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"Petit � Petit": Contemporary Art and Decolonial Horizons in Belgium's AfricaMuseum

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"Petit à Petit":

Contemporary Art and Decolonial Horizons

in Belgium's AfricaMuseum

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Culture and Performance

by

Elaine Ericksen Sullivan

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"Petit à Petit":

Contemporary Art and Decolonial Horizons

in Belgium's AfricaMuseum

by

Elaine Ericksen Sullivan

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Allen Fraleigh Roberts, Chair

In December 2018, Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa reopened to the public, five years after closing for an extensive renovation. Rebranded the AfricaMuseum, the institution was eager to shed its colonial image and highlight its new "focus on decolonization." To do so, the museum emphasized the display of newly commissioned or acquired artworks by contemporary artists from the former Belgian colonies of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. In this dissertation, I ask what work the contemporary art on view in the renovated museum is being asked to do, a question which guided my analysis of artworks and interviews with artists. Rather than "decolonizing" the museum, the artists have produced installations that

expose violent histories of colonization previously ignored by the museum, raise questions about ongoing relationships between Belgium and Central Africa, and challenge the museum's role in representing African stories.

This dissertation begins with consideration of two site-specific installations commissioned by the museum, "Ombres" (Shadows) by Freddy Tsimba and the multi-part "RE/STORE" project by Aimé Mpane and Jean-Pierre Müller. Both installations comment on the colonial memories embedded in the museum's very architecture, and counter the museum's earlier celebration of colonial conquest by bringing attention to Congolese experiences of colonial violence. The "RE/STORE" project in particular, which began as one sculpture by Mpane but has developed over two years into two sculptures and sixteen veils designed by Mpane and Jean-Pierre Müller, illustrates the gradual nature of the museum's moves toward "decolonizing." Mpane characterizes this as an unending process advancing "petit à petit," or "little by little." In addition to the commissions, the museum acquired numerous works of art by contemporary artists. I discuss three such works, by Aimé Ntakiyica, Michèle Magema, and Freddy Tsimba, all of which present personal stories with collective implications. These personal artworks create human connections between visitors and artists whose ancestors were dehumanized in earlier exhibitions within the museum. As the AfricaMuseum moves toward decolonizing, contemporary artworks provide opportunities for critique and connection, building on memories to imagine possible futures.

The dissertation of Elaine Ericksen Sullivan is approved.

Saloni Mathur

Steven Nelson

David Delgado Shorter

Allen Fraleigh Roberts, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

In memory of Mary (Polly) Nooter Roberts

Advisor, Mentor, Friend

May your extraordinary kindness and intellectual curiosity always be my guide.

And with gratitude to my parents, for everything.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As Aimé Mpane might say, this dissertation and my entire graduate school experience has progressed "petit à petit," advancing in fits and starts over many years. I am grateful to the many teachers, artists, and friends who have guided and supported me across three continents.

First, I am grateful to my dissertation committee: Allen F. Roberts, David Shorter, Steven Nelson, and Saloni Mathur. I cannot begin to express my gratitude to Al Roberts, editor and email-correspondent extraordinaire, whose scholarship has inspired me since I was an undergrad. His guidance has helped me develop an eye for detail and a deep engagement with Central African worldviews (including an appreciation for pangolins and aardvarks). David Shorter has been an invaluable teacher throughout my time in WAC/D. He introduced me to the scholarship of native studies and decolonization, as well as critical ethnography. Equally important, my first experience teaching was as his TA, and his model as engaged teacher with a focus on writing is one I emulate. I greatly value my time spent in Steven Nelson's classes, and I have repeatedly returned to the lessons I learned from him about the arts of Africa as my research has changed directions – especially to always ask artists I'm writing about what books they are reading. I am grateful to Saloni Mathur not only for sharing her knowledge of museums, colonial histories, and contemporary art, but especially for her enthusiastic support of my research at a time I needed it most.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Polly Roberts, whose writing about Luba arts inspired me to pursue graduate study. I joined the wac(k)y, interdisciplinary department of World Arts and Cultures to become her student, and she was my advisor and chair of this dissertation until her passing in 2018. Her research centered people and their stories, and celebrated beauty and ingenuity across the African continent. Her kindness was unmatched, and she and Al created a family of students past and present who will never cease to share her insight with others and celebrate her memory.

Artists are at the heart of this project, and I could only pursue my research because of the gracious artists who agreed to meet with me and answer my seemingly endless questions. I began very intimidated by the prospect of interviewing contemporary artists, whom I assumed were much too important and busy to spend time with a grad student like me. While they are certainly important and busy, they are also kind and generous. Mille mercis to Aimé Mpane, Freddy Tsimba, Michèle Magema, Aimé Ntakiyica, and Jean-Pierre Müller. In Kinshasa and Lubumbashi I have had the luck to befriend and interview many other artists, whose works are not discussed here but who have introduced me to the wonderful, diverse community of Congolese contemporary artists: Géraldine Tobe, Steven Bandoma, Iviart Izamba, Nelson Makengo, Sinzo Aanza, Alexandre Kiyungu, Pathy Tshindele, Chéri Chérin, Modeste Mpane... may our paths soon cross again!

Dogs are a reminder that despite the chaos of life one must always make time for food and exercise, and that there's no writing despair that some cuddles can't help with (and dogsitting certainly helps pay the bills). Daisy, Trip, Eoin and Marley in Brussels, Polly's Poodle Pod in LA (Toombee, Toto and Tinka), Cooper and Frank, Goku, and my god-dog Chewie. Annie and Philip made sure I was never alone during comprehensive exams, taking shifts under the table as I pulled all-nighters.

While attending French school is largely to blame for my interest in African histories and cultures, two of my high school English teachers deserve credit for the student I have become. Mrs. (Patricia) Sellars encouraged my unabashed love of learning, and her son's annual visits to our school, and our class trips to his works-in-progress solidified my decision to dedicate my life to the arts and later join his department at UCLA. Ms. (Minakshi) Capur's fury at being told by another teacher that he thought "we all have an Africa in our souls" and her outright refusal to teach *Heart of Darkness* because "quite simply, it is racist," are the reasons I challenged myself at the beginning of grad school to write about Congo without ever citing Conrad (for now).

At Yale, I signed up for Vincent Scully's Intro Art History class following my own notions of what a liberal arts education should include, only to have Robert Farris Thompson's guest lecture on Kongo and Yoruba arts spark a flame of intellectual curiosity that has only grown since. Put simply, the Yale University Art Gallery changed my life. Aja Armey and the Gallery Guides program taught me to hone my skills of close looking and share my love of arts and museums with a broad public. It was in this program that I first researched Luba sculpture, landing on writings by Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts. Amanda Maples interviewed me for a position as an assistant in the African art curatorial department, ending with "well we need someone fluent in French, so you're hired." Fred Lamp encouraged my own self-guided learning about arts of Africa and transcribing and translating his field notes was my introduction to the work of African art history.

Most importantly, to my parents. Little did they know that enrolling their three-year-old in a French immersion school would lead to a love affair with Brussels and Congo, rather than a quaint Parisian apartment for them to visit in retirement. You taught me to love travel and dug an infinite well of curiosity in my mind, though I am sorry for all the anxiety my solo travel around the world has caused. Thanks for letting me take over the dining room table not once but twice in my graduate career, and for keeping a roof over my head and food in my stomach during tight times. To my mother, the first woman hired by her department, who lectured to undergraduates as I filled in coloring books in the front row, whose fight to join and succeed in academia fifty years ago paved the way for my generation. To my father, who picked me up from daycare on SFMOMA free Tuesdays for lunch time visits to stare at the work of abstract expressionists, whose solid belief in the pursuit of knowledge and beauty purely for the joy of it fueled my choice of an interdisciplinary department with a funny name. I may have flown far from the roost, but only because you gave me strong wings.

VITA

<u>EDUCATION</u>

M.A.	Culture and Performance, University of California, Los Angeles
2015	Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance
	Thesis Title: Mapping Through Memory: The 2010 Rencontres Picha
	Biennial in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo

B.A.	Yale University
2010	History of Art, *With Distinction*
	English, *Writing Concentration*

<u>GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS</u>

2019-2020	Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA
2019	Arnold Rubin Award, Fowler Museum at UCLA
2017-2018	Collegium of Undergraduate Teaching Fellows, UCLA
2015-2016	Belgian American Educational Foundation
2014-2015	Graduate Research Mentorship Program Fellowship, UCLA
2014	Smithsonian Predoctoral Fellow, National Museum of African Art
2013, 2015	Clifton Webb Fine Arts Scholarship
2013	Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship, UCLA
2012-2013	Hortense Fishbaugh Memorial Scholarship, UCLA
2012-2013	Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance Hand Scholarship, UCLA
2012-2013	School of Arts and Architecture Dean's General Scholarship, UCLA
2011-2014	UC Regents Registration Fees and Stipend Grant, UCLA
2010	A. Conger Goodyear Fine Arts Award for outstanding work in the history of art, Yale University

<u>PUBLICATIONS</u>

Book Reviews

2017	Review of *Humor and Violence: Seeing Europeans in Central African Art* by Z. S. Strother, *African Studies Review* 60: 2 (2017): 263-264.

Exhibition Reviews

2020	"Contemporary Art In and Out of the Museum." Exhibition Review of Renovated Africa Museum in Tervuren, Belgium. *African Arts* 53: 2 (2020): 80-83.
2016	Exhibition Review of "Beauté Congo – 1926-2015 – Congo Kitoko" at Fondation Cartier, Paris. *African Arts* 49: 4 (2016): 84-85.
2014	Exhibition Review of "Bearing Witness: Embroidery As History in Post-Apartheid South Africa" at the Fowler Museum UCLA. *Ufahamu* 38: 1 (2014): 295-299.

Encyclopedia entries
2014   "Aimé Mpane" for *Grove Art Online*, Oxford University Press.
2014   "Sammy Baloji" for *Grove Art Online,* Oxford University Press.

SELECT CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2019   "Contemporary Art as Restitution of Agency: The Case of the Royal
                       Museum for Central Africa" at the 10th Biennial Conference of the
                       Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora, College of
                       William and Mary, November 5-9.
2019   "Contemporary Arts Activating Memory Inside and Outside the Museum:
                       A Case Study from Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa" at the
                       2019 Mnemonics Summer School: Memory and Activism, Utrecht,
                       September 18.
2019   "In Between Congo and Belgium: The ambiguous role of contemporary
                       art in the Royal Museum for Central Africa" at 8th European Conference
                       on African Studies, University of Edinburgh, June 11-14.
2018   "Silhouettes and Solids: Aimé Mpane's human figures made of
                       matchsticks and plywood" at the Congo Research Network Conference,
                       Oxford, April 26.
2017   "Making Art Between Congo and Belgium: Aimé Mpane Investigating
                       His Countries' Histories" at the African Studies Association 60th Annual
                       Meeting, Chicago, IL, November 17.
2014   "Reimagining the City: Mapping Art Spaces of Lubumbashi" presented at
                       Arts Council of the African Studies Association 16th Triennial Symposium
                       on African Art, New York, NY, March 22.

PROFESSIONAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

2012-2013   Co-Curator on exhibition *From X to Why: A Museum Takes Shape*, Fowler
                       Museum at UCLA
2012-2013   Research Assistant to Professor Mary Nooter Roberts, consulting curator
                       of African art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, for *Shaping
                       Power: Luba Masterworks from the Royal Museum for Central Africa*
2012   Graduate Intern for curator Yaëlle Biro for *African Art, New York, and the
                       Avant-Garde* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art
2011-2012   Museum Educator at the Fowler Museum at UCLA
2008-2010   Student Worker in department of African art, Yale University Art Gallery
2008-2010   Gallery Guide, Yale University Art Gallery

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2019   Lecturer for "Arts of Traditional Africa" at Loyola Marymount University
2012-2018   Teaching Assistant, UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Introduction

"Reorganizing" the AfricaMuseum

A round of tug-of-war takes place on the steps of a museum (Figure 1). Under an arched

doorway, three Europeans pull toward the entrance. At the bottom of the steps, a group of five

African men and women pull toward the garden. Between them, a sculpture of two Africans, one

asleep, one wearing leopard print and standing as if ready to pounce, weighs down a moving pad.

A white-eyed elephant perched on a short plinth watches from the background. Above the

Europeans a comic-style word bubble has dialogue in three languages, Lingala, French, and

Dutch.[1] For those who do not immediately recognize the museum's palatial beaux-arts façade, its

name appears at the top right corner of the painting: "Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale" (Royal

Museum for Central Africa). In larger print, the artist has written "REORGANISATION." Will

this colonial museum of Central Africa be reorganized, and how will the tug of war play out?

This painting by Congolese artist Chéri Samba, titled "Réorganisation," (Reorganization)

has become a symbol of the renovation of Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa, now

rebranded the "AfricaMuseum."[2] Painted in 2002, a full eleven years before the museum would

finally shutter its doors to begin its renovation, Samba represented a literal tug-of-war between

museum staff and members of the African diaspora in Belgium. The two sides are fighting over

one of the most well-known sculptures in the museum, known as "The Leopard Man," a 1913

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[1] The Lingala reads "We cannot accept this work being removed. It has made us who we are." The French reads "It's true that it's sad but…" and the Dutch reads "the museum really must be completely reorganized."

[2] Throughout this dissertation I will most commonly refer to the museum using its present name, the AfricaMuseum. Before it reopened in 2018 the museum was known as the "Royal Museum for Central Africa," reflecting the source for the vast majority of its collections: Congo (primarily), Rwanda, and Burundi, all former colonies of Belgium. Today both names are used.

Figure 1: Chéri Samba, *Réorganisation* (2002). Oil on canvas, 104 cm x 134 cm. H.O.0.1.3865.

sculpture by Paul Wissaert that has come to symbolize the racist, colonialist perspective at the foundation of the museum. Certain figures are recognizable: Billy Kalonji, who would become the head of "COMRAF" (Comité de Concertation Musée Royal de L'Afrique Centrale - Associations Africaines, a committee of members of the African diaspora), is dressed in red and leads the African group; Guido Gryseels, the director of the museum since 2001, stands at the top of the steps but slightly apart from the European staff, arms crossed, watching over the tug-of-war. In the lead-up to the opening, a portrait photograph of the director in front of a large reproduction of Samba's painting was made available for press use and illustrated the section on "The New Museum's Philosophy" in the press packet. Today, the painting is one of the first artworks visitors see when they enter the renovated museum, as a large reproduction has been installed on a wall immediately before the entrance to the introductory gallery (Figure 2).

