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Lumumba's Bike

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An old bicycle against a tree, a rusty chain, no chain guard, no gears; the baggage rack is stacked with a big load of home-made charcoal, shored up with rope and a couple of tree sticks. The whole thing is chained to a tall tree in a park. It seems somewhat out-of-place, forgotten by somebody on their way home in this popular city park. On closer examination, the shoring job of the charcoal is craftily done, using additional wood supports around the axle of the back wheel. The charcoal is stuffed in three bags that seem to come from the Congo with vague stenciled letters on them. The chain is locked with an old combination padlock, rusting, like the bike itself, but certainly of a more recent date (fig 1).

Figure 1 (Source: Piet Defraeye)

And then it becomes clear. This is not a left-behind bike. Behind the tree, a sign identifies the object as having a title and a maker: *AWB 082-3317 7922* by Sven Augustijnen. It is part of the Track initiative of the city of Gent, Belgium, labeled as "A Contemporary City Conversation." In spite of its initial appearance as decidedly an object that is not art—*ceci n'est pas une oeuvre*—it turns out, because of the label, to be precisely that, and although its aura is certainly understated, even diminutive –the label foregrounds its enigmatic standing all the more (fig.2). While it did not oblige

to the traditional ghost bike genre of a white-painted bicycle near a place of accident, there was certainly something ghost-like about the bike.

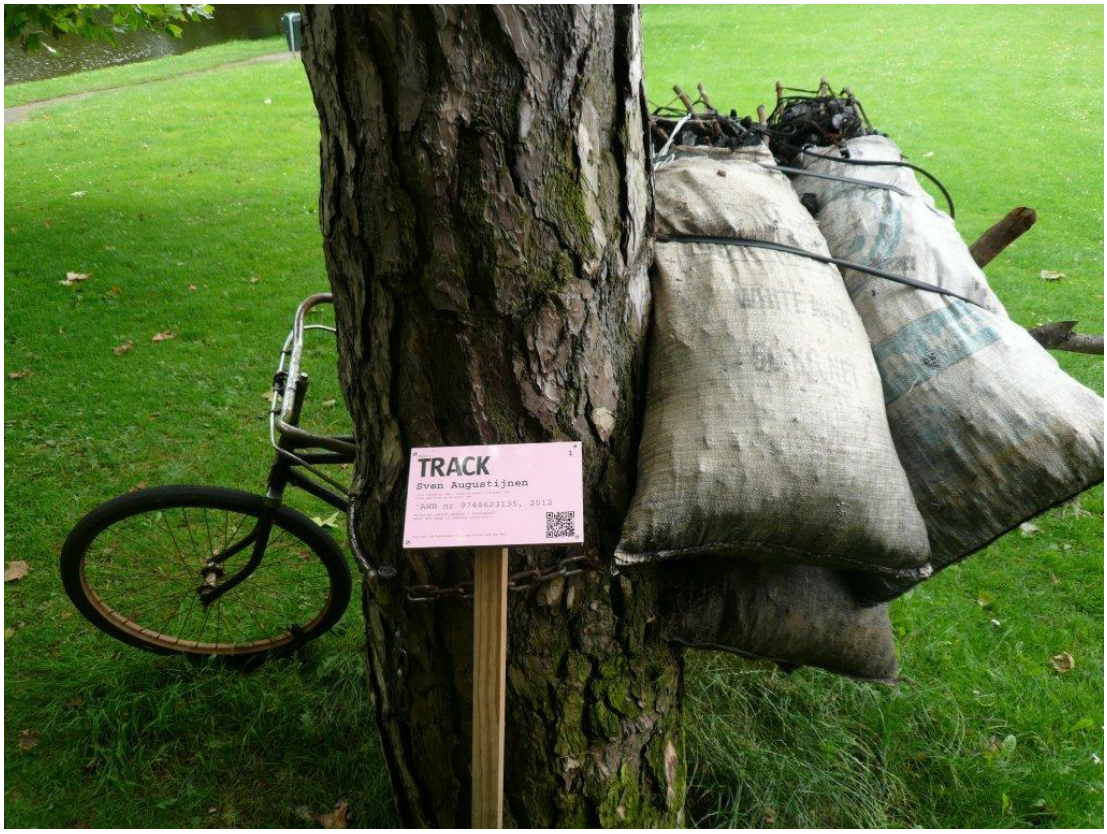

Figure 2 (Source: Piet Defraeye)

