



NEW RELEASE

## Tariq Zaidi *Sapeurs* Ladies and Gentlemen of the Congo

Photographs and text by Tariq Zaidi

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### Self-Expression Through Fashion, Style and Art in the Streets of Kinshasa and Brazzaville/Congo

British photographer Tariq Zaidi presents a fashion subculture of Kinshasa & Brazzaville: La Sape, Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes (Society of Ambiance-Makers & Elegant People). Its followers are known as »Sapeurs« (»Sapeuses« for women). Most have ordinary day jobs as taxi-drivers, tailors and gardeners, but as soon as they clock out they transform themselves into debonair dandies. Sashaying through the streets they are treated like rock stars – turning heads, bringing 'joie de vivre' to their communities and defying their circumstances.

From the text by Tariq Zaidi:

*»Brazzaville and Kinshasa are on opposite banks of the Congo River, almost directly across from one another, yet they have different styles. In Brazzaville, La Sape is mainly 'French style' (think exquisite suits), but in Kinshasa anything goes, from Japanese Yamamoto coats to Scottish kilts.*

*True Sapologie is about more than expensive labels: the true art lies in a sapeur's ability to put together an elegant look unique to their personality.*

*Though the subculture is traditionally passed down through the male line, many Congolese women have recently begun donning designer suits and becoming sapeuses. By challenging Congolese patriarchal society in this way, they are returning to La Sape's origins by reversing the power dynamic.*

*La Sape is a movement that is constantly evolving, as disenfranchised youths use fashion as a way of navigating their nations' journeys from developing countries into a more hopeful cosmopolitan future.«*

**Tariq Zaidi** is a freelance photographer based out of London, UK. In 2014, he gave up an executive management position to pursue his passion of capturing the dignity, strength and soul of people, within their environment. He is a self-taught photographer with an MSc from University College London. His photography focuses on documenting social issues, inequality, traditions and endangered communities around the world.

Zaidi has worked in 19 countries across four continents, mainly in the developing world. His work has been shown in over 75 international exhibitions and featured in more than 700 publications, including The Guardian, BBC, CNN, National Geographic, The Washington Post, Der Spiegel, GEO, El Pais, Foreign Policy, The LA Times, Smithsonian Magazine, Conde Nast Traveler, GQ, Marie Claire, Esquire and Vogue among other international titles. Zaidi's work has been recognised through a number of prestigious awards, including Pictures of the Year International (POYi), the National Press Photographers Association's (NPPA) Best of Photojournalism awards, UNICEF Photo of the Year, the Marty Forscher Fellowship Fund for Humanistic Photography (Parsons School of Design), the International Photography Awards and the PDN Photo Annual. He is represented by Zuma Press (USA), Caters News Agency (UK) and Getty Images (UK).

[www.tariqzaidi.com](http://www.tariqzaidi.com)

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## Press images



01 Elie Fontaine Nsassoni, 45-year-old taxi owner and sapeur for 35 years, in Brazzaville, 2017 © Tariq Zaidi



02 Ntsimba Marie Jeanne, 52-year-old businesswoman and sapeuse for 20 years, Okili Nkoressa, 10-year-old school student and sapeur for 5 years, and Judith Nkoressa, 39-year-old policewoman and sapeuse for 18 years, in Brazzaville, 2017 © Tariq Zaidi



03 Natan Mahata, 8-year-old school student and sapeur for 3 years, in Kinshasa, 2019 © Tariq Zaidi



04 Maxime Pivot Mabanza, 43-year-old teacher of La Sape and sapeur for 36 years, in Brazzaville, 2017 © Tariq Zaidi



05 Yamea Bansimba Jean Claude, 58-year-old bricklayer and sapeur for 50 years, in Brazzaville, 2017 © Tariq Zaidi



06 Clementine Biniakoulou, 52-year-old housewife and sapeuse for 36 years, in Brazzaville, 2017 © Tariq Zaidi



07 Ella Kiadi, 44-year-old businesswoman and sapeuse for 8 years, in Brazzaville, 2019 © Tariq Zaidi



08 Basile Gandzion, 51-year-old human resources manager and sapeur for 30 years, in Brazzaville, 2017 © Tariq Zaidi



09 Israell Mbona, 5-year-old school student and sapeur for 3 years, in Kinshasa, 2019 © Tariq Zaidi



10 Nkodia Aurelie, 48-year-old businesswoman and sapeuse for 36 years, in Brazzaville, 2019 © Tariq Zaidi



11 Francis Okiemi, 14-year-old school student and sapeur for 3 years, Steven Okiemi, 9-year-old school student and sapeur for 1 year, in Brazzaville, 2019 © Tariq Zaidi



12 Six Lokoto, 28-year-old model and sapeur for 20 years, in Kinshasa, 2019 © Tariq Zaidi