This painting and its prominent placement both in the museum and in press about the renovation exemplifies the main inquiry of this dissertation, driven by the question "what work is the contemporary art on view in the renovated AfricaMuseum being asked to do?" To answer, I have met with many of the artists whose works are now displayed in the museum, meetings which took place across three continents. I have spent time with some of the artists in their homes and studios, and I have visited their artworks in the museum countless times. Discussions with the artists have ranged from memory and history to artistic practice and mental health. Their emotional investment in the museum ranges from distant and professional to personal and intimate. The artists have driven me to research Belgian and Central African histories and worldviews, which inform conversations in the present. In this dissertation I weave together European and Central African art histories as I analyze artworks by contemporary artists based in both continents and the roles they can play within the AfricaMuseum.
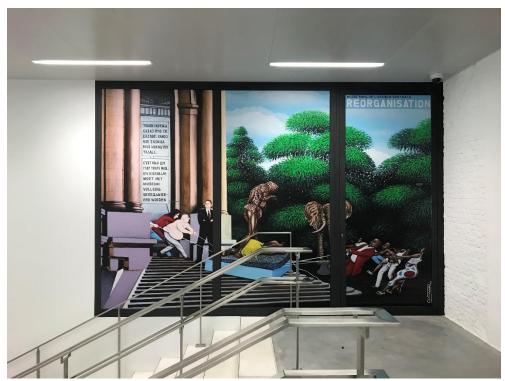
Figure 2. An enlarged copy of Chéri Samba's "Réorganisastion" on the wall to the left of the entrance to the museum's underground introductory galleries.

Figure 3. View of the "Sidelined" gallery. The "Leopard Man" (Paul Wissaert) is on the left, "Defiance" (Herbert Ward) faces the viewer, and shelves of ethnographic busts and Belgian colonial figures are on the right.

The original painting "Réorganisation" is just on the other side of the wall of its enlarged reproduction, in an underground gallery titled "Sidelined" (Figure 3). Off to the side of the main introductory room and through a narrow doorway, dark bronze sculptures of "primitive" Africans and busts of Belgian military men are corralled together. A label explains:

> From 1908 to 1960, the museum was funded by the Ministry of the Colonies. This was reflected in the selection and presentation of the exhibited projects. As a result, the museum played an important role in the representation of Africa and Africans and in the glorification of the colony and its founders. Some aspects of this imagery are still at work.
>
> The images and sculpture that you see here were previously part of the permanent exhibition, but no longer belong in that context.

"The Leopard Man" has indeed been removed from the stately building portrayed in Samba's painting, brought down the stairs and placed in the basement. The only other text in the "Sidelined" gallery is the label explaining Samba's painting and clarifying that the leopard man "confirmed the image of the terrifying, murderous Congolese." The corral display and the Samba painting, alone on a long white wall, provide unwritten context for a visitor's interpretation of both the gallery and the implications of this history for experiencing the rest of the museum.

The display and the painting encapsulate the museum's new approach to displaying the colonial past. The painting was commissioned by the museum (a detail made clear in the label), showing the museum's openness to critique and to working with Congolese artists. The statues have been taken out of the magnificent halls and cordoned off in the basement, evidence of the museum's past and its previous treatment of Africans symbolically pushed aside by the new, renovated galleries. Together, the painting and the statue enclosure imply a causal relationship, as if the painting "Réorganisation"had spurred on the actual reorganization of the museum. The presentation seems to say, "We did it!" The Leopard Man has not been taken outside of the museum, however, as shown in Samba's painting. Rather, both Samba's painting and the

Leopard Man are still within the museum, illustrating a simplified answer to this dissertation's question: the contemporary art by Congolese and Burundian artists in the museum aids the institution in confronting its colonial practices by bringing attention to them. The artworks are not independent actors, however, and are in the embrace of the museum.

Brief History of the Museum

The AfricaMuseum was originally founded in 1897 by King Leopold II, King of the Belgians and sovereign ruler of the Congo Free State.[3] The idea to create a museum of Congo in Belgium grew out of a series of world's fairs held in Belgium, beginning with the Antwerp World's Fairs in 1885 and 1894, and then the Brussels' World's Fair in 1897. While Congo was on display in all three fairs, this last fair had its own colonial section on Leopold II's private estate in Tervuren, linked to central Brussels by the newly built Avenue of Tervuren. More than 1.2 million visitors made the trip to visit the newly built Palais des Colonies (Palace of the Colonies) and the accompanying "Congolese villages" where over 250 Congolese people lived, worked, or were on display. The whole colonial section was such a success that the Palais des Colonies reopened the following year as the "Musée du Congo" (Museum of Congo), and plans were set in motion to create a larger museum at Tervuren. The colonial sections of the world's

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[3] A note on terminology: this dissertation is about arts and artists from Central Africa, and especially from what is known today in French as "la République Démocratique du Congo." This country name is most frequently translated to "the Democratic Republic of the Congo," though on the country's own US Embassy website both "Democratic Republic of the Congo" and "Democratic Republic of Congo" are used. Under Leopold II's rule from 1885 to 1908 it was called "the Congo Free State," before becoming "the Belgian Congo." When it first gained independence from Belgium in 1960 it was "the Republic of the Congo," changing its name in 1964 to "the Democratic Republic of the Congo." In 1971 President Mobutu changed the name to "the Republic of Zaire," which it was called until 1997 when he lost power. Since 1997 the country has been "the Democratic Republic of the Congo." Today, many scholars use the general term "Congo" or "the Congo" when referring to the region and use the specific state or colony names when discussing a specific time period. In this dissertation I will most frequently be using "Congo" as I am writing about contemporary artists whose interests span historical time periods. I have decided to not use "the Congo," as to many ears the use of the article "the" sounds very colonial, as in "the Sudan" and "the Argentine," among others. Though in French the country is referred to as "le Congo," this reflects the French rule of referring to countries with definite articles ("la France," "l'Inde," etc.).

fairs and the later museum served as promotions and justifications of Leopold's African exploits, showcasing the flora, fauna, and raw materials in Congo, inspiring investment or young Belgians to sign up to serve in the colony.[4]

Leopold soon decided he would need a much larger building for his museum, and construction of today's main building began in 1905, continuing to 1910. The king would not get to see the grand opening of his museum, however, as he died in December 1909. The completed Musée du Congo Belge opened on April 30th, 1910. Like Congo itself, the museum would be administered by the Ministry of the Colonies. Over the course of the 20th century the museum barely changed. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the museum often had over 150,000 visitors per year during peace time, and was the country's most-visited museum (Stanard 2011a, 97). The collection grew with various collecting expeditions and later donations from former colonials. The museum provided a "total picture of a unified Congo," meant to encompass all knowledge about Belgium's colony, divided up into anthropology, political and moral sciences, social sciences, and natural sciences (Stanard 2011a, 103).

After 1960, the museum's administration was moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1960-1962) before ending up with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Though funding diminished and the permanent exhibition did not change, the staff numbers exploded as researchers who had been working in Congo returned to Belgium (Gryseels et al. 2005, 638; Couttenier 2010a, 56). The museum broadened its research projects to cover regions across all of Africa and changed its name to "Royal Museum for Central Africa" though the vast majority of its collections remained Congolese (see Figure 4 for timeline of name changes). Young Belgian

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[4] For more information on the world's fairs and the early history of the museum, see Wynants 1997, Stanard 2011a, and Thys van den Audernaerde 1998. The AfricaMuseum's own website says "Leopold II saw the museum as a propaganda tool for his colonial project" (AfricaMuseum n.d.a).

students continued to visit the museum every year on field trips, mesmerized by the stuffed

animals (Stanard 2019, 102). Outside of the museum's halls, Mobutu made demands for

restitution of objects in Tervuren to his museum in Kinshasa, the Institute of National Museums

in Zaire, during the height of his policy of *authenticité* (van Beurden 2015, 116-117). Eventually

1,042 objects were sent from Tervuren to Kinshasa, but only 114 came from the reserves of the

museum, and these were specifically chosen to not "damage" the collection in Tervuren.[5] After

Congolese independence the AfricaMuseum continued to present a Congo seemingly frozen in

time and utterly disconnected from the issues that affected actual Congolese.[6]

1897	Colonial Section of the Brussels International Exposition held in Tervuren
1898	Museum of the Congo (Musée du Congo) in the Palais des Colonies
1908	Museum of the Belgian Congo
1952	Royal Museum of the Belgian Congo
1960	Royal Museum of Central Africa
2018	Rebranded "AfricaMuseum," but still technically the Royal Museum of Central Africa

Figure 4. Timeline of name changes. In addition, I have noticed most Anglophones and Francophones refer to the entire institution as "Tervuren," the "Tervuren Museum," or the "Musée de Tervuren." Flemish friends and acquaintances seem more likely to refer to it as the "AfricaMuseum" ("Africa" is "Afrika" in Dutch, but "Afrique" in French, and "museum" is "museum" in Dutch, but "musée" in French).

As Belgian approaches to colonial history began to change in the 1990s, new revisions

also came to the museum, though not in ways that changed its fundamental culture. In 2000 the

museum mounted "ExItCongoMuseum: Un siècle d'art avec/sans papiers" (ExItCongoMuseum:

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[5]Rahier 2003, Silverman 2015. Historian Sarah Van Beurden provides extensive details on this return. Of the 1,042 objects sent from Tervuren to Kinshasa, 901 of them had only left Congo between 1958 and 1960, and thirty-two of the objects had been part of a group sent on tour from Congo to Europe in 1958. They were still travelling when Congo became independent in 1960, leaving them somewhat stranded (Van Beurden 2015, 123).

[6] With the move away from simply being a museum of Congo, the museum tried to expand its purview to all of sub-Saharan Africa and even housed objects from Oceania and the Americas (Bouttiaux 1999). But when literally hundreds of thousands of objects in a collection come from Congo, any addition will still be a small percentage of the total.

One century of art with/out papers), curated by Boris Wastiau and Toma Muteba Luntumbue. Influenced by anthropological writings about "lives of objects," Wastiau aimed to expose *how* the objects on display arrived at the museum and some of the less-savory aspects of colonialism that had not previously been discussed in the museum galleries (Wastiau 2000). Luntumbue curated the contemporary art portion of the exhibition, and became the first African curator invited to work in the museum, and the first to bring contemporary African art into the museum (Luntumbue and Poinas 2001). Five years later, the museum hosted another temporary exhibition meant to approach colonial history in a more critical light. "La mémoire du Congo: le temps colonial" sought to fight both "amnesia" of the colonial period and the mythification (and de-mythification) of the early colonial period (Vellut 2005, 11, 18). The exhibition made an explicit contrast with what Vellut described as "a museum of a colonial museum" whose mise-en-scène was itself a "lieu de mémoire" (11). The exhibition met great criticism, both by those who thought it did not go far enough in denouncing colonialism, and by those who thought it had gone too far.

By the 21ˢᵗ century, renovation became a pressing concern and the new director of the museum, Guido Gryseels, mentioned the need for a renovation in his inaugural speech in 2001. In 2005 he published an article, co-authored with Gabrielle Landry and Koeki Classens, the museum's Head of Publications and Head of Museology, describing the museum spaces as "stagnant" and museum's public identity as "fossilized" (Gryseels et al. 2005, 639). The authors outlined the process of creating a new mission statement and new logo, looking ahead to "to complete the renovation of the museum by 2010, the 100ᵗʰ anniversary of the opening of the museum building" (644). The museum finally closed for renovation in 2013, only to reopen in 2018, a few years behind schedule.

Overview of the Museum in 2018

Today, visitors enter the museum through a glass entrance hall a few hundred yards from the 1910 building (Figure 5). Past the ticket counter and before the gift shop, one descends an unusually steep staircase down a long all-white hallway leading underground to the main museum building. At the center of the hallway, dividing crowds right and left, a giant pirogue welcomes visitors as it had previously in the ethnographic hall (Figure 6). At the end of the long hallway, one climbs the steps toward the old museum building. Before opening the doors to what was that building's basement, to the left is the reproduction of Cheri Samba's "Réorganisation" (Figure 2). The introductory gallery is through the doors to the left, with displays introducing visitors to the museum's scientific research. Before the stairs leading to the main floor of the museum, a display island exhibits some collecting histories of the museum, highlighting the collecting missions or donations from Europeans from the 20th to the 21st century.[7]

Walking up the stairs to the main level of the museum, most visitors turn left into a small rotunda on the north side of the building, and then right into the large hall of Languages and Music (see map Figure 7). Visitors first see a large screen showing a video featuring numerous central Africans explaining how many languages they speak and the importance of orality to them. The section on language merges into the section on music and dance, easily identifiable in the opening weeks by the children playing on the child-friendly xylophone and slit drum. A tall, free standing display case features three shelves of large slit drums and blown-up photos of Congolese drummers from 1890s to the 1980s. One can take time in front of exhibits showcasing

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[7] Some of these collectors and donors include Gustaaf Hulstaert, a priest-linguist who was also an amateur entomologist and collected butterflies for the museum; Armand Hutereau and his wife, Mrs. Hutereau, who led an ethnographic expedition for the museum from 1911-1913; Bogumil Jewsiewicki, a Canadian historian who sold his collection of popular paintings was acquired by the museum in 2013; and Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, former head of the ethnography section of the museum, who studied Guro mask societies in Ivory Coast and collected masks there in 1999.