The phenomenon of bike memorials, or ghost bikes is well known in our cities and alongside roads. The Street Memorial Project in New York is perhaps the most famous, and continues its operation under the banner ghostbikes.org[1]. Ghost bikes are a form of street art, memorializing cyclists that have been killed in traffic. Recently, just around the corner from where I live in Edmonton, Canada, a ghost bike, painted in the habitual white, emerged locked to a lamppost at the intersection where a 50-year old mother of three had been killed on her way to work, dragged along by a garbage truck (fig. 3)[2]. The installation needed no comment or explanation to fulfill its function as both a memorial to a grieved mother, as well as a warning to motorists to be careful and watch out for cyclists. Ghost bikes speak out clearly. They have a simple grammar in their expressive quality, though often they tell a complex story of inadequate road design, alcohol, distraction, tremendous sorrow and loss. Invariably, they are inexpensive – an old recycled bike, sometimes the mangled vehicle involved in the accident itself. The artist is not paid. The artist is not known in most

[1] See http://ghostbikes.org/ghostbikes/New+York+City
[2] Wendee Hockney was struck on her way to work in downtown Edmonton, AB on Thursday May 22, 2014 (http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Cyclist+killed+Edmonton+caring+family+says/9875626/story.html). The ghost bike was set up by Chris Chan of the Edmonton Bicycle Commuters' Society.

cases. There is no invitation. No leaflet. No expensive art insurance. No grant subsidies. Lots of aura —but of a different kind, and lots of viewers.

Figure 3 (Source: Piet Defraeye)

The old bicycle in Gent's Citadelpark, though exceptionally simple in its appearance, certainly does not speak loud. *AWB 082-3317 7922* is an understatement, if anything. Its grammar, as well as its story, however, is complex and stubborn in the telling. Its narrative develops and grows rhizomatically, in concert as it were, with its forest surroundings. Depending on the viewer's (dis)position, many of these rhizomes will end up as dead-ends, others will be truncated, diverted, or peter out. Some lead to systems of meaning that boast complexity, intricacy, and solid rhizomatic structure.

I had gone to the park in the summer of 2012, on the suggestion of my brother, who knew about my extensive research into cultural discourse emerging around the figure of Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961), the first Prime Minister of the Congo. His MNC party (Movement National Congolais) came out as the victor of the 1960 elections—the first and arguably *only* free and fair elections in the country's history (and it would certainly take another 46 years for Congo to have anything close to a fair vote, in 2006). He was murdered in dreadful circumstances, barely 6 months into his term.

To this day, Lumumba remains a stalwart figure in Congo's complex post-colonial history, and an inspiring symbol in Africa's ongoing struggle for self-determination and emancipation.

Lumumba's legacy lives on, in other words, in an almost ghost-like fashion. He has been the subject of several street art interventions; Bogumil Jewsiewcki's collection of graffiti art and popular paintings on Lumumba, for instance, is a lively example. It was the subject of a major exhibition at the Museum for African Art in New York, in 1999. Many African and European cities have statues and monuments memorializing him, and he continues to inspire a divergence of cultural discourse in songs, poetry, novels, paintings, theatre, and film. Aimé Césaire's early play *Une Saison au Congo* (1966)[3] still counts as a manifest example, and as recently as October 2013, a new Lumumba monument was inaugurated in the centre of Berlin. This cultural commentary and production is often paired with considerable irony. President Mobutu Sese Seko (1930-1997), for instance, declared him Congo's "National Hero" on June 30 1966, while all historians agree that then Colonel Mobutu played a key role in Lumumba's demise. The 10-metre high Lumumba statue in Congo's capital, commissioned by president Laurent-Désirée Kabila (1939-2001), and inaugurated in 2002 (fig. 4) references the image of the destroyed monument in the politician's hometown of Kisangani (formerly Stanleyville). One of Sven Augustijnen's more recent installations *Appele-moi Pierre, comme je t'appelle Joseph* is an exhibit of archival imagery of this Lumumba monument, which was blown up by dynamite in 1965.

