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For Immediate Release

**CERCLE D'ART DES TRAVAILLEURS DE PLANTATION
CONGOLAISE (CONGOLESE PLANTATION WORKERS ART
LEAGUE)**

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CHOCOLATE SCULPTURES BY CONGOLESE ART COLLECTIVE TO BE SHOWN IN THE U.S. FOR THE FIRST TIME

Exhibition:
***Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de
Plantation Congolaise (Congolese
Plantation Workers Art League)***

Long Island City, NY – SculptureCenter is pleased to announce the first exhibition of the **Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise** (Congolese Plantation Workers Art League or CATPC) in the United States, on view January 29–March 27, 2017.

Dates:
January 29–March 27, 2017

Creating sculptures with cacao as a primary material, the artists that comprise the CATPC are plantation workers who harvest primary material for international companies. In the Congo, as elsewhere, plantation workers are grossly underpaid for their contribution to global industry, whether to the \$100 billion chocolate industry or to the production of palm oil, broadly used in common household products. The Congolese plantation laborers cannot actually afford to live off of the wages they receive for their work and survive without basic amenities such as clean water and electricity. By using material sourced from cacao plantations worldwide instead to make artworks, the members of CATPC can occupy another place in the global value chain, one normally reserved for middle class artists.

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Many of the sculptures created by CATPC members are future, present, and ancestral self-representations, and take up symbolic figures such as the art collector. First molded from clay, then 3D printed and cast in chocolate, the sculptures are made in collaborative settings and the materials used refer back to and overwrite the exploitative economics of global trade. The CATPC reinvests profits in new, self-owned, and regulated agricultural production—provoking questions about the division between those who should work on plantations and those who are allowed to reflect on this, about the inherent value of art and its market, and challenging art's potential as a tool for broader social change.

Unprecedented wealth (financial and cultural) has been extracted directly from plantations worldwide and redeployed in the production and acquisition of art in major global cities, resulting in local gentrification and the reaffirmation of class disparities. One striking example may be the Unilever Series at Tate Modern, funded by a corporation that has a large stake in the Congo. How can we assess the conditions and motivations around the consumption of critically engaged art when it is funded by plantation economies? What is the value of art that is not only about a site of conflict as a subject, but actually originates from that place? Can we extract wealth from the art system and repatriate it to the plantations where it originates? Can art turn the plantations into inclusive and ecological test sites?

In collaboration with their sister organization the Institute for Human Activities (IHA), CATPC is currently building a research center in Lusanga on a former Unilever plantation in a remote rainforest within the Democratic Republic of Congo, which aims to put the quintessential white cube to service as a vector for social and environmental change. Its location is of crucial importance: the research center is constructed in Lusanga, formerly Leverville, where the Lever Brothers (later the Unilever company) founded their first palm oil plantation in 1911. It is here, at heart of the plantation system, at the crossroads of ecological and economic urgencies, where the research center will establish a program to redefine the mandate of art.

This exhibition will include existing and new sculptures and drawings produced by members of the CATPC, as well as materials about the larger activities and context of the IHA in the Congo. A series of public programs on topics raised by the exhibition will be announced at a later date.

The Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) is an expanding art collective co-founded in 2014 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Plantation workers **Djonga Bismar**, **Mathieu Kilapi Kasiana**, **Cedrick Tamasala**, **Mbuku Kimpala**, **Mananga Kibuila**, **Jérémie Mabila**, **Emery Mohamba**, and **Thomas Leba**, ecologist **René Ngongo**, and the Kinshasa-based artists **Michel Ekeba**, **Eléonore Hellio**, and **Mega Mingiedi** are its leading personalities.

The Institute for Human Activities has been working in Congo since 2012, where it attempts to diversify the local economy through critical artistic engagement. Dutch visual artist Renzo Martens is its founder.

The exhibition is curated by SculptureCenter Curator **Ruba Katrib** and will be accompanied by a fully illustrated publication.

ON VIEW CONCURRENTLY

In Practice, an annual exhibition for emerging artists selected from an open-call with a focus on the production of new work, curated by SculptureCenter's 2016–2017 Curatorial Fellow, Alexis Wilkinson. January 29–March 27, 2017

About SculptureCenter

Founded by artists in 1928, SculptureCenter is a not-for-profit arts institution in Long Island City, NY dedicated to experimental and innovative developments in contemporary sculpture. SculptureCenter commissions new works and presents exhibitions by emerging and established, national and international artists. Our programs identify new talent, explore the conceptual, aesthetic and material concerns of contemporary sculpture, and encourage independent vision.

SculptureCenter's major exhibition and operating support is generously provided by grants from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; the Lambent Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation; the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council; the Kraus Family Foundation; the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; the A. Woodner Fund; Jeanne Donovan Fisher; and contributions from our Board of Trustees and Director's Circle. Additional funding is provided by the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation and contributions from many generous individuals.

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