Figure 5. Entrance pavilion.
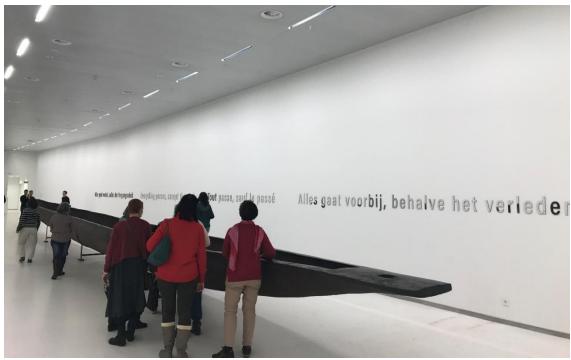
Figure 6: A pirogue made for King Leopold III's 1958 visit to the Belgian Congo still welcomes visitors to the museum, now in the underground hallway connecting the entrance pavilion to the main building. Pirogue, Ubundu, Bamanga, DR Congo (1958). Length 22.5 meters. EO.1958.1.1.
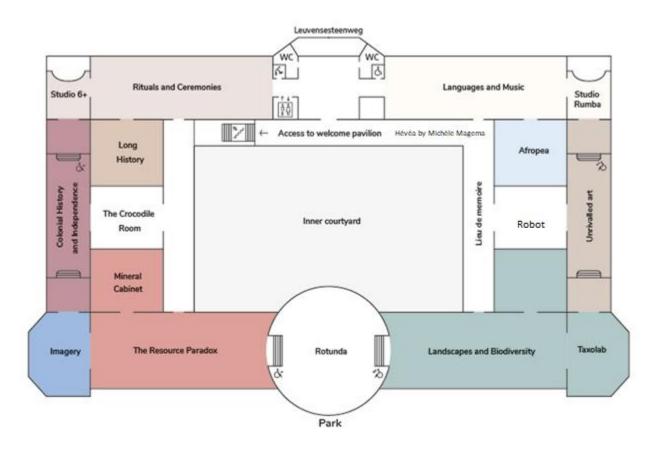
Figure 7. Map of the ground floor of the main exhibition building of the AfricaMuseum. From www.africamuseum.be/en/visit/permanent_exhibition, accessed May 11, 2020, with addition indicating location of "Hévéa" and the Robot by author.

dance from Rwanda, or contemporary music and performance from Lubumbashi, as well as a small "Rumba Studio" featuring a historical overview of popular music in the DRC since 1930 and videos to dance along to.

Turning right out of the Language and Music hall, visitors arrive in the "Afropea" room, dedicated to the Sub-Saharan African diaspora population of Belgium. At the center of the room a very large circular table provides stations where visitors can sit down and watch videos on screens to learn about current issues affecting people of African descent in Belgium (in December 2018, however, these were only available in Dutch). Against three walls of the room, restored display cases are now filled with historical documents and personal mementos which tell the story of central Africans in Belgium, from human zoos to present-day activism. The Afropea gallery is also likely one of the first places where a visitor will encounter examples of contemporary art, after "Réorganisation," as works by Aimé Ntakiyica and Chéri Samba are displayed there.

In the next room, a kind of crossroads on the east side of the museum dividing the social sciences from the biological sciences, a full-size robot crossing guard directs traffic. The robot is a version of the traffic robots one can see in Kinshasa, which have become 21st century symbols of the city. Before heading straight to the galleries on biodiversity, visitors have the option to turn right into the Memorial Hallway (discussed in Chapter One) or turn left and visit the temporary exhibition. As of 2020, the temporary exhibition is still "Unrivalled Art," an exhibition of some of the artistic masterpieces from the museum's ethnographic collection.

In the Landscapes and Biodiversity galleries visitors can learn about the plants and animals of Central Africa, as well as the effects humans have had on the natural world. These rooms contain some of the museum's show-stopping stuffed animals, including giraffes, okapi,

an elephant, and leopard, among others (Figure 8). In a corner gallery, visitors can see more of the museum's insect and animal collections while learning about taxonomy. Across the Rotunda (discussed in Chapters Two and Three) the science galleries continue, with the Resource Paradox display focusing on human relationships with the land in Central Africa from extraction to urbanization. On the west side of the building, a square "Mineral Cabinet" gallery off of the long Resource Paradox gallery is entirely devoted to geology and minerals in which gem specimens are displayed in a jewel-box like manner.

On the west side of the museum the clockwise visit returns to the social sciences. In a corner gallery named "Imagery" one can open drawers of colonial-era photographs depicting Congolese people and colonial-era propaganda. This room leads directly into the long hall dedicated to colonial history and independence, which is surprisingly small for such important content. From one side of the room visitors can look into the "Crocodile Room," aptly named in reference to the two stuffed crocodiles at its center and unchanged since the 1920s, purposefully presented as a "museum within a museum." Via the large Rituals and Ceremonies gallery on the north side of the building, one can visit a small offshoot gallery on the "Long History" of Congo before completing the visit with a return to anthropology. In the Rituals and Ceremonies hall visitors learn about various rituals and rites of passage from birth through death, illustrated with many remarkable works from the museum's ethnographic collection.

Exiting the Rituals and Ceremonies room, visitors return to the initial small rotunda where one can return audio headsets or wait for friends and family as they go to the bathroom nearby. The above commonly-taken clockwise route misses two important spaces in the main building. Looking toward the courtyard from this small rotunda, visitors could turn right and go back down the stairs to exit, or turn left into a hallway running along the interior courtyard.
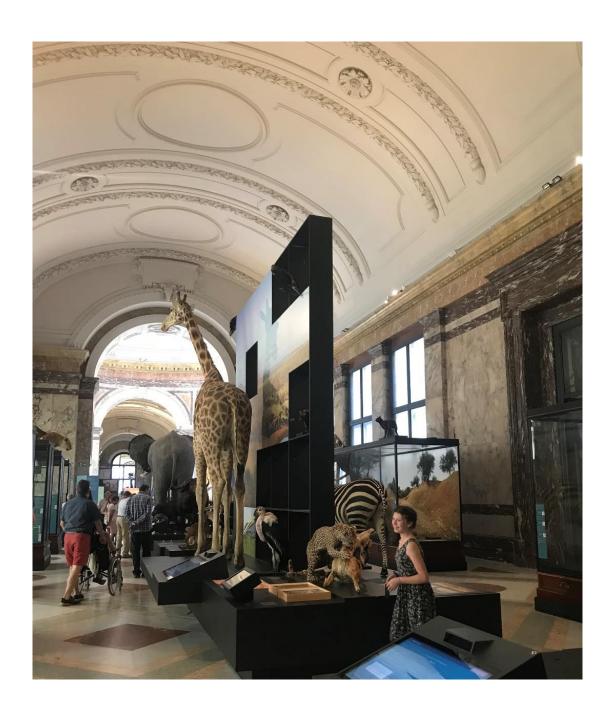
Figure 8. Landscapes and Biodiversity gallery. The giraffe and the elephant are looking toward the Rotunda. A crouching lioness is ready to pounce from her perch atop a display case (left).

Here, one finds contemporary artist Michèle Magema's "Mémoires Hévéa, entre Histoire et histoires individuelles" (Hevea Memories, between History and Herstory), discussed in Chapter Four. Turning right at the end of this hallway, one enters the "lieu de mémoire" Memorial Hallway, where the 1930s memorial to "Congo Pioneers" is now joined with Freddy Tsimba's "Ombres" (Shadows), a memorial to Congolese who died in Belgium during the early colonial period, discussed in Chapter One. Though celebrated in official communications, not all of the contemporary arts in the museum are easy to find or clearly displayed. A final work, Freddy Tsimba's "Centres fermés, rêves ouverts" (Closed Centers, Open Dreams) is outside of the museum building, reachable only by those exploring the outdoors grounds.

The AfricaMuseum thus combines linguistics, ethnomusicology, art history, biology, geology, history, and anthropology under one roof. Though understandable when considering the museum as heir to colonial displays, the choice to continue with this approach after the renovation struck me as a curious one. As an American with experience working in several American art museums, I struggled to make sense of the overall plan and execution of the renovated AfricaMuseum until I changed my understanding of what the museum is and what it is meant to do. While I had previously conceived of the work done in museums as primarily focused on the outward-facing aspects of the institution, prioritizing exhibitions and visitor experience, I realized that the galleries in the main building of the AfricaMuseum make up the presentation arm of a giant research institute.[8] The museum website's "Mission" page includes *two* mission statements, one for "the RMCA" and one for "the museum." That the "M" in "RMCA" stands for "Museum" adds to the confusion.[9] Many of the researchers (all referred to as

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[8] In 1989 a council in the museum unanimously voted to change the name to "Royal African Institute" to reflect the broader mission of the institution, but nothing came of this decision (Couttenier 2010a, 56).
[9] To add even more confusion, many public-facing staff members use "RMCA" and "AfricaMuseum" interchangeably.

"scientists" regardless of their disciplines) are focused on research on the ground in Congo or in their laboratories, and are producing articles and books. The displays in the museum are just another way of reporting on their research to the public. The work of the AfricaMuseum is not to create museum displays about biodiversity or colonial history. The employees at the RMCA study biodiversity and colonial history, and the displays in the museum building are a way of telling the public what they do.[10]

Within this institution dedicated to everything from insects to postcolonial history, one can now find examples of contemporary art by ten well-known and up-and-coming Central African artists, as well as a the very large number of works by Congolese popular painters. This dissertation addresses the major installations and paintings by four of these artists and examines how they affect the legacy of this colonial museum. Of particular interest is the work of the artists providing new installations for the museum and how they personally and professionally address the legacies of colonialism in Africa, in Europe, and in their own families. Because of the importance of this museum, because of the importance of the artists, and because of the importance of current efforts throughout the world to confront legacies of colonial exploitation, an examination of the roles played by contemporary arts in the reorganization of this museum carries lessons for museology and for museums confronting their colonial pasts throughout the world.

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[10] In her review of the renovated museum, anthropologist and former employee Vicky Van Bockhaven (2019) described the renovated displays as "uneven," reflecting "both a lack of unity within the museum and the management's indecisiveness" (1081). This unevenness is reflected in the museum's organization chart, divided into a "research" branch home to Cultural Anthropology and History, Earth Sciences, and Biology, all of which are separate from "Public Services," which includes "museology" (sometimes called "exhibitions"), in charge of the museum displays. In the past few years I met many full-time researchers at the museum who did not participate in the design or reinstallation of the museum galleries at all.

Confronting Colonial Pasts

When the museum reopened in December 2018, contemporary arts took center stage.

Media reviews featured photos of Aimé Mpane's "Nouvelle Souffle ou le Congo Bourgeonnant"

(New Breath or Burgeoning Congo) and the museum published an additional press packet

devoted solely to contemporary arts (AfricaMuseum 2018a). The general press packet for the

reopening included the language,

> The work of the artists, which was inspired by our collections, definitely offers
> added value for the museum, accompanying its focus on decolonization. In
> addition to this, artists can also fill the gaps in the museum's collection in a poetic
> way (AfricaMuseum 2018b).

The French and Dutch versions perhaps better reflect the museum's purposes, with "focus on

decolonization" written as "le travail de décolonisation" or "dat inzet op dekolonisering,"

meaning the "work" (travail) or 'intention" (inzet) of decolonization, suggesting ongoing

processes.[11] The reopening was covered with such headlines as "Bruxelles: doit-on 'décoloniser'

l'AfricaMuseum?" (Brussels: Must we "decolonize" the AfricaMuseum?) (La Meslée 2018),

"De facelift van het Africa Museum 1: een wertwijfelde dekolonisering" (The facelift of the

Africa Museum: A desperate decolonization) (DeBlock 2019), and "The Fight to Decolonize the

Museum" (Hochschild 2020), and almost every article reporting on the opening mentioned

"decolonization" (e.g. Brown 2018, Schultz 2018, and Psaledakis and Lohman 2018).

The AfricaMuseum embraced the rhetoric of decolonization in the months leading up to

its reopening. To return to the general press packet, it explained,

> The [educational] content was dictated by the new approach of the renovated
> museum, which focuses on decolonization: develop a critical narrative, better
> incorporate the contemporary African perspective, focusing on contemporary

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[11] AfricaMuseum 2018c, 33 and 2018d, 33. A Belgian Dutch-speaking friend opined to me, "It's a word that has been used a lot lately, but I find it too vague. Depending on the context, you can translate it as 'dealing with,' 'focus on,' 'promote, or 'creating an awareness'" (pers. comm. with Frederic Delmotte, Dec. 8, 2020).

Africa while being a memorial site for Belgium's colonial history.
(AfricaMuseum 2018b, 35)

Presenting a critical assessment of the past and focusing on contemporary perspectives is to be

applauded, but such strategies do not amount to decolonizing a museum on their own. A museum

dedicated to decolonizing would center the voices of community members whose heritage is

displayed not only in the finished galleries but in the planning process years before construction,

and not only via volunteer consulting groups but in permanent staffing. A natural history

museum dedicated to Congo might reorganize its departments based on shared Congo-basin

ontologies and provide information in Congolese languages.[12] Defining what decolonizing the

AfricaMuseum should mean and analysis of the behind-the-scenes actions taken (or not taken)

toward that goal are not the objectives of this dissertation.[13] Instead, I will analyze the role of

contemporary arts in what the museum terms "decolonizing," that is, reevaluating colonial pasts

and centering contemporary voices, and emphasize their role in what I term "moving the

museum toward decolonization," underscoring possible directions towards decolonial futures

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[12] The majority of academic scholarship about "decolonizing museums" has been written by North America-based scholars writing about North American museums (see for example the edited collections by Sleeper-Smith 2009 and Lonetree and Cobb 2008). My understanding of decolonizing museums is most informed by Amy Lonetree's work, especially her 2012 book *Decolonizing Museums* discussed below. Scholarship about decolonizing European museums is greatly increasing, however, and important case studies include England's Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (Kassim 2017, Kasmani 2019, Minott 2019, and Giblin et al. 2019) and Amsterdam's Tropenmuseum (Kreps 1988, Bouquet 2015, Stevens 2011, van Huis 2019). Decolonizing museums has not gained much attention in France beyond discussion of restitution, which are not usually framed as acts of "decolonizing" in the French press. Of note, a group of artists and writers founded the collective "Décoloniser les Arts" in Paris 2015, focused on the arts more broadly and housed in the cultural center ~~La Colonie~~ which was itself founded by artist Kader Attia (see Cukierman et al 2018).

[13] Several important projects have focused on the participation of diaspora voices in the renovation. Film director Matthias de Groof was given access to some of the the meetings between museum staff and the "Groupe de 6," a select group of consultants from the African diaspora, footage of which he included in his 2019 film "Palimpsest of the AfricaMuseum." The feminist, "afro-descendent" activist group Bamko compiled a crucial "Dossier Musées Coloniaux" featuring eleven articles about the AfricaMuseum, its renovation, and restitution of objects (Demart and Robert 2018; see especially Mpoma 2017 in the dossier). Recent academic articles on the subject include Demart 2020 and Clette-Gakuba 2020.

should the museum leadership undertake a comprehensive decolonial practice in the coming years.