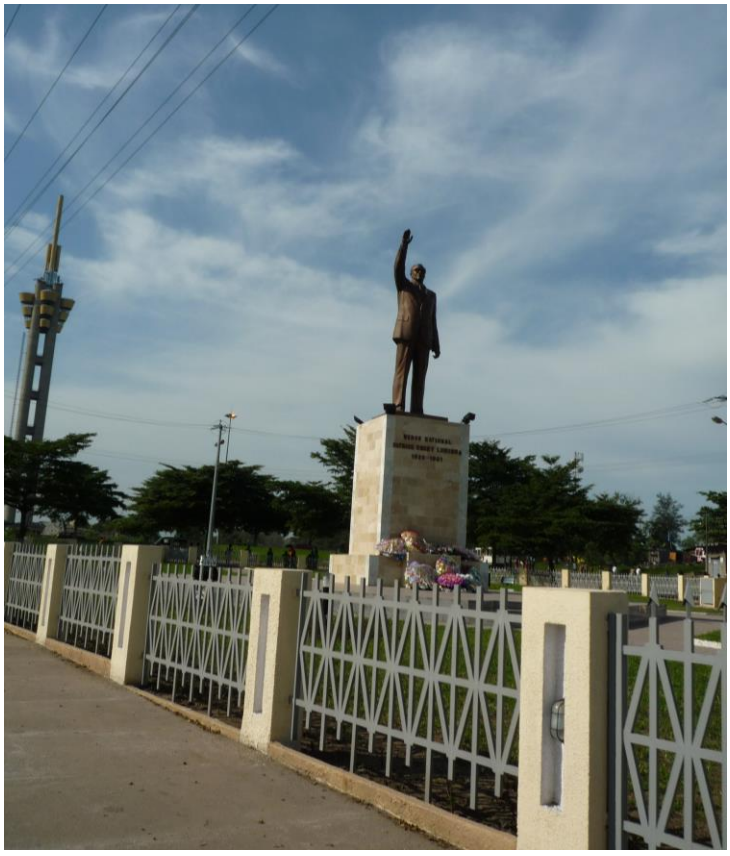

Figure 4 (Source: Dirk Defraeye)

[3] See also Piet Defraeye, "*A Season in the Congo.*" *The Literary Encyclopedia.* http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=14501

Although I was immediately aware of a certain Congolese iconic assemblage when I saw the bike, because of the stenciled bags, the decidedly colonial-looking bike, and the charcoal, this *feeling* did certainly not go beyond an associative affinity between this left-behind bicycle, and my own observation and recollection of industrious African villagers covering impressive distances with their charcoal-laden bikes during an arduous bicycle trip through Rwanda and Eastern Congo, now a few years ago.

It was clear that I needed the booklet provided by Track and its conceiver S.M.A.K. (Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst), Gent's signature city museum for contemporary art, to prod the rhizomes of this narrative to reveal themselves and thus allow the installation its full meaning-making process. Its iconic and semiotic potential is, of course, an important consideration when one deals with street-art. It is ultimately the concealed 'gallery' sign that both legitimizes as well as frames the bike object with its charcoal as a vehicle of meaning, thus going beyond its literal vehicle-ness.

The Track exhibition featured within a long tradition of public art activism in the city of Gent. Renowned art curator, administrator and "art pope" extra-ordinaire Jan Hoet (1936-2014) had earlier launched initiatives like Chambres d'Amis and Over the Edges, which found their impulse in a desire to go beyond the museum walls in an effort to allow a greater public to participate in the consumption of art, and also as an attempt to de-sacralize art away from the museum aura.[4] Chambres d'Amis started in 1986, and exhibited work from 51 internationally renowned artists in the private setting of individual houses. In most cases, there was a dialogue between the artist and the family occupants to determine details of what sort of art, together with the precise location within the family dwelling. For two weeks or so in the summer, Gent was abuzz with a string of private host galleries, distributed across town, which opened their doors to ticket holders at designated times. This endeavor to go *extra muros* continued with Over the Edges in 2000, when artists were invited to create and install objects in public places around Gent. This project was as site-specific as Chambres d'Amis, yet, the art objects of Over the Edges were not private interventions, but very public installations, often disruptive, and certainly invariably functioning as catalysts for intense public discussions and exchange. While Chambres d'Amis had art infiltrate the private sphere, Over the Edge took over the public square. It should also be noted that both initiatives featured an impressive list of internationally renowned artists. Christian Boltanski, Bruce Nauman, Daniel Burens, Luciano Fabro, and Panamarenko are just five names that contributed to Chambres d'Amis; Marco Boggio Sella, Jimmie Durham, Kiki Smith, Wim Delvoye, and Jan Fabre were prominent provocateurs in Over the Edge. It is also important to note that in the margins of both projects, dissident initiatives emerged, with groups of artists commenting on, extending, and critiquing Jan Hoet's initial set up. A group of Belgian disgruntled artists, for instance, who had not

[4] The immediate impulse for Chambres d'Amis was lack of space in the overcrowded Museum voor Schone Kunsten (MSK), which temporarily housed the collection of Gent's Museum for Contemporary Arts in just a few designated rooms. Jan Hoet's decision to go beyond the walls and its huge success forced the city administration to make plans for what was later to become Gent's Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), which was to be housed independently a stone's throw from the MSK, in the centre of Citadelpark.

been selected within the international paradigm of Chambres d'Amis, set up Antichambre in a vast deserted factory domain, on the outskirts of Gent. 180 artists exhibited their work under the umbrella quip Factory of Entartete Kunst[5]. All this to say that the 2012 exhibition Track, of which Augustijnen's bicycle was a part, was just one of the more recent highlights within a long-standing tradition of art-activism in Gent, which specifically engages with the debate surrounding private and public function of art and art installations.

