

As he plunged into the history of Belgium's military intervention in the Congo following the country's declaration of independence in 1960, Sven Augustijnen found his attention and interest drawn to the city of Kamina. While working on *Spectres*, a feature-length documentary from 2011 that examines Belgium's colonial past through the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, Augustijnen came across some people who put him on the trail of a national redoubt Belgium had planned to build in the province of Katanga in the 1950s.

His curiosity was stimulated by the absence of clear information and data on the topic, and by his longstanding interest in anything that has to do, whether directly or remotely, with the communist spectre that haunted Europe in the post-War years. Some preliminary research resulted in the discovery of an archive fonds, at Belgium's Centre de Documentation historique des Forces armées (ACOS IS/CA), which contained information linked to the national redoubt project.

Augustijnen then set out on the massive task of documenting and analysing thousands of photos, negatives, carbon copies and various plans. These documents had never left the archive, or been studied by anyone. Thanks to the complicity of one of the archivists, Augustijnen was able to exhume the plans for a project of stunning proportions undertaken by the Belgian government: to develop a military base and a governmental city, to serve as refuge, in the city of Kamina.

Le Réduit retraces the history of the Kamina Base, which at first appeared as an architectural and urban materialization of the fear of a Soviet invasion, but which would go on to play a strategic role during political upheavals that destabilized Congo in the months and years that followed the declaration of independence. The exhibition is composed of a selection of archival documents and new works by the artist. The artist's choices reveal several temporalities, discourses, and narratives. And together, these outline a journey that, although based on historical facts, tips over into fiction. Employing a strategy characteristic of his practice, Sven Augustijnen allowed himself to be guided by his interpretation, by the ghosts of history, and, even, by the emotive and personal input of some of the interlocutors he met along the way. In his turn, the artist guides us through what results: a complex reality that remains no less open and able to generate truths.

About the artist

Sven Augustijnen was born in Mechelen in 1970, and he lives and works in Brussels. He has had solo shows in the following institutions, among others: The Hugh Lane, Dublin (2016); Kunsthall Trondheim, Trondheim (2015); CCS Bard & Hessel Museum of Art, Anandale-on-Hudson (2014); VOX, Centre pour l'Image contemporaine, Montréal (2013); Malmö Konsthall, Malmö (2013);

Kunsthalle Bern, Bern (2011); De Appel, Amsterdam (2011); Wiels, Brussels (2011). His films, publications, and installations are often featured in group shows, among them: *The Unfinished Conversation: Encoding and Decoding*, Museo Coleção Berardo, Lisbon (2016), and *The Power Plant*, Toronto (2015); *Gestures and Archives of the Present, Genealogies of the Future*, Tapei Biennial (2016); *Art in the Age of ... Asymmetrical Warfare*, Witte de With, Rotterdam (2015); *Europe – The Future of History*, Kunsthau Zürich (2015); *Ce qui ne sert pas s'oublie*, CAPC, Bordeaux (2015); *Enthusiasm!*, Rencontres Picha – Biennale de Lubumbashi, Lubumbashi (2013).

Sven Augustijnen teaches at ERG (École de Recherche Graphique), in Brussels, and is regularly invited to give talks and workshops in Belgium and abroad. He is represented by the Jan Mot Gallery and is one of the founding members of the production and distribution platform August Orts.

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