Like many museums around the world, Belgium's AfricaMuseum is entwined with colonialism. As Europeans began sailing across the globe in search of new lands and people with whom to trade – so the telling goes – they returned with beautiful and unusual things, placing them in their "curiosity cabinets" or "wunderkamers," and later displaying them in World's Fairs and in public museums (Findlen 1989, Hooper-Greenhill 1992, Ames 1992, Bennett 1995). Writing about the colonial foundations of research, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) highlights how 18th and 19th century European drives toward categorization and compartmentalization persist in knowledge-creating institutions today, such as universities and museums:

> It was a process of systematic fragmentation which can still be seen in the disciplinary carve-up of the indigenous world: bones, mummies and skulls to the museums, artwork to private collectors, languages to linguistics, 'customs' to anthropologists, beliefs and behaviors to psychologists. (29)

Museums became an extension of the European drive to define and classify the world, taking the form in Africa and in African collections through delineation of tribes and styles, in addition to the better-known classifications of the animal kingdom.[14] Furthermore, colonial museums like the AfricaMuseum displayed how colonized peoples were inferior, showing collected objects as evidence of their "barbarism" and how their makers' lives were improved by the arrival of European governments and religion (Bennett 1995).

Museums across Europe have been addressing their colonial pasts for decades, and indeed the AfricaMuseum long held the moniker "Europe's last colonial museum."[15] Since the

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[14] This is most evident in the creation and development of encyclopedic museums, like the Louvre and the British Museum (see for example Duncan and Wallach 1980).

[15] E.g. McDonald-Gibson 2013 and Rannard 2020. In Paris, the musée du Quai Branly opened in 2006, self-consciously presenting itself as a home for non-western arts previously dispersed in ethnographic collections (Price 2007). The African collection of the British Museum returned to the main Bloomsbury campus of the British

1990s, museum renovations, gallery reinstallations, and temporary exhibitions have been the focus of study and discussion by scholars of museums, especially those aligning themselves with what came to be called "new," "reflexive," or "critical" museology (e.g. Vergo 1980, Clifford 1988, Vogel 1989, Karp and Levine 1991; cf. Phillips 2005). Whereas museums had historically been visited with the assumption that the information presented was objective and unbiased, reflexive displays are concerned with questioning *how* information is gathered and presented (Butler 2015). In so doing, museums question their own authority; in the cases of ethnographic collections, they question the colonial assumptions that led to the creation of their collections and the historic modes of display.

Perhaps the most enduring idea to grow out of the museums scholarship of the 1990s is the idea of a museum as a "contact zone." Using a term introduced by Mary Louise Pratt (1992) in her discussions of colonial-era travel writing, James Clifford proposes that museums should become "contact zones," that is, places for "copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power" (Clifford 2007, 192, quoting Pratt 1992, 6-7). He further explains, "a contact perspective views all culture-collecting strategies as responses to particular histories of dominance, hierarchy, resistance and mobilization" (213). Rather than a place to store and exhibition foreign objects, museums can be places for transcultural dialogue and encounter, engaging with communities near and far and addressing difficult histories.

Museum in 2001 after a thirty-year hiatus in the Museum of Mankind (Spring et al 2001). Amsterdam's Tropenmuseum still stands in its colonial-era building but has been continuously reimagining its displays (Bouquet 2015, van Huis 2019). (Of note: most of the Netherlands' national ethnographic materials from Africa are now in the Afrika Museum in Berg-en-Dal, with some also at the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden.) Berlin eagerly awaits the opening of the new Humboldt Forum in the reconstructed Berlin Palace on Museum Island, in which several collections from across the city will merge into one new building.

In the 21st century the AfricaMuseum has taken steps toward community engagement suggesting that it might follow the contact zone model. As mentioned above, exhibitions in 2000 and 2005 took critical approaches to the Belgian colonial past and the museum's role in it (Wastiau 2000 and Vellut 2005). In 2003 the institution created the COMRAF committee of members of the African diaspora to better address concerns of those of African descent living in Belgium (Ceuppens 2014, Clette-Gakuba 2020). In so doing, the museum faced an obstacle that Clifford (1997) had predicted: unless museums worked with communities in "the actual planning of exhibits and the control of museum collections" they would not be trusted by those who had previously been excluded (208; see also Boast 2011 and Vallet 2018). In her discussion of these 21st century initiatives, AfricaMuseum curator Bambi Ceuppens (2014) writes:

> Inviting Congolese as (co-) curators or artists in residency does not make for a true reciprocal working relationship. There are inevitably unequal power relations between long-term staff who have direct access to, expert knowledge on and curatorial control over collections and short-term Congolese collaborators who largely depend upon the former for access to archives and collections. (95)

Nevertheless, Ceuppens concludes that the museum "must decolonize itself by engaging in contact histories" and by "involving Congolese actively in the creation of the renovated museum" (96). Writing while the museum was closed for renovation, Ceuppens' reference to artists in residency and decolonizing prefigured the museum's later public relations focus and the scholarly shift away from "museums as contact zones" to "decolonizing museums."

Earlier moves toward recognizing colonial legacies in ethnographic museums – through contact zones or otherwise – have finally led to today's calls for decolonizing museums. As mentioned above, the museum embraced the terminology but maintained its underlying colonial structures. The museum has begun to address violent colonial histories, and some staff members' scholarship exposes present challenges (e.g. Ceuppens 2014, Vanhee 2016, Couttenier 2018).

Employees can disrupt from within institutions, and others can protest outside the museum walls.

These might be the first steps toward a decolonial horizon.[16] Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) has

provided important guidance on this point:

> There are always lessons to be learned in the process of decolonizing: it is not
> enough to hope or desire change. Systemic change requires capability, leadership,
> support, time, courage, reflexivity, determination and compassion. It is hard work
> and the outcome often seems a distant vision. (xiii)

In the United States, Amy Lonetree (2012) has identified some successes in decolonizing

museum practice in American Indian museums. She defines such an approach as one that creates

a space for addressing hard truths, for participating in critical reflection, and for healing (6, 171-

172). Unlike the museums Lonetree analyzes, however, the AfricaMuseum is not run by

members of the communities whose objects and knowledge are on display. Nevertheless

Lonetree's case studies provide importance guidance, recommending concept-based approaches

to exhibitions and prioritization of indigenous languages and worldviews. While full

decolonization of the AfricaMuseum may never be possible, keeping it on the horizon can guide

policy and gradual change.

In many ethnographic museums reconsidering their collections and their pasts,

contemporary art by artists from the cultures whose objects are on display counters previous

representations of static, "primitive" cultures and communicates that the museum was turning

over a new leaf. In Europe, some museums, such as the Tropenmuseum, have taken this

approach for decades while others, like the Weltmuseum in Vienna, have done so only after

recent renovations (Shatanawi 2009; Chwatal 2018). Mirjam Shatanawi (2009), a former curator

at the Tropenmuseum, identifies the fundamental challenge to presenting contemporary art in

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[16] In their editorial to the "Decolonizing Art Institutions" issue of *On Curating*, editors Dorothy Richter and Ronald
Kolb compare decolonizing to "a horizon, in the way Derrida spoke about a democracy to come" (Richter and Kolb
2017).

ethnographic museums: if it does not coincide with a change in the museum's departmental and disciplinary boundaries, it will likely only reaffirm the boundaries (370). Moreover, the choice of which artists and artworks get chosen for national ethnographic museums versus national art museums can further solidify definitions of "us" and "them" and "art" and "artifact" (Oguibe 2004). In some cases the inclusion of contemporary arts can deflect responsibility for addressing the colonial project onto the art and away from the museum and its staff (Leeb 2013). This dissertation adds a Belgian case to the small but growing literature on the presentation of contemporary arts in European ethnographic museums as a strategy to move towards a decolonial horizon.

Finally, alongside an emphasis on contemporary Africa, the museum aims to be "a memorial site for Belgium's colonial history" (AfricaMuseum 2018b, 35), acknowledging the competing memories of diverse communities within the singular museum space. Prior to its renovation, the museum served a memorial function for one aspect of colonization, celebrating military conquest of Congo and World War I battles fought in Africa (Stanard 2011a, 108-110). Véronique Bragard and Stéphanie Planche (2009) characterized the museum as an exemplar of Belgium's "ambiguous relation to its colonial past" (182). While many national museums present a national past in service of a national present, Bragard and Planche argue that to do so in Belgium is nearly impossible both because of the shame brought upon Belgium through renewed international interest in the horrors of early colonial rule in Congo and because the of many divisions within the nation of Belgium itself.[17] Because of this history, the AfricaMuseum offers a complex case for discussion of memory and museums because it is not a museum dedicated to memory (like a Holocaust museum) nor is it explicitly a museum of Belgian or colonial history.

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[17] For a comparison with museums and monuments in France, see Aldrich 2005.

Nevertheless, the museum dedicated three "sites of remembrance" in its renovation: the memorial gallery, the Rotunda, and the Crocodile Room, a gallery which has remained unchanged since 1920s and is meant to be a museum-within-the-museum.[18] The AfricaMuseum's new mission statement explicitly states, "It is a place of memory on the colonial past and strives to be a dynamic platform for exchanges and dialogues between cultures and generations" (AfricaMuseum n.d.b). In the renovated AfricaMuseum contemporary art, colonial histories, and dissonant memories go hand-in-hand as the museum grapples with its roles of representing Congo, Congolese culture, and Belgian colonialism.

The Path to this Dissertation

My approach to this project reflects the winding path of my graduate education. I arrived at UCLA intending to continue my studies of arts of divination of Luba peoples of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which I had begun as an undergraduate at Yale. In New Haven I had been introduced to the arts of Africa through lectures by Robert Farris Thompson and my work-study job as the student assistant in the African Art curatorial department in the Yale University Art Gallery, working for Frederick Lamp. While searching for final paper topics and a focus for my own gallery tour, I repeatedly returned to a Luba bowl figure from Congo. I finally decided to make the sculpture the topic of my senior thesis, and as I researched Luba arts I relied heavily on the scholarship of Mary (Polly) Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts. The more I read and wrote about Luba arts and the bowl figure specifically, the more questions I had, and after graduation I applied to study with both Mary Nooter and Allen F. Roberts in UCLA's department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance (WAC/D).

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[18] AfricaMuseum 2018b, 22. "Sites of remembrance" is a translation of Pierre Nora's "lieux de mémoire," a foundational text in the field of memory studies (Nora 1989; see Chapter One).

In my interdisciplinary department at UCLA, I continued to study Congo and performative approaches to the arts of Africa, which I had been introduced to by Thompson and Lamp.[19] Guided by Mary Nooter Roberts I began to concentrate on critical curatorial studies and memory studies, leading to my master's thesis on memory, mapping, and the 2010 Lubumbashi photography and video biennial informed by my research in Lubumbashi, the DRC's second-largest city, in 2013 (Sullivan 2015). Having conducted MA research on contemporary Congolese arts, I planned to return to historic Luba arts, and worked with Mary Nooter Roberts on the 2013 exhibition "Shaping Power: Luba Masterworks from the Royal Museum for Central Africa" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Steeped in anthropological, historical, and art historical literature about the greater Luba region, I departed for a year of archival and collections research in Belgium at the end of 2015.

Thanks to the assistance of Mathilde Leduc Grimaldi at the AfricaMuseum and Pierre Petit at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), I began research in the AfricaMuseum's collection and attended numerous colloquia about Congo held throughout Belgium. Through contacts at both institutions I got to know researchers who frequently traveled between Belgium and the DRC in preparation for my anticipated research there in 2017. I was researching the region between the cities of Kamina and Mbuji-Mayi, now a part of the provinces of Haut-Lomami (Upper Lomami), Lomami, and Kasaï-Oriental (Eastern Kasai). Over the course of 2016, however, that area became the heart of the Kamina Nsapu rebellion, also referred to as the Kasai crisis, and Kasaïen colleagues began to warn me that I might have to change my plans. By January of 2017, 216,000 people had been displaced and at least 400 people had been killed, with ongoing discoveries of mass graves (Hoebeke 2017, Muadimanga Ilunga 2019). I would not

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[19] Though I was unaware of it as an undergraduate, both Thompson and Lamp are known for foregrounding performance when researching and presenting African arts (Thompson 1974 and Lamp 2004).

be able to travel to Congo and would need to develop a new dissertation project, a mere

inconvenience compared to the loss of life in Kasai.[20]

Stranded in Brussels and in search of a new research project, I met with artist Aimé

Mpane. Mpane and I had met in Los Angeles when he visited for the opening of the LACMA

"Shaping Power" exhibition which included his installation "Congo: Shadow of the Shadow." At

our first meeting, he mentioned that he had been commissioned to make a large sculpture for the

Rotunda of the AfricaMuseum. As I had already studied the history of the museum as well as

Congolese contemporary arts, working with Mpane seemed an obvious choice. Furthermore,

thanks to Dunja Hersak and Kathleen Louw I had already met Freddy Tsimba, who would be the

next artist in residence in Tervuren. By the summer of 2017 I had a new dissertation project: I

would write about the contemporary artists involved with the renovation of the museum.

Though the topic of my dissertation research had changed, many of the fundamental

questions driving the first project continue to inform this one. Following my mentor Mary

Nooter Roberts, I investigate the efficacy and agency of works of art, both historic and

contemporary.[21] As I consider the various "chapters" in the "lives" of both the museum building

and some of the objects within it, I am informed by Roberts's work on the lives of objects and of

museum spaces (M.N. Roberts 1994a, M.N. Roberts 1994b). Her work and teaching about

museum curation and display have steered my thinking about the AfricaMuseum and its

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[20] Although the rebellion was limited to the Kasai region of the DRC, I would likely not have been able to obtain a visa to visit the country in general. In response to Obama administration sanctions on government officials the Kabila administration began to limit visas for Americans. Rebel operations cooled down with the election of a new president in 2019, but the security situation around Kananga has not stabilized (see Mercy Corps 2019).

[21] Roberts and Roberts 2007. Polly Roberts also developed an undergraduate class, "World Arts/Local Lives," based on the exhibition at the Fowler Museum "Intersections: World Arts/Local Lives," for which the efficacy and agency of objects was the central concern (Berns and Roberts 2006). Polly Roberts was my graduate advisor and thesis chair before she passed away in 2018.

renovation.[22] Most importantly, Mary Nooter Roberts's teachings and writings on Luba arts of memory brought me to UCLA and serve as the foundation of this dissertation. Throughout her research on Luba arts, she foregrounded Luba understandings of memory and history and how various Luba art practices, including sculpture, body adornment, and dance, create a constellation of Luba memory and take part in the transmission of knowledge (Nooter 1993, Roberts and Roberts 1996, M.N. Roberts 2000, M.N. Roberts 2013b, M.N. Roberts 2013c).