In 2012, S.M.A.K. artistic director Philippe Van Cauteren teamed up with Mirjam Varadinis, who is an art curator for the Zurich Kunsthaus gallery, to curate Track, which was programmed between May 12 and September 16, 2012. They identified six geographical clusters in Gent, which went well beyond the traditional historic and tourist centre of its downtown. While the push for *extra muros* of the two previous initiatives was maintained, Track wanted to more thoroughly engage with the *in situ* opportunities for the site-specific art installations. It means that, while Over the Edge had a mostly provocative function in 2000, twelve years later, Track encouraged artists to engage with local history and narrative, with the city's challenges and problems, with local conflicts and opportunities. Track's manifesto, available online in 15 languages, including the colourful local Gent *patois*, assertively presents Track as a "universe of parallel narratives, occurrences, encounters and (hi)stories." Most of the artists (from 22 different countries) managed to present art that somehow engaged with local situations, be it sociologically, politically, aesthetically, historically, or even at economic levels. Polish artist Pawel Alhamer, for instance, is well known for his participatory interventions. For Track, he engaged several hundred local citizens in a live re-vocation of Jan and Hubert Van Eyck's *Agnus Dei* (1432), which is on permanent display in the adjacent cathedral where his quiet and soundless tableaux took place at the end of a regular working day for all involved. People witnessed the gradual emergence of the central panel of the famous and detailed triptych; while all participants remained in their own identity, clothing, and job function, including judges, firemen, police officers, politicians, tourists, and even a live lamb. The live replica was held for a short period, whereupon the tableaux dissipated slowly and gradually and all participants just went about their own private business in the city.[6] Dahn Vo, a Danish installation artist, born in Vietnam, now living and working in Berlin, provided an installment of his *We the people* project, in which he presents fragments of a full-scale reproduction of the Statue of Liberty. As it happens, the World Exposition took place in Gent in 1913 and was mostly located in the city's Citadelpark, which was the location for Vo's installation, just in front of the renewed Museum voor Schone Kunsten (MSK), which incidentally was also finished in 1913 for the World Exposition. At the time, the U.S. had built a replica of the Statue of Liberty as part of the American contribution to the World Exposition in Gent, but mostly as a fundraiser—repeated at several other World Expositions—in order to pay for the expensive foundation of the actual statue on New York's Liberty Island. With the invocation of the first sentence of the American constitution, and the warped and shattered

[5] It is important to note here that these dissident initiatives in themselves were hugely important staging grounds for emerging artists. Antichambre, for instance, was Berlinde de Bruykere's first professional exhibition in 1986. She went on to become one of Belgium's most sought after and internationally renowned visual artists, including repeated solo exhibitions at Venice's Biennale.

[6] See http://cobra.be/cm/cobra/videozone/rubriek/kunst-videozone/1.1427657. Accessed August 11, 2014.

fragments of the American icon, Vo's *We the people* certainly engaged with local history and contemporary outcomes. As the Track manifesto posits in its fifth postulation: "Track approaches the city as an open source where history mingles with the present and where a local reality meets with the global condition."

Sven Augustijnen's *AWB 082-3317 7922* similarly wants to act as an anthropological event as well as an archeological dig. It wants to encounter "the multiple identities of a place" and thus open "unexpected, surprising, hidden, forgotten and new means of access, insights and perspectives on the city, art and the times we live in." (Track Manifesto). A bit condescendingly, Robrecht Vanderbeeken calls Augustijnen's bike installation "a solitary political work" (1) within the Track happening. There are certainly other valuable candidates for this epitaph in the 41 street-art Track interventions, and calling an old bike chained to a tree in a park "political" is a surprising appraisal. However, upon closer investigation, the lonely abandoned bike in Gent's Citadelpark is exactly that: a political shrine that evokes one of the darkest episodes of African history, while at the same time it also suggests deep and continuous historical engagement with Belgium's troubling (post-) colonizing history.

Gent's Citadelpark was one of six city clusters set up for Track. Like most locations in Gent, it has a rich and colourful history. Its name refers to its successive military functions, culminating as the location of a big fortified citadel that was built in Vauban style under the Dutch regime (1815-30). Impressive as it was, the structure was never really used as a military barracks, and even less as a defensive bastion. It fell into disuse when a soldier committed suicide in the gunpowder storage in 1849, blowing up about a third of the Citadel, and ceased operation in 1871. The city of Gent opted to demolish the buildings and most of the fortifications and replace these by a city park.[7] The park subsequently acquired fame as the location of the 1913 World Expo (Exposition universelle et internationale) for which not only the grand Museum of Fine Arts (MSK) was completed within the periphery of the park, but also the adjacent St. Pieters main railway station in its eclectic neo-gothic style was finished in 1912, specifically in time for World Expo. With their choice of Citadelpark as one of six clusters, the Track curatorial team wanted to focus on issues of mobility and Gent's historical and current place within a global picture.

Four centuries after the birth of the future Emperor Charles V in 1500, World Expo brought Gent back into the global scope in 1913, just before the outbreak of World War I. Congo had recently become a Belgian colony, having been officially transferred from the private estate of Leopold II (poignantly called Congo-Free State) to the Belgian state in 1908, and the African continent featured prominently as a motif throughout World Expo. For Belgium, it was an occasion to showcase their colonial aspirations in order "to testify to the rapid progress accomplished in our beautiful colony, thanks to the new impetus given by a wise administration," according to an official government communiqué (qtd. in Stanard 54).

[7] For further info on the history of Citadelpark, see the extensive city of Gent Archives. Luc Van de Sijpe's overview website is tremendously detailed and documented with multiple references to these archival sources: http://www.bunkergordel.be/14.028b%20Bouw%20Citadel%20van%20Gent.html

The grand Colonial Palace (fig. 5) occupied a dominant place on the southern outskirt of the park, facing the Canadian Pavilion and the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and skirting the newly established Arboretum on the edge of the Citadelpark. It was a favourite destination for Expo visitors with its huge *Panorama of the Congo*, a gigantic painting of different colonial tableaux, 13 meters high and 120 meters long.

Figure 5 (Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France)

By 1913, the Citadelpark already bore colonial marks, with a couple of monuments that linked Gent to the Belgian Congo. One of these is still conspicuously present: it is known colloquially as "het Moorken," which translates as the little moor[8]. The Brothers Van de Velde monument, as it is officially known, dates from 1888 and is one of the oldest surviving structures in the park. It was originally located at the exact place where the Museum of Fine Arts was to be built. Its base is an artificial grotto, an incongruous aesthetic, except for its re-occurrence all over the park. These grottos were built in concrete at the time of the Citadel's demolition in order to hide all kinds of cannon rooms and gunpowder storages that could not easily be demolished. The effect is bizarrely fake, but also mysterious; they create an uncanny atmosphere, popular among park dwellers. Essentially, these grottos function as a theatrical stage in which nature, in tandem with the rich panoply of trees has, both *as it were*, and also effectively taken over from the military structures now invisible to the eye. It also creates a ghost-like setting for the park and its visitors.

[8] One can speculate that "Moorken" might come from the local patois word for kettle, which is "moor" (pronounced with long [o:] as in diagnosis), meaning little kettle thus referring to the blackness of the kettle. The reference to the ethnic meaning of moor, however, is more likely.

When they started with the foundations for the Museum of Fine Arts (MSK) in 1910, the 2 boulders of the Van de Velde monument were placed on top of this grotto assemblage (fig. 6), the medallion relief depicting the faces of the two brothers Lieven (1850-1888) en Jozef (1855-1882) facing their previous position where the museum now stands. The two men were immortalized as the local "H.M. Stanleys" because of their early explorations in Leopold's Congo Free-State, where both of them also died at a young age. On a holiday back home in Gent in 1884, Lieven Van de Velde thought it exciting to bring back a souvenir from the exotic and mysterious Congo in the form of a Congolese boy named Sakala; he was in his early teens, and the son of a certain Mambouco, a village Chieftain in Vivi, a small settlement near the port of Matadi (*Bibliographie Coloniale Belge [BCB]* vol 3. 881). The village apparently got its name after the two V's in Van de Velde's name. Sakala was a popular presence in *fin-du siècle* Gent. For most citizens, he was undoubtedly one of the first Africans to see in person. Apparently, he went to primary school, and even learnt Flemish, a language that certainly must have helped him tremendously once back in his native Congo, after three years in Gent. He posed for a photo in a local studio, and was also the subject of a portrait by local painter Gustavo Van Aise (*Gents Gastenboek*). Lieven Van de Velde eventually took him back to Congo in August 1887; sources are vague on his further destiny, while Lieven passed away six months later in Léopoldville.[9] Stanley, apparently, called the explorer "the most valiant officer of the Bas Congo" (qtd. In *BCB*, 3. 882, my translation).

Figure 6 (Source: Hedwig Jansen)

[9] Matthew Stanard suggests that Vandevelde's (sic) "'boy' accidentally shot him in the back" (200). There is no indication that the 'boy' in question might also be Sakala. Moreover, Van de Velde's extensive biography in the *BCB* (vol. 3 col 878-82) does not mention this version of his death at all. Stanard's reference in *BCB* for his observation instead indicates that Van de Velde succumbed to fever during his third and last visit to the Congo, on February 17, 1888, close to the capital Léopoldville (vol 3, 882).

The Van de Velde monument in Gent's Citadelpark is unique from the other three or four memorials for the brothers that exist in Belgium, because it is actually more known for Sakala than for the Van de Veldes. The top boulder is crowned with the bronze statue of an African boy, seated naked, apart from a cloth wrapped around his loins, and playing a sanza, an African so-called thumb piano. Sakala is, in fact, more prominent than the medallion relief, and park visitors consistently refer to the monument as 'Het Moorken," the little moor (fig. 7).