Allen Roberts's research, writing, and teaching on visual cultures of Africa and especially of Central Africa have guided my own research questions. Writing about Tabwa arts, Roberts foregrounds Tabwa peoples, memories, and histories, informed by European archives while challenging their often-restrictive descriptions of African peoples (A. Roberts 1985, A. Roberts 1996a, A. Roberts 2013). With Mary Nooter Roberts, Allen Roberts's research on the visual arts and devotional practices by followers of both the Senegalese Mouride saint Sheikh Amadou Bamba and Indian saint Shirdi Sai Baba investigates the power of images and the crucial role of sight (or lack thereof) in religious practices.[23] Finally, neither Aimé Mpane nor I knew in 2017 that three years later he would be unveiling his sculpture "Skull of Lusinga," referencing a 19th-century Tabwa chief who was the subject of Roberts's 2013 book *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo*. Roberts's scholarship on Lusinga, violent colonial histories, politics of display in Belgium, and how colonial memories can be mediated through objects and persons has been fundamental to this project.

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[22] M.N. Roberts 2008, M.N. Roberts 2012, M.N. Roberts 2013a, M.N. Roberts 2017. Polly Roberts also developed the class "Curating Cultures" about the politics of exhibiting non-Western arts.

[23] Roberts and Roberts 2003, Roberts and Roberts 2015, Roberts and Roberts 2019, among others. On sight and secrecy among Tabwa, see A. Roberts 1993, and in relation to Luba arts, M.N. Roberts 2013c.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One begins my review of the major installations of contemporary African art in the AfricaMuseum with Freddy Tsimba's "Ombres" (Shadows). His work incorporates and comments on the museum's Memorial Hallway, a "lieu de mémoire" with a list of names of the 1,508 Belgian men who died in Congo between 1876 and 1908. On the windows opposite the wall of names, Tsimba has added the names of Congolese people who died in Belgium during that same time period. I analyze "Shadows" alongside the underlying concepts of Kongo *minkisi*, "power figures" made to contain spirits from the land of the dead. This approach allows us to consider how Tsimba's installation, which he describes as a tomb for the spirits of the dead, can act within the museum. Tsimba's invitation to the dead to inhabit the museum and his description of the museum as a tomb leads to a consideration of Jacques Derrida and Avery Gordon's theories of haunting in service of decolonization. "Shadows" creates a space for memory but also one for challenging history and the museum, tying together Congolese and European memorial practices.

In Chapter Two I consider the two-part sculptural installations created by Aimé Mpane in the museum's Rotunda. Mpane first proposed "Nouvelle Souffle ou Congo Bourgeonnant" (New Breath or Burgeoning Congo) for the competition held in 2017 for the Rotunda commission, and the large sculpture was installed for the 2018 reopening. I provide historical context for interpreting the Rotunda installations, discussing the gradual additions of sculptures by European artists over the course of the 20th century prior to the renovation. After the reopening, the museum decided more work was necessary to address the colonial inheritances in the Rotunda, and asked Mpane to add to his initial work. In February of 2020 he added another sculpture,

"Crane de Lusinga" (Lusinga's Skull), calling upon Lusinga, a deceased Tabwa chief, to help move the museum toward decolonialization.

In addition to his "Lusinga's Skull," in 2019 Mpane asked Belgian artist Jean-Pierre Müller to work with him on an addition to the Rotunda, the subject of Chapter Three. Together they created an installation of sixteen veils encompassing the entire Rotunda entitled "RE/STORE." Since the museum could not remove sixteen colonial-era sculptures in niches in the Rotunda because of their protected heritage status, the artists proposed to hang semi-transparent veils in front of them referencing aspects of Belgian and Congolese histories. The installation by both a Belgian and Congolese artist underlines the necessity for decolonization work to be done by all those from communities connected with colonialism and the power of contemporary art to create space for critical reflection on the difficult truths of history and memory which continue to shape the present.

In Chapter Four I discuss three artworks acquired by the museum during the renovation, all of which present personal stories with collective implications. Aimé Ntakiyica's "Histoire de famille. Arbre généalogique nº1" (Family History, Family Tree No. 1) is a sculptural installation of approximately 120 glass jars filled with yarn, each labeled with a name of someone in his family. The materials and the names on the jars are linked both to Ntakiyica's specific memories and shared memories of Belgian artists or Burundians familiar with the events surrounding that country's independence. Michèle Magema's "Mémoires Hévea, entre Histoire et histoires individuelles" (Hévéa Memories, from History to herstories [artist's translation]), comprised of three large photographic portraits surrounded by thirty-four smaller drawings, frames Magema's family memories with events in Congolese history. Finally, the story behind Freddy Tsimba's "Centres fermés, rêves ouverts" (Closed Centers, Open Dreams) is a personal story of travel and

detention, aspects of which are shared by millions of Africans traveling to or through Europe each year. Whereas the large installation works create opportunities for critique of the colonial pasts of Belgium and the museum, these personal artworks create human connections between visitors and artists whose ancestors were dehumanized in earlier exhibitions within the museum. As the AfricaMuseum moves toward decolonizing, contemporary artworks provide opportunities for critique and connection, building on memories to imagine possible futures.

<p style="text-align:center">Chapter One:</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Freddy Tsimba's "Shadows" Haunting a *Lieu de mémoire*</p>

Theorizing Memory in the Museum

When you arrive at the AfricaMuseum, you might reach for a museum map to help guide you through the galleries. No matter which language of map you select – Dutch, French, German or English – one location is always labeled the same way: the "lieu de mémoire" (pl. "lieux de mémoire) hallway on the eastern side of the museum (Figure 9).[1] The lieu de mémoire hallway was a center of attention for the museum's renovation and reopening. Once an outdoor portico, the Memorial Hallway was created in 1934 in remembrance of the Belgians who had died in Congo between 1876 and 1908. During the renovation from 2013 to 2018, the museum commissioned a new artwork for the renovation of the hallway from Congolese artist Freddy Tsimba. The Kinshasa-based artist, who visited the museum as an artist-in-residence in 2016, created an installation, "Shadows" (Ombres), honoring Congolese victims of the colonial era, in which he added the names of Congolese who died in Belgium to the glass windows, which cast shadows on the memorial wall (Figure 10).

By labeling the corridor a "lieu de memoire," and specifically by using the French name no matter which language the map is printed in, the AfricaMuseum is referring to the work of French historian Pierre Nora.[2] In his essay "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de

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[1] Two other locations in the museum are considered "sites of remembrance," one possible translation for "lieux de mémoire" (AfricaMuseum 2018b). One, the Crocodile Room, was restored to look just as it did in the 1920s. The other is the large rotunda to be discussed below.

[2] Nora first introduced the idea of lieu de memoire in the introduction to the multi-volume collection of essays on French history and memory that he edited, which were published between 1984 and 1992 (see Nora 1984). His introduction was translated into English and published in a special issue of the journal *Representations* in 1989, after which the concept gained greater currency in anglophone academia.
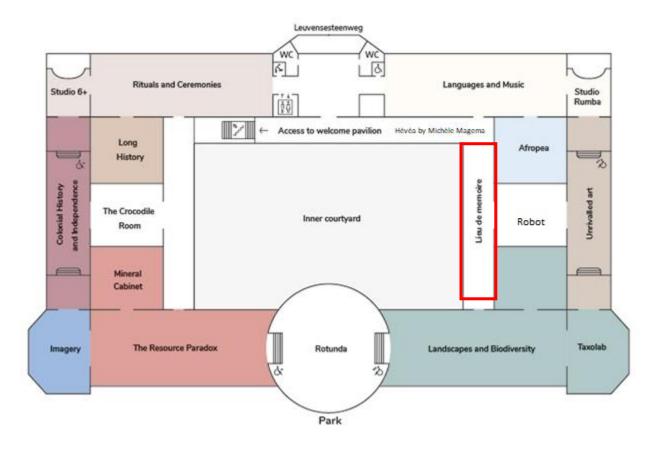
Figure 9: Map of the ground floor of the main exhibition building of the AfricaMuseum. From www.africamuseum.be/en/visit/permanent_exhibition, accessed May 11, 2020, with addition indicating location of "Lieu de mémoire," "Hévéa," and Robot by author.

Figure 10. Freddy Tsimba's work *Ombres (Shadows)*, 2016. Collection RMCA, inv. no. 2016.45. © RMCA, Tervuren, photo Jo Van de Vijver.

Mémoire," Nora argued that history was overtaking memory, and that lieux de mémoire were

being created against a tide of disappearing memory.[3] Following Nora (1989), a lieu de mémoire

is created by a deliberate act to save an aspect of collective memory, in a type of

"commemorative vigilance" (12), indicative of a "will to remember" (19). Examples of lieux de

mémoire include such physical things as statues or monuments to the dead, archives,

dictionaries, and museums, but can also be symbols like a flag or a pilgrimage (12 and 22). That

said, Nora is adamant that a lieu de mémoire is attached to a site and not an event: "indeed, it is

the exclusion of the event that defines the lieu de memoire. Memory attaches itself to sites,

whereas history attaches itself to events" (22). Of importance for this chapter, Nora explains that

lieux de mémoire are not necessarily location-specific, citing monuments to the dead as

examples that could change locations and still carry meaning (ibid.). These are in contrast with

other lieux de mémoire, which are "ensembles constructed over time, which draw their meaning

from the complex relations between their elements," such as the Chartres cathedral or the palace

at Versailles (ibid.). While the 1934 memorial wall could have been built anywhere in Belgium,

adding the work by Tsimba changed the meaning of the space. Further, the meaning of

"Shadows" is dependent on its relationship with the memorial wall and on histories spanning two

continents. The Memorial Hallway as lieu de mémoire has become a location-specific ensemble.

Tsimba's intervention in the Memorial Hallway engages not only with the hallway's

present architectural elements but also with the hallway's past. In his study of Holocaust

monuments and memorials, memory studies scholar James Young (1993) proposed that such

memorials and monuments have "lives," whose different life chapters should each be

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[3] Nora 1989, 12. Ironically, Nora's premise was proven wrong as his own writing became the founding of an entire field of memory studies (Rothberg 2010, 4). I first learned about Nora's "lieux de mémoire" from through the scholarship of Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts, who placed his ideas in conversation with Luba theories of memory, discussed below.

researched.[4] Young described his project as "provid[ing] a uniquely instructive glimpse of the monument's inner life," including the context in which a monument was first proposed, how it was built, and, in relation to all the monuments he covers, their "ever-evolving lives in the minds of their communities" (14). Such an approach is not merely useful for understanding the AfricaMuseum's building and Memorial Hallway but is also important for considering the addition of contemporary arts during its recent renovation.

While Nora's writing on lieux de mémoire and Young's treatment of memorials have been foundational to the academic discipline of memory studies, European authors are not the only theorists of memory;[5] Congolese methods of memorialization are found within the monumental building of the AfricaMuseum. Most visitors will arrive in the Memorial Hallway through the Language and Music gallery, thus passing by one of the restored display cases dedicated to "knowledge carriers," with reference to objects used by people to help teach their communities (Figure 11). In addition to painted and carved panels used to teach boys during Nkanu *nkanda* initiation rituals,[6] a selection of three Luba *lukasas* are on view, briefly explained as memory boards used to aid in genealogy recitations and to recount histories of heroes, kings, and migrations. Like Nora's lieux de mémoire, lukasas also provide us with a way of theorizing memory, but from a Central African perspective.

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[4] Young seems to be unknowingly echoing Igor Kopytoff (1986), whose "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process" also proposes an investigation in the biographies of objects.

[5] See Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe 1993 for but one discussion – though broad – of African approaches to theorizing memory and history.

[6] For more information about Nkanu arts of initiation, see Van Damme 2001. During initiation known as *nkanda* or *mukanda*, boys live outside of their community, where they learn the lessons important to being an adult member of Nkanu society. In addition to panels and small figures, masks are carved and performed, with the arts all working in tandem to educate the initiates and later demonstrate what the initiates have learned (Van Damme 2001).

A lukasa is what Mary Nooter Roberts refers to as a "memory device," that is, a visual

representation of Luba constructions of memory, which can include other artworks such as bow

stands, beaded necklaces, and staffs (Roberts and Roberts 1996, 37; see also Reefe 1977).

Lukasas are the most important of these, however, because of their roles within the *Mbudye*

secret society, an association of initiated community members who are not only in charge of the

composition and transmission of Luba histories, but can also serve as a check on Luba royal

power.[7] Each local chapter of the Mbudye association has at least one lukasa, and usually each

important figure within the association has their own (ibid.). Such memory boards were used by

Mbudye members as mnemonic aides in the performance of Luba histories and the transmission

of cultural memory.[8]

Most lukasas share a similar constructive format. They are flat boards, usually a rectangle

but sometimes in an hourglass shape, most frequently a bit larger than a man's hand (Figure 12).

One side, called the "inside," can be studded with beads or carved figures, which can then be

read by a member of the Mbudye association (M.N. Roberts 1996, 132). In addition, many have

spirit heads carved at the top. Acacia thorns are used to peg beads to the "inner" surface of a

lukasa, their configurations memorized and assigned data from a complex narrative read by an

Mbudye member recounting or inventing Luba histories to meet the needs of a given

performance event. Because each bead has no specific meaning, but rather gains one through its

relation with other beads and the context in which the lukasa is being read, the same lukasa can

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[7] When discussing Mbudye associations in this chapter I am basing such knowledge on what has been reported by Mary Nooter Roberts, based on her fieldwork in the Luba region in the 1980s, prior to the civil war of the 1990s. From my own research and conversations with Congolese friends I know that Mbudye associations continue to exist but I do not know the extent to which their practices have changed since the 1980s.

[8] As Ian Cunnison describes in regard to the Luapula Valley (and as Roberts and Roberts emphasize in their scholarship), the practice of history in this region is "particular," a dynamic exercise creating difference histories and memories (Cunnison 1951, 4-5).

Figure 11. A visitor looks at the lukasas on view in the "knowledge carriers" display case in the "Language and Music" gallery.

Figure 12. A lukasa on view at the AfricaMuseum. Lukasa, made by a Luba artist, Katanga, DR Congo. 24.3 cm x 10.6 cm. EO.1979.39.2.

be read in many different ways and used to recount different histories or rules (41).[9] A lukasa is a mnemonic aide, but not an exact text. According to Mary Nooter Roberts (1996), "Mbudye members agree that the 'inside' or front of the lukasa is an architectonic model of both the royal court and, simultaneously, the Mbudye meeting house" (136). A lukasa can be used to recount king genealogies, histories of migration, seating protocol for where each member of the court should be positioned vis-à-vis the king, and even more mundane matters like mapping relative positions of medicinal plants in the royal garden.

Lukasas illustrate how Mbudye members organize memory in spatial terms. Roberts and Roberts (1996) argue that for Mbudye members, lukasas act as lieux de mémoire, since they are grounded in place (such as the Mbudye meeting house) and are used to structure present memory (38-40). Mary Nooter Roberts compared lukasas to Guilio Camilla Delminio's "memory theater" and Mattero Ricci's "memory palace," European Renaissance concepts which relied on architecture as mnemonic aides (117). Similarly, lukasas can represent the architecture of a royal court, or refer to larger geographic elements such as lakes, among other physical characteristics of the land (136). Like monuments to war dead in every European town square, each Mbudye association has its own lukasa. These lieux de mémoire are both location-specific and generic (38). They are used to refer to specific genealogies and broader Luba epics, but are also recognizable as lukasas by people across the region.

I propose that lukasas are helpful not only for theorizing memory in general but also for theorizing memory in museums.[10] Seeing "lieu de mémoire" indicated on a paper map, a visitor

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[9] Though most beads only gain meaning through relationships to other beads, there are some exceptions. The violent chief Nkongolo Mwamba, for example, is always shown as a red bead, while Mbidi Kiluwe, the hero and founder of Luba kingship, is always represented as a blue bead, understood as "black" following the red-white-black symbolic triad fundamental to Luba philosophy (Roberts and Roberts 1996, 47).

[10] When Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts developed the exhibition accompanying *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History* at The Museum for Africa Art they designed the layout following the logic of a lukasa.

is given information about memory in relationship to place. Lukasas are also meant to be read

and provide information about places, as well as the memories and histories related to such

places. As the beads on a lukasa change meaning based on their relationship with the other

beads, objects in museums change their meaning based on how they are presented. Thus, the

curatorial choices made in the presentation of objects can change the meaning of the objects or

emphasize some meanings over others. An Mbudye member might use the same lukasa to

recount a chief's genealogy, how a community was founded, or where to locate specific plants.

At the AfricaMuseum, visitors can sign up for tours focusing on history, natural resources, or

architecture, among other themes. Depending on who is "reading" the museum and guiding the

tour, different histories and memories will be expounded upon.

    A Belgian dropped in a meeting of Mbudye members in Congo in 1934 would not likely

recognize a lukasa as a memory device; similarly, a Luba person visiting Tervuren in 1934 might

not recognize a list of names on a wall as an example of a very common method of

commemorating the deceased across Europe.[11] While they both act as lieux de memoire within

their respective communities, their symbolism and use would need to be explained to be

understood by someone from a different cultural background. Freddy Tsimba's addition to the

Memorial Hallway complicates the hallway-as-lieu-de-mémoire because he works within two

different memorial traditions. While on the surface his addition of names to the windowpanes

opposite the wall imitates the Belgian memorial wall, he considers the window names to be

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[11] Due to the Belgian presence in Congo, however, there were a few monuments in a European style in the colony, including a monument "Au Souvenir (de la Premère Guerre mondiale)" inaugurated in Léopoldville in 1927 (Dupont 2008). I am grateful to Sarah Van Beurden for bringing this article to my attention. A "monument to pioneers" also exists in Kinshasa, next to a cemetery for Europeans on Mont Ngaliema. The cemetery dates to the earliest days of Leopoldville, but I do not know where the list of names was added (on Mont Ngaliema and its monuments more generally, see Lagae 2013).

doing something very different from those on the wall. Tsimba uses the imagery of a European memorial to create his own Congolese memorial.

In this chapter, I will trace the Memorial Hallway's role as a lieu de mémoire within the museum from its creation in 1934 to today. Following Young (1993)'s approach to investigate the lives of memorials and monuments, I will first provide a brief history of some of the chapters of the hallway's life as a memorial to Congo pioneers and as a gallery of colonial history. I will then discuss Tsimba's installation "Shadows" and analyze it as an example of "nkisi logic," in which Tsimba creates a contemporary art installation to act as if it were a Kongo *nkisi* power object. I ask whether bringing nkisi logic into the museum changes the lieu de memoire through haunting, beginning the process of decolonizing the AfricaMuseum. Finally, I propose that rather than a lieu de mémoire, the Memorial Hallway in its present form is a "nœud de mémoire," a "knot" of memory, tying together diverse memories and memorial practices in the museum.

<u>The Memorial to Congo Pioneers</u>

Turning into the Memorial Hallway from the Language and Music gallery, a visitor stands between a completely solid wall on one side and one of glass on the other, with panes installed just inside the columns of what was once an outdoor portico (Couttenier 2010b, 136). In 1934 a large memorial was created in this hallway, listing the names of 1,508 Belgian men who died in Congo between 1876 and 1908, above which is written "Belges Morts au Congo 1876 - 1908 Belgen In Congo Overleden" with the Belgian coat of arms between the two dates. A border of garlands encircles the list of names and Leopold II's mirror-image L's are found in each corner (Figure 13 a and b). Christine Bluard, the Exhibitions and Art Development Manager at the AfricaMuseum, authored the labels in the hallway contextualizing the installation:

*Painted in this corridor are the names of the 1,508 Belgian men who lost their
lives in the Congo Free State between 1876 and 1908. It was done between the
two world wars, in an atmosphere of Belgian patriotism. The women and children
who died are not recorded. The asterisk in front of some names indicates that the
next letter in the alphabet starts here. Underneath the memorial is a quote by
King Albert I: '...mercilessly death reaped the ranks of the first pioneers. Never
will we pay enough tribute to their memory.'*
*The memorial does not refer in any way to the hundreds of thousands, perhaps
even millions, of Congolese who died in the same period as direct or indirect
victims of the Congo Free State, or to the population deficit that this violence
caused.*
*During the renovation of 2013-2018, the Africa-Museum asked the artist Freddy
Tsimba to honour these invisible and nameless victims with a new work.*

In the following section I will discuss the pre-renovation history of the Memorial Hallway,

providing its historical and specifically Belgian context, before addressing Tsimba's installation.

For the first seventy-nine years of its existence, the Memorial Hallway encapsulated the

museum's approach to colonial history as a story of Belgians bringing civilization to the Congo.

When it was created in 1934, the gallery was under the purview of Frans Cornet, head of the

"Moral, Political and Historical Sciences Section" of the museum. Cornet had recently installed

nearby galleries on missionary projects, transportation, and on "history," highlighting early

European explorers of Congo, the Arab Campaign, and the First World War.[12] In addition to the

names, the memorial gallery wall included two series of enlarged photographs on each side of

the central archway. The two sides of the photographic installation were meant to present a

"before and after," with one side showing traditional Congolese life and the other highlighting

the "great works" Belgians had brought to Congo, such as European medical care and the large-

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[12]Couttenier 2010b, 134-136. The "Arab Campaign" refers to Leopold's pretense of ending the slave trade in the
Congo basin, run by traders based on the East African coast who plundered Central Africa for people and ivory and
traded across the Indian Ocean (e.g. Alpers 1975). The main port was on the island of Zanzibar, where the Sultan of
Oman had settled in 1832. While some of the traders were Arab, many were Africans who had converted to Islam,
who came to be called "Arab-Swahili traders" though frequently simply referred to as "Arab" regardless of their
ancestry. Leopold ordered a campaign against one especially powerful trader, Tippu Tip, whose power came in part
thanks to previous treaties with Leopold. Leopold sent the Congo-based armed forces, called the Force Publique, to
defeat such people in what became known as the "Arab Campaigns" lasting from 1891-1894 (Ndaywel è Nziem
2009, 277-281).

Figure 13 a (top) and b (below). List of names on the north side of the Memorial Hallway, showing the border of leaves the the symmetrical L's of Leopold II.

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scale mining industry (139). Panels taught visitors a very particular general history of European colonization in Congo, further illustrated by large transport wheels used in the Stanley expedition and parts of what were thought to be his steamer ship (ibid). Underlining the theme of Belgians "bringing civilization to Congo," four display cases in the gallery displayed "basketry, textiles, pottery, and ivory and wooden sculptures marked by European influence […] intended to make the case that the Congolese were susceptible to European civilization" (140).

Individual monuments to four Belgian men were featured in the gallery when it opened, continuing the narrative of European great men taming the Congo (Figure 14). A bust of King Albert I, who had died nine months before the opening of the gallery in February 1934, stood beneath the central archway. Directly facing it on the window-side of the gallery was a pillar from Louis Crespel's grave in Zanzibar, where Crespel, who led the first expedition of the Association Internationale Africaine in 1878, had died.[13] Framing King Albert I's bust on either side of the archway were two niches, each with its own bust. The left niche housed Edmond Hanssens and the right housed Emile Storms, symbols of Belgian conquest of Congo from either side of the continent: Hanssens based in Leopoldville to the west, and Storms in Mpala, on Lake Tanganyika in the east (Couttenier 2010b, 139, Roberts 2013, 219, Couttenier 2019, 334). Combined with the wall of names, the narrative of Belgians "benevolently" occupying Congo emphasized the chauvinistic idea, repeated on memorials to Congo pioneers across Belgium, that the young Belgians had "died for civilization."

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[13] Couttenier 2010b, 139. Leopold II founded the International African Association in 1876 at the Brussels Geographic Conference, a convening of explores and experts interested in exploring Central Africa. It was under the auspices of the IAA that Leopold II famously hired Henry Morton Stanley, who had recently traveled much of the length of the Congo River, to set up stations along the river and have local chiefs sign treaties. As with the broader Leopoldian Congo project, the IAA was supposedly dedicated to the eradication of the slave trade and to geographic discovery, but was rather a "front for the imperialist maneuvering of Leopold II" (Roberts 2013, 3).
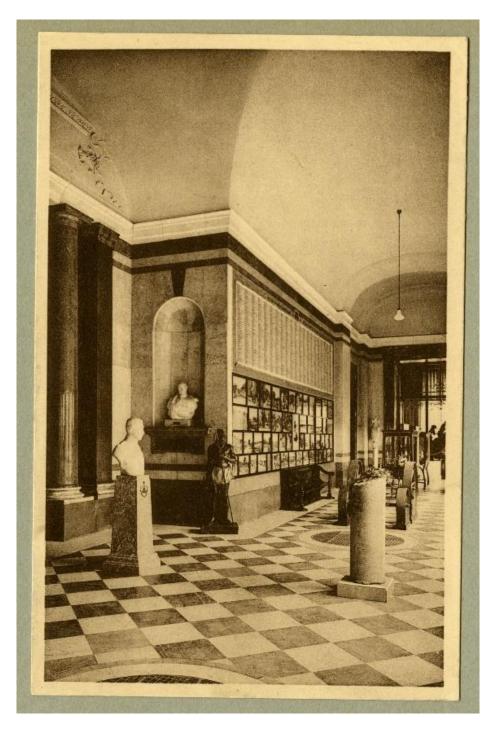
Figure 14. Memorial hall ca. 1934-1949. HP.56.64.3, collection of RMCA Tervuren. Unknown photographer, with permission.

The label now on view at the end of the hall describes the time of the memorial's

installation date, 1934, as "an atmosphere of Belgian patriotism." Belgium's centenary had just

passed in 1930, and the country was on the side of the victors of the First World War.[14] Living in

Belgium from 2016-2018, I noticed that the First World War still loomed large in Belgium, even

larger than the Second. Staring out the bus window driving from Brussels to Paris, I would

occasionally see rows of identical white crosses, a reminder that I was driving through sites of

years-long battles fought almost exactly a century ago. Every November British expats in

Brussels donned their poppy lapel pins, and some of their families came to visit for a long

weekend and drive to places like Ypres and Passchendaele, sites where hundreds of thousands of

soldiers lost their lives. Each neighborhood has its own memorial to local sons lost from 1914-

1919, some with heartbreaking additions to add those lost from 1939-1945. The "atmosphere of

Belgian patriotism" between the two wars was also an atmosphere of memorialization, and saw

the creation of many monuments featuring lists of the dead to be remembered.[15] Such a

comparison is not lost on Belgian anthropologist Maarten Couttenier, who describes the

AfricaMuseum's memorial wall as a "smaller, colonial version of the Menin Gate at Ypres"

(2010, 138), in reference to the memorial at Ypres lists over 54,000 names of soldiers from the

British Commonwealth who died in the Ypres area of Belgium between 1914 and 1918

(Commonwealth War Graves Commission n.d.).

The interwar period also saw the creation of many memorials to the Belgian "pioneers" in

the Congo Free State. Historian of Belgian imperialism Matthew Stanard (2019) counts "dozens

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[14] Notably Belgium's major victory in the First World War came at Tabora, in present-day Tanzania, by an army made up of mostly Congolese soldiers (see for example Roberts 1987, Ndaywel E Nziem and Mantuba-Ngoma 2015, Ngongo 2018, Stanard 2014).

[15] Pedro Monaville explicitly notes that the 1920s and 30s comprised "the first expressions of Belgian colonial memory" (Monaville 2015, 63).

if not hundreds" of memorials to the pre-1908 pioneers built around 1930 (50). These were not only representations of nationalism but also explicitly tied the colonial project in Congo to this nationalism. Many such memorials honored those who "died for civilization," and represent a reclaiming of the pre-1908 colonial period. Stanard notes a two-fold irony of such monuments. First, their nationalist rhetoric ignores that in 1908 only 58% of White people in Congo were Belgian, and that the early colonial enterprise relied heavily on other Europeans working in Congo. Second, emphasizing "civilization" completely ignores the reason that 1908 is even viewed an important marker, as it was the year Congo was taken from Leopold II precisely because of his "uncivilized" crimes in Congo. Less ironic but still notable, the majority of those honored in monuments to pioneers in Congo did not die fighting either "natives" or "Arab" traders, but from disease and suicide (54; Fabian 2000).