Figure 7 (Source: Hedwig Jansen)

Augustijnen's bike in Gent's Citadelpark was positioned just adjacent to "Het Moorken," thus eliciting a rapport between Gent's historical links to the Congo. Both artefacts deal with violent interventions and with historical disappearance. While Sakala finds figuration in the little bronze boy,

there is no trace of what really happened to him—his removal from his family and from the Congo when he was barely eleven, his three years in Gent, and his sudden return to his native land when he was fourteen. The statue itself is the product of a colonial imagination, not unlike what people saw and imagined at the grand Colonial Pavilion in the same park, in 1913: a happy little boy playing the sanza, naked, not bothered apparently by the local climate, and with a happy face, smiling towards the south: smiling towards Congo. Its dark and uneasy underlying narrative is turned into a naïve glorification of white exploration and sacrifice and black innocence and happiness. The ghost of Sakala is as it were hewed away into the black marble of the statue.

Augustijnen's *AWB 082-3317 7922* presents an equally troubled narrative, but does so in a much darker grammar. Sven Augustijnen had been researching Congo's history of independence for some time. His film *Spectres*, which came out the year before the Track initiative in 2012, was showing simultaneously in Gent during Track. In contrast to other films about Lumumba, like Raoul Peck's *Lumumba: la mort d'un prohète* (1991), Augustijnen focuses on what is most difficult to show in film: that which is no longer there. *Spectres* does not present a re-evocation of what was or could have been, but instead tries to document the void, the impossibility to revisit, and ultimately the failure of history itself. The film leads us to Katanga, the southern province and mining powerhouse of Congo, it was also the centre for Lumumba's dissidents in a ruthless chess game of power between Congolese parties and individuals, Western powers and interests, and their Cold-War opponents in the early 1960s.

Lumumba was taken prisoner in December of 1960, and eventually flown to the Southern Katanga, on January 17 1961, where, together with two of his closest political friends, he was murdered the next day by soldiers of the secessionist Moïse Tshombe, in the presence of Belgian military and political officials (Ruys 70-72). Multiple sources indicate that the deposed but democratically elected Prime Minister was tied to a tree and then gunned down by multiple bullets.[10] The next day, the bodies of all three murdered victims were hacked into pieces and dissolved in acid, in order to obliterate all traces. The film documents a search for the tree against which Lumumba was killed. It is never found. Instead, the film becomes a constant quest for the spectre of Lumumba that emerges throughout his documentary, though constantly fragmented and elusive.

Instead, in the park in Gent, Augustijnen presents us with an old bicycle loaded with charcoal, which is the most likely destination for a bullet-ridden tree in the middle of fuel-starved villages in southern Congo. On his way back to Lubumbashi, after filming in Mwadingusha, northwest of Lubumbashi, where Lumumba was killed, he noticed several villagers on bicycles, loaded with *makala* or home-made charcoal, headed for the local market, and he decided to buy one

[10] *Spectres* opens with a sequence at the house of the son of the then Belgian minister of African Affairs Harold d'Aspremont Lynden (1914-1967), who's on paper as having ordered by telegram "the definitive elimination" of Lumumba (Ruys 60) and coordinated the delivery of the imprisoned prime minister to his political enemies in Katanga (Ruys 70). His son, Count Arnoud Charles receives his guests in Mouffrin, France, in Augustijnen's film in 2010, where we hear, cocktails in hand, and with slight indignation, that "the soldiers had drunk alcohol"… "but at least Lumumba had not been tortured, just executed. . . . Afterwards, Belgian military collected almost two kilos of cartridges… [the three] obviously were riddled (*truffé)* with bullets" (my trans.).

of these old bikes, charcoal and all (Marcelis 5). Unfortunately, the logistics of sending it to Belgium in time for the Track exhibition proved to be too complex and particularly too costly, salvaging the Air Waybill number (AWB) that had been allocated to the bike parcel as the title of the piece: *AWB 082-3317 7922*. Its cold scientific resonance echoes both the calculated coldness of the murder, as well as the necessary detachment of forensic diligence and its numerical display. What Augustijnen suggests is clearly that Lumumba is gone, yet, because of the falsifying efforts to cover up what really happened, the spectre remains, and re-emerges not only in a continuous pursuit of justice, but also as a sabotaged potential from the past for a future of a country that seems set up for cyclical failure, unable to adequately deal with its violent past.

As street-art, its location in Gent's Citadelpark brings about amazing serendipities. The charcoal metonymize the covered up traces of a hideous murder, just like the quixotic rock formations that serve as a décor to Augustijnen's bike hide the military function of the park, with its share of bloody interactions. Clearly nature has also played a major role in eradicating these bloody traces, just like the Katangese savannah has taken over the spot where three democratically elected politicians met their violent end. Thus, the charcoal not only stand for his corporeal absence, they also physicalize the ghost of Lumumba.

The adjacent Van de Velde monument reminds us that *plus ça change*: the colonial and post-colonial narratives echo a haunting concoction of valiant discovery, mixed in with heroic sacrifice and well intentioned development, but ending up as one-sided belligerent subjugation and exploitation. The statue of *het Moorken*, the little African boy that now looks onto an "African" bike with a pile of charcoal as its cargo, reminds us of a colonial imagination that once overtook the park during the 1913 World Expo, as people wandered through the Colonial Pavilion. Monumentalisation itself is questioned, as we look through the trees and observe the neo-classical architecture of Gent's Museum of Fine Arts (MSK – fig. 8), a building for which *het Moorken* had to make way, and that at the Track Exhibition, in dialogue with Augustijnen's bike, is surrounded by a carved up replica of the Statue of Liberty, the greatest symbol of liberty and self-determination. "We the people" ricochets back and forth as a deceptive excuse for brutal intervention, as well as an indignant lament for reconstructive justice.

Finally, a startling serendipity emerges from the rhizomes that are active around Lumumba's ghostbike. The Belgian historian Ludo de Witte, in his painstaking research on the events in Congo, has put together the intriguing puzzle of agents and proxies in the downfall of Lumumba. One of the military jeeps in the 6-car convoy that brought Lumumba, his minister Mpolo, and the deputy Senate Chair Okito to Mwadingusha, north east of Jadotville on that fateful day in January 1961, is Warrant Officer Sakela, who had served previously under the Belgian forces in the Congo, and is now part of Tshombe's *gendarmerie.* (119-20). He is most likely a Lunda, one of the prevalent tribes in the area, and certainly a southerner.

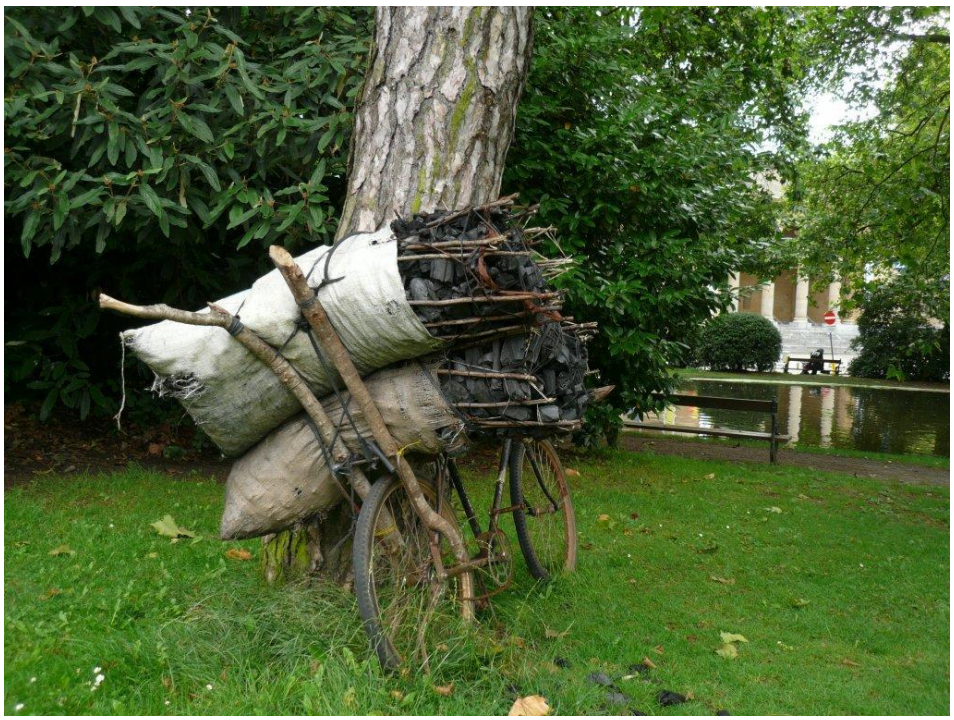

Figure 8 (Source: Piet Defraeye)

In Gent's Citadelpark, the young boy Sakala, who was displaced from his family and culture, and after returning to his native area in North-West Congo "finit tristement" (*Gents Gastenboek*) looks onto the enigmatic pile of charcoal, a symbol for the spectres of Congo's violent past and the collusion of local and global interests. His namesake Sakela from the Southeast of the Congo incarnates these collusions as the driver of the American jeep, guiding the group of local and foreign agents to the execution tree in the Katangese savannah. The park tree that now supports the bike and its cargo, is an imposing *Ginkgo biloba,* one of the oldest surviving trees on the planet, often called a living fossil; a tree that epitomizes historiography itself. An older less sturdy *Ginkgo* tree is one of the oldest trees in the nearby Arboretum; planted around 1906[11], it dates back to the time when Congo Free-State became a Belgian Colony in 1908[12]. Gent's Arboretum was established in its present location in 1902, just on the edge of the current Citadelpark. Many visitors of the Colonial Palace of the 1913 World Expo must have looked at this weird tree as it was trying to get a foothold for what was to become its centennial life-span. Just a stone's throw away, Augustijnen's Maidenhair tree, as it is called in English, with its 200 cm circumference, is much younger, probably between 45 and 55 years old, which brings it back to the time of Congo's independence in 1960 and the assassination of its first Prime Minister– and also about the age of the old bike itself. One wonders if the roots of these two trees might touch beneath the surface. They almost certainly seeded one another.