The date 1908 is an explicit reference to the international Red Rubber scandal and atrocities committed in the early years of the Congo Free State. While the above-mentioned "Arab Campaign" was an early premise for Belgian involvement in Congo, most now associate the early colonial period with what became known as the Red Rubber Scandal. The events began in Europe, when Dunlop invented the pneumatic tire, setting off a global rubber-boom, including in Congo, where rubber vines grow naturally. In 1899, a British Vice Consul explained how the rubber was harvested: soldiers would attack a village and hold women as hostages until the male villagers returned with the demanded amount of rubber (Hochschild 1998, 161; see also Casement [1904] 2018, 83). Failure to meet quota could be punishable by death, but on some occasions soldiers (members of the Force Publique) had to collect the hands of the dead to justify spent bullets (Renton et al. 2007, 30-31). While a number of Europeans must have been aware of these practices, it was not until E. D. Morel, a British shipping company employee who oversaw

the unloading of ships returning from Congo, began to write about what was occurring in Congo in 1903 that public opinion began to turn against Belgian involvement in Congo (Dunn 2003). The writings and speeches of Morel and others spurred the British Foreign Office to send Roger Casement, their consul in Congo, to investigate. His report, published by the government, confirmed what Morel and others had been writing, and lent legitimacy to the other reports (Casement [1904] 2018). By 1908, internal and diplomatic pressure combined with Belgium's own economic interests and resulted in the Belgian government finally taking the control of Congo away from Leopold II (Gondola 2002, 78). The Congo Free State officially became the Belgian Congo on November 15, 1908.

Choosing 1908 as a date to highlight in the Memorial Hallway and in other monuments to Belgian pioneers was thus a strange choice. The date marks a dividing point between two eras of the colony, but the only reason the second era began was because of the atrocities committed in the pre-1908 era. Celebrating the Belgian "pioneers" who died in Congo prior to 1908 without acknowledging why the Belgian government had to take control of the Congo Free State is remarkable revision and elision of history. Stanard argues that the creation of a division between pre- and post-1908 colonials worked to glorify the "pioneers" and created a founding story of risk and exploration for the colony. He posits that this was necessary because unlike other European countries, Belgium did not have a long history of overseas colonies and reframing the early period as "heroic" helped to legitimize the colonial story (2019, 54). This reframing was not only necessary for nationalistic reasons but also to encourage continued investment (both financial and emotional) in the colony, an aim in which the museum also took part.

The hallway's label continues, "The memorial does not refer in any way to the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Congolese who died in the same period as direct or indirect

victims of the Congo Free State, or to the population deficit that this violence caused." This label

is notable in its acknowledgement of the "perhaps millions" who died during this period, as well

as the population deficit caused by decreased fertility that resulted from early colonial practices.

This phrasing is likely a reference to ongoing disputes about the number of victims during the

Congo Free State period, an argument brought to a head with the publication of Adam

Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost* in 1998, and which resurfaced in response to the 2005

exhibition "Memory of Congo: The Colonial Era," curated by Jean Luc Vellut at the

AfricaMuseum.[16] Hochschild argued that approximately 10 million Congolese died, because of

four interconnected reasons: murder, starvation/exhaustion/exposure, disease, and a declining

birth rate (225-234). Citing Jan Vansina, Hochschild estimates that "between 1880 and 1920, the

population of the Congo was cut 'by at least half'" (233). This is contrary to the numbers

presented by Vellut in the 2005 exhibition and accompanying book, which noted a population

loss of twenty percent, citing E.D. Morel (Vellut 2005). The disagreement moved from Belgium

to the pages of the *New York Review of Books*, which published Hochschild's (2005) review of

the exhibition as well as Vellut's response and Hochschild's response to Vellut's letter (Vellut

2006; Hochschild 2006).

     After its 1934 creation the memorial hall did not remain completely frozen in time,

changing bit by bit over the course of the decades. In 1967 the "Moral, Political and Historical

Sciences Section" changed its name to the "History of the Belgian Presence Abroad" and in 1976

a new exhibition in the Memorial Hallway was unveiled, organized by Marcel Luwel (Couttenier

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[16] Hochschild was not the first to note these numbers and credits the scholarship of Jules Marchal (1996) for them. The controversy extends back to the Red Rubber Scandal, but it is notable that an international best-seller was needed to spur this controversy anew in Belgium. Philippe Marechal (2005) and Vicky Van Bockhaven (2019) both point out that while Hochschild's book received much attention, numerous Belgian and Congolese scholars like Daniel Vangroenweghe (1985) and Elikia M'Bokolo (1976) had brought attention to these histories earlier.

2019, 348). Different cases lining the window side of the hallway brought a visitor "closer to the former traveler, explorer, colonial, missionary and military man" (Anonymous 1976, 141-142, cited in Couttenier 2019, 348). In these cases visitors could see the uniforms of Belgian military men, flags captured from enemies (such as a German flag from German East Africa), historic arms, and paintings illustrating some of the experiences of these Belgian "pioneers" in Congo.

In a 2003 article anthropologist Jean Muteba Rahier recounted visits between 1999 and 2001, when the room was entitled "The Memorial Hall: The Belgian Presence Overseas," and paintings by Belgian artists who lived in Congo hung along the wall.[17] One of these paintings, Edouard Manduau's "Civilization in Congo" (1884-1885) deserves special attention for its forthright visual criticism of Belgian violence in bringing "civilization" to Congo (Figure 15). Mauduau depicted a violent scene of a white man ordering an African man to whip another African man with "la chicotte," a particularly painful whip made of hippo hide.[18] Rahier noted that this painting was only present because of the "insistence" of one of the historians at the museum, and its criticism of colonialism was still muted due to the label referring to the violent methods used by "some Occidentals" and not the violence of the entire colonial system (67). Nevertheless, this is an early example of some curators at the AfricaMuseum using artwork to bring critique into the museum, in this case via artwork by a Belgian artist.

When I visited in 2013, the walls beneath the list of names were bare, black fabric draped under the ceiling (perhaps related to building woes), and horizontal window blinds further

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[17] The difference in the room's title is likely due to the different translations by Couttenier and Rahier into English.

[18] For more on Manduau, see Eyenga-Cornelis 2003 and Cornelis et al. 2007. Such scenes would later become important in Congolese popular painting depicting Belgian rule (Jewsiewicki 1991; Strother 2016, 253-262). The painting was displayed alongside later popular painting descriptions of the scene in the 2016 temporary exhibition "Congo Art Works" at BOZAR organized with the AfricaMuseum while it was closed for renovation, jointly curated by AfricaMuseum staff anthropologist Bambi Ceuppens and Congolese artist Sammy Baloji (see Ceuppens and Baloji 2016). It now hangs in the Colonial History gallery in the small display area about the extreme violence of the early colonial era.

Figure 15. "La Civilisation du Congo » (1884-1885) by Edouard Manduau.

Figure 16. Larger-than-life statue of Leopold II in the southeast corner of the memorial hall before the renovation. Photograph by Nicky Reeves, used with permission. Photograph originally tweeted 24 February 2019: https://twitter.com/Nicky___R/status/1099723793147273217

darkened the atmosphere. The gallery was still dedicated to colonial history from a Belgian perspective, Storms and Hanssens still in their niches. Running along the shaded window-side of the gallery were six free-standing display cases, one of which featured several mementos that had belonged to Storms (Roberts 2013, 220). On the far southern end of the gallery, a larger-than-life sculpture of Leopold II stood in the corner, looking over the memorial to his dead (Figure 16).

The gallery was much the same three years prior in 2010, but in addition to the display cases, a sculpture by Herbert Ward was installed in the alcove between the two niches (Figure 17). Allen Roberts (2013) understood the juxtaposition between Storms' bust and Ward's sculpture, titled "Defiance," as fertile ground for interpretation of the museum's representation of fraught interactions between European and African men (225-227). The bronze sculpture was made in 1909 by Herbert Ward, and depicts an African man whose every clenched muscle lives up the work's title.[19] Dressed only in a loincloth and holding a knife, the man stands as if ready to attack, chin jutting forward and weight on his forward right leg.[20] Immediately to this man's left, looking down on this dark figure, was the white bust of Emile Storms in military regalia. Contrasting the barely-clothed, muscular African man with the bust of Storms, Roberts points to Frantz Fanon, who wrote that "In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in the elaboration of his corporeal schema. Knowledge of the body is a uniquely negating activity" (227, citing Fanon 1952: 90). In today's parlance, to be more "in touch" with one's body, more

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[19] For more on Herbart Ward's bronze sculptures depicting Congolese people, see Arnoldi 1992 and Arnoldi 1998, as well as the next chapter. In his analysis of the contrast between the bust of Storms and Ward's "Defiance," Roberts notes that the placement of "Defiance" in the memorial hallway may have been a coincidence, since it has recently been moved from its previous location in the small rotunda (on the north side of the museum).

[20] Art historian Gabriella Nugent (2019) discusses the depiction of tense Congolese men in the photographic collages of Sammy Baloji. She points to literature scholar Darieck Scott (2010) who uses the image of "muscular tension" to illustrate the experience of the colonized, building on Fanon's statement "the muscles of the colonized are always tensed" (Fanon 2004, 16).

"in touch" with nature, is to "go back" to a pre-modern, pre-civilized time. This is but one example of what anthropologist Barbara Saunders (2005) refers to as the museum's "radical detemporalisation of vision through distancing devices" (75), describing a manner of representation in which Congo seems out of time and historical "progress" (see Fabian 2002). Through an interaction of viewpoints, a visitor might see a Congolese man defiant against colonial oppression and colonial generals' scowls, or "civilized" Belgians looking down on "violent, unpredictable" Africans.

"Defiance" was not in the gallery when I visited in 2013, but was replaced by the most well-known European sculpture in the museum: "The Leopard Man of Stanley Falls" (1913) by Paul Wissaert, sometimes also referred to as "The Anioto" and most frequently simply as "The Leopard Man." The sculpture depicts an African man in a leopard skin costume standing over a sleeping African woman, ready to attack. It refers to the colonial-era stories of secret societies of murderous "leopard men" roaming the jungle, ready to pounce on unsuspecting victims at any moment. Behind the sculpture, in line with the display cases, the museum displayed Chéri Samba's painting "Réorganisation" (2002) (Figure 18). By 2018, Wissaert's sculpture had become a symbol of the colonial, racist views Belgians had toward Congolese people, who were depicted as overly violent (van Bockhaven 2009, 80).

What colonial Belgians termed "Leopard men" likely did exist during the colonial period, though not as depicted in the Wissaert sculpture. They most likely did not wear costumes that impeded movement and sight, but they formed part of the *anioto* society and their actions did include murder. Considered within a broader historical and cultural context, the anioto society is now thought of as one aspect of local resistance against political power-players in the region, be they local kings consolidating power, slave traders from the east, or European colonial

Figure 17. Bust of Émile Storms by Marnix d'Haveloose (1906) and Herbart Ward's "Defiance" (1909) as juxtaposed at the RMCA in 2010. Photograph 2010 by Kathleen Louw, with permission.

Figure 18. Paul Wissaert's "Leopard man" (1913) in the foreground, with Chéri Samba's "Réorganisation" (2002) in the background as seen in 2013. Photograph by Nicky Reeves. Photograph originally tweeted 24 February 2019: https://twitter.com/Nicky___R/status/1099723793147273217

government (A. Roberts 1996b; Van Bockhaven 2018). Through numerous representations in popular European culture, however, Congolese understandings of the societal roles of the anioto society were lost. Such stories as the comic book *Tintin au Congo* (Hergé [1931] 1946) and the novel *Tarzan and the Leopard Men* (Burroughs 1935) obscured original meanings, and framed leopard men within a narrative of good vs. bad, or civilization conquering barbarism (Hunt 2002; van Bockhaven 2013, 232; Halen 1993).

The choice to present Wissaert's "The Leopard Man" with Samba's "Réorganisation" foreshadows the post-renovation use of contemporary art to contextualize the museum's history. Whereas the interplay of gazes between Emile Storms' bust and "Defiance" emphasized the buttoned-up conquest of defiant "barbarians," presenting Samba's "Réorganisation" in the same sightline as "The Leopard Man" turned the dichotomy on its head. If the original message of the Memorial Hallway was to memorialize and celebrate European "civilization" in contrast with African "barbarity," Samba's painting reflects more recent perspectives which question whether considering Africans as barbarians is in fact the actual barbarity. While a "civilized" Storms looked down on "Defiance," and an assumed-civilized visitor was meant to look down on the violence of "The Leopard Man," Samba's painting looked down on those who unquestionably accepted this point of view.

Just as the historical context must be taken into consideration when assessing the memorial wall, so must historical context be considered when writing about the 2018 update. In addition to the present moment of much discussion of decolonizing museums, the new artworks are part of a gradual recognition of the negative aspects of Belgian colonial history which had begun in the 1990s. As discussed in the introduction, books such as *King Leopold's Ghost* and *The Assassination of Lumumba* prompted Belgians to re-think their colonial past (Hochschild

1998, De Witte 2001). In the museum, temporary exhibitions such as "ExItCongoMuseum" and "The Memory of Congo" from the turn of the 21ˢᵗ century pointed toward a more promising approach to exhibiting the colonial past (Wastiau 2000; Vellut 2005). Throughout Europe and the United States ethnographic museums began to include contemporary arts in their displays, and the AfricaMuseum joined in, inviting Chéri Samba to critique it. The stage was set for more critical contemporary artists to engage with the museum, as Freddy Tsimba did in the same space where Samba's "Réorganisation" was on display up to the 2013 closing.