[11] http://www.plantcol.be/partner-ghent.php?l=nl (Aug. 20 2014).

[12] http://plantaardigheden.nl/tuinen/be/gent.htm

AWB 082-3317 7922 is the kind of street-art that is performative in its associations with the setting in which it features: it evokes a rhizomatic narrative that is broken and eclipsed, which at the same time calls for a reconstructive exercise, however sutured, and fragmented. It certainly does suggest a "universe of parallel narratives, occurrences, encounters and (hi)stories," as the Track manifesto proclaims. When the installation moved to the studio, after Track concluded its public exhibition, in October 2012 to Paris for the Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain (FIAC) and in November 2012 to the Brussels-based gallery Jan Mot (fig. 9), its ties with the multi-layered, and multi-tentacled rhizomes and surroundings of Gent's Citadelpark were lost, its ghostbike aura was broken. We can speak of an almost literal uprooting of the work, a deracination in which, for obvious reasons, the tree that supports it *must* be left behind, together with its rhizomatic network and potential. Within the gallery, it emphatically becomes an art piece: *ceci est une oeuvre*! It subsequently loses its ghost-aspect, and turns into conceptual art. Looking at this object against the whitewashed wall of a contemporary gallery, it becomes very hard to go beyond a literal bike with charcoal loaded on its cargo rack, and let the object tell its story. Street-Art only works on the street.

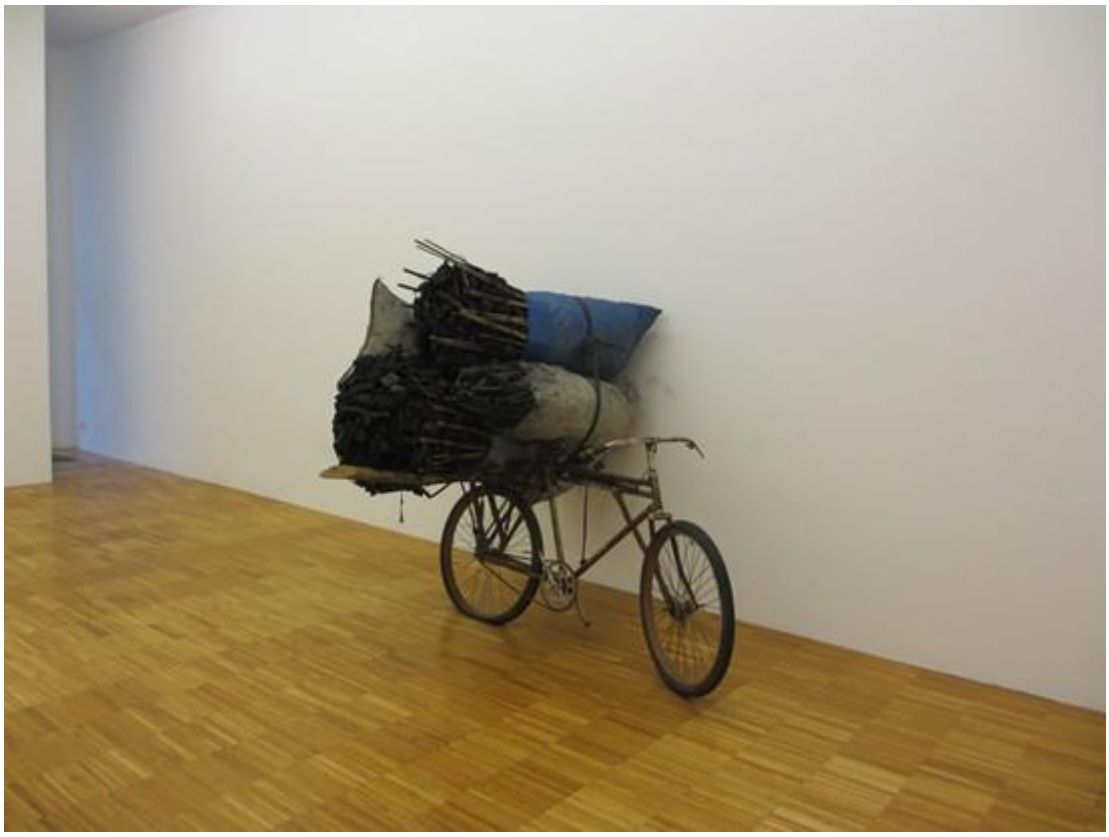

Figure 9 (Source: Gallery Jan Mot)

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