Freddy Tsimba's "Shadows" (Ombres) and Nkisi Logic

Simply titled "Shadows," Tsimba's work encompasses the memorial wall, and acts as an installation piece within the entire hallway. On the glass opposite the wall, Tsimba added the names of twenty-four Congolese people who died in Belgium between 1876 and 1908 (Figure 19). Beneath each name is the city where they died, and below that, the year. The letters are backwards for those looking at the glass from the corridor. Rather, when the sun shines, the names appear on the wall opposite, literally casting shadows on the Belgian monument (Figure 10). On the southern end of the hall, Tsimba has included a cart which had been used in Congo during the colonial era to construct the road from Matadi to Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), a project considered one of the most deadly of the colonial period (Figure 20).[21] The cart had been on display in this same corridor at the time that the memorial was added in 1934, so that in addition to the names of the deceased "pioneers," one could also view one of the carts used for

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[21] Rene Cornet (1947) recounts some of the horrors of building the rail line, though with some sympathetic comparisons to other rail projects casting it in a more positive light (370) and with significantly more focus on the death of Europeans than Congolese. He describes cemeteries along the railway, however, and the numerous desertions and strikes, making clear the terrible human toll. Daniel R. Headrick (1981) writes that 1,800 non-European workers died, 900 of whom died in the first two and a half years of the 8-year project (199). Marchal (1996, 141-151) describes the international labor recruitment efforts necessary because of the high death rate.
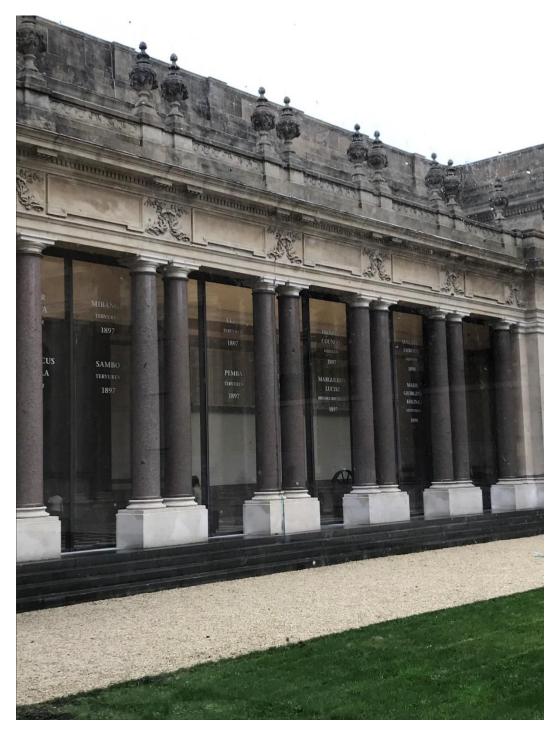
Figure 19: View of "Shadows" from the interior courtyard, showing names on the glass.

Figure 20: Tsimba included parts of a cart that had been used in construction of the railway from Matadi to Leopoldville, which had previously been on display in the hallway (see Figure 14).

and thus lauding colonial expansion (Figure 14). Finally, the museum's press release also includes the detail that Tsimba asked the museum to remove the busts and displays that had been in the corridor which celebrated Belgian colonialism. The niches are now bare.

The hall's label concludes by explaining that the museum asked Freddy Tsimba to "honour these invisible and nameless victims with a new work." Using the 1876 to 1908 date range of the Belgian memorial as a framework, Mathieu Zana Etambala and Maarten Couttenier, two researchers at the AfricaMuseum, found the names of Congolese who died during that same time period in Belgium. These Congolese people who were in Belgium during this time can be divided into three different groups, made evident by the dates and cities listed on the glass. First, there are those who were brought to the Antwerp World Exposition in 1894; second, those who were brought to Tervuren during the Colonial Exposition of 1897; and third, those who were brought to the small village of Gijzigem as young children to be educated at the Institut Saint-Louis de Gonzague, where about 60 young Congolese boys and girls were sent starting in 1890.[22] Ironically, Tsimba honors the "nameless" by adding names to the windows.

Tsimba developed "Shadows" while he was an artist-in-residence at the AfricaMuseum in 2016. Living in Belgium, he would have noticed a small impediment to his plan to have the sun project shadows on the wall in the museum: the sun rarely shines in Belgium. When I first arrived in Belgium, a friend warned me "it rains over 200 days a year here," which a brief internet search and my later experience confirmed. From my own experience, I can attest that even when it is not raining, clouds are almost ever-present. On average, there are about 132 days of rain per year in Belgium, and about 1,504 hours of sunshine, making it similar to cities in

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[22] The Institut Saint-Louis de Gonzague was run by Father Van Impe, who organized a "Gijzegem village" at the Tervuren Colonial Exposition in 1897 to show off his "civilized" students. He was against the display of Congolese as uncivilized, but rather wanted to show that the Congolese could be civilized, as he was doing at his institute in Flanders (Rahier 2003, 63-64; see also Wynants 1997, 125-129).

Ireland and the United Kingdom (Lisbon, by comparison, has an average of 2781 hours of

sunshine per year) (Climate Data n.d.). Every Belgian I have discussed "Shadows" with has

brought up a lack of sunlight. But Tsimba explains, "they are shadows. They are there even if the

light is not there; they are there. If you see them or not, they will still haunt the museum" (pers.

comm., December 20, 2018). Even if the sun is not shining, the artwork still exists. The names

are still on the window.

For Tsimba, however, the names on the window are not *just* letters on glass. He explains,

"these people, they don't even have tombs, they don't even have a place to rest. I wanted to

install their names so that they could rest here. For me, they are like tombs or sanctuaries.

Before, they were just like that, in nature" (pers. comm., Dec, 20, 2018). The names inscribed on

the glass and the shadows that they make contain the spirits of those who died and whose names

are written.[23] Here, Tsimba makes evident what I consider "nkisi logic," with a nod to Tsimba's

own Kongo heritage (Jewsiewicki and Roberts 2018, 5). "Nkisi logic" refers to the idea that a

spirit can live within an artwork, such as in the types of objects called "nkisi" (plural *minkisi*).

Tsimba does not consider any of his artworks to be minkisi (pers. comm. Dec. 20, 2018), but as

Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Allen Roberts have shown, thinking with minkisi while analyzing

Tsimba's work illuminates important aspects of his artistic process and philosophy (Jewsiewicki

2016, Jewsiewicki and Roberts 2018).

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[23] As discussed below, I use the word "spirits" to describe what Tsimba terms "esprits" in French, referring to the non-physical presence of dead persons who might inhabit his artwork. Discussing Native American religious belief, David Shorter (2016) describes the word "spirit" as one that can "mean so much that it simply fails to mean anything at all" (3). In seeking specificity from Tsimba about his use of the term "esprits," however, I learned that Tsimba does not follow any one religious belief but describes himself as "not [an] atheist, but I believe. I don't know what I believe in, but I believe" (pers. comm. August 7, 2020). That "spirit" can mean many things is useful in this discussion of Tsimba's artworks because he is not explicitly working within historic Kongo belief systems which differentiate between kinds of spirits, or within a Christian tradition which might use the term "soul" (on Kongo spirit classifications, see MacGaffey 1977 or Martinez-Ruiz 2013, among others; scholarship about Kongo spirit-realms can provide seemingly contradicting information, as illustrated below, another reason why "spirit" is still useful, for now).

In having his installation work like an nkisi, Tsimba marshals Congolese power to challenge

what has been the predominant narrative of Belgian colonialism still evident in the museum

through such architectural details as the memorial wall. "Nkisi" is now most frequently used in

anglophone scholarship to refer to objects made to house spirits, also known as "power objects"

and previously referred to as "fetishes," the most well-known examples of which are large

anthropomorphic nail-figure sculptures (Figure 21).[24] Power objects can be found throughout

Central Africa, and are referred to by similar names ("nkishi" in the Luba region, for example).

The term refers to the spirit that is embodied by the power object, but has been so frequently

used to refer to the objects themselves that such use has become standard. [25] Nkisi objects are

made to harness and make available an nkisi spirit's power, and are physical embodiments of the

nkisi spirit's power. The most well-known and those I will discuss here come from what is

sometimes called the "Lower Congo," a western region of central Africa that is the ancestral

home of Kongo peoples and the Kongo kingdom, covering parts of what is now the Republic of

Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola (see for example Thornton 2020,

Bostoen and Brinkman 2018, and LaGamma 2015). Historically, an nkisi was associated with a

specific *nganga*, a healer or ritual specialist, who would create an nkisi through accumulating

specific materials as well as performing songs and actions throughout the nkisi's creation.

Minkisi could be used for various purposes, including healing illness, divination, and

adjudicating local disputes.

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[24] "Fétiche" is still commonly used in French, and all the Congolese people I have spoken with about the subject use this term when speaking in French. For a discussion of the history of the word and European views toward Kongo power objects, see Petridis 2008, 22-29.

[25] Martinez-Ruiz notes that "this collapsing of terms is done both by scholars and among the Bakongo themselves" (Martinez-Ruiz 2013, 151). According to art historian Robert Farris Thompson and anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey, Kongo peoples divide the world into that of the living and that of the dead, the latter of which is inhabited by ancestors, ghosts, "controlling spirits of localities" called *bisimbi,* and minkisi, spirits who assist nganga healers (see for example Thompson 1984, 107 or MacGaffey 1993, 59-61).

Figure 21. Nkisi figure from Lower Congo region, labeled as "Yombe," E.O.1949.9.1. 92 cm x 43 cm x 30 cm. ©
RMCA.

Discussing minkisi with Tsimba, he clarified that while the famous nail-figure minkisi minkondi are not used today, minkisi objects are still part of his life experience. For example, Tsimba's father was born a twin, but his sister died as a young child. Tsimba's father was made a small figure statue which he and the family believed to have the spirit of the lost twin within it, which he cared for until his death (pers. comm. August 7, 2020).[26] Tsimba has also seen examples of nail-figure minkisi for sale in Kinshasa's "Marché des Voleurs" (also known as the Marché des Valeurs). In addition, in 2010 a film crew followed him on his visit to the exhibition "Geo-Graphics" at Brussels' BOZAR, in which one of his sculptures was on display.[27] He stopped in front of an nkisi (Figure 21) and exclaimed, "This comes from my village – imagine!" He later clarified with me that he was quite surprised to see such an object in BOZAR (Brussels' Center of Fine Arts) and that when seeing its designation as being "Yombe" he thought of his father's village, Isangila, in the region of Manianga Mayombe, at the border between the Bayombe and the Manianga (sometimes spelled Manyanga) territories (pers. comm. September 8, 2020). Though Tsimba may not have been making explicit reference to minkisi, analyzing "Shadows" through nkisi logic sheds light on how his artwork *works* and illuminates alternative understandings of memorializing the dead inside of a museum.

What does it mean to say that an object (or an artwork) has power? Writing ca. 1900, Kongo preacher Nsemi Isaki explained that:

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[26] Such twin figures have been used historically in the Lower Congo region, and were described by Nsemi Isaki writing ca. 1900: "The statue of a twin is not a nkisi but an important kind of pacifier (mbidi a niembikisi) in case of the birth of twins. For if one of the two dies, it is not said that he has died. If the twin was male, they call him Went-to-Fetch; if female, Went-to-Chop Firewood. When one dies, the other will become angry; he must not be allowed to suckle unless the statuette of its companion-twin is tied to him. […] As the mother honors them in this way she ties a statue-charm with a string to the remaining child. […] The statuette thus represents the image of the twin who died, and this is done in order that the living one will not be upset and also die. Such a statue has no power to protect; it is simply so the other [remaining one] will know 'We are together' (quoted in Janzen and MacGaffey 1975, 36). Twins are important for many communities across Africa its diasporas (see for example the essays collected in Peek 2011).

[27] The video, titled "Freddy Tsimba's 48 hours@Bozar," is available on YouTube: https://youtu.be/roP2aIl0smQ.

> The *nkisi* has life; if it had not, how could it heal and help people? But the life of an *nkisi* is different from the life in people. It is such that one can damage its flesh (*koma mbizi*), burn it, break it, or throw it away; but it will not bleed or cry out. Yet the magicians think that an *nkisi* possesses life because when it heals a person it sucks illness out. In this sense they think an *nkisi* has inextinguishable life coming from a source. (Quoted in Janzen and MacGaffey 1974, 35, 4.1-4.5)

Isaki's description of minkisi exemplifies what first led Europeans to characterize the objects as "fetishes." Though now recognized by most as an insulting term, studying the early use of the term is helpful for understanding the early misinterpretations of such objects and how they can and cannot be understood in Europe today, such as at the AfricaMuseum. Historically, when used by Europeans, "fetish" referred to an object they judged as *wrongly* thought to have agency, and which they would say is *only* a representation of social relationships.[28] Anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey (1993) traces this thinking to Hegel, who believed Africans were not capable of abstract thought, and therefore would endow any random object with magical powers (32). MacGaffey warns that "fetish" is a purely European creation of which "we are still trying to disabuse ourselves" (ibid.). But if instead these "fetish" objects are *correctly* thought to have agency, and work within social relationships rather than as vehicles or representations of them, we approach an understanding of an object having power.

The manner in which an nkisi is made by an nganga illustrates how such a power object both relies on its social relationships and has its own power. Minkisi objects can serve as vessels for minkisi spirits, the latter of which can be replaced and switch vessels or can be removed entirely (thus making the object "dead" or "empty" [MacGaffey 1990, 49]). The objects only

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[28] In a series of three articles entitled "The Problem of the Fetish," William Pietz (1985, 1987, 1988) traces the origins of the the term "fetish," which he places in the space of encounter between Africa and Europe. This idea of "fetishes" created in spaces of encounter was expanded upon in the edited volume *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Places* (Spyer 1998), whose authors also focus on what Pietz (1985) termed "the fetish object's irreducible materiality" (7). For a more recent treatment of the subject, see J. Lorand Matory's *The Fetish Revisited: Marx, Freud, and the Gods Black People Make* (2018).

become activated when an nganga adds the specially chosen medicine packet, *bilongo*, to the object during a ceremony which would also include singing, musical instruments, and ceremonial dress as part of a much larger performance (e.g. MacGaffey 1993, 49-58). In the case of anthropomorphic minkisi, an artist would first carve and sell a figure to an nganga but the sculpture would not yet have power. The nganga would select medicines for the bilongo packet which would eventually be inserted into the object, the make-up of which was dependent on which nkisi would be called upon to inhabit the object, and for what purpose. In addition to ingredients signifying what job the nkisi would be asked to do, the nganga also had to be sure to attract and capture a spirit from the land of the dead, possibly though light reflection objects or via earth from a gravesite (Thompson 1978, 209; MacGaffey 1990, 51). Once an nkisi object was fully activated, it was a sort of "person."[29] Clients asked the nkisi to perform actions such as healing an injury, or hurting an enemy, and had to follow specific rules for behavior when the nkisi was in use (MacGaffey 1990, 53).

Healing is one of the most significant roles played by an nkisi. An nkisi's power to heal depended not on its outward appearance but on the combination of ingredients enlivening it as its bilongo. MacGaffey (1991) explains that "there were as many minkisi as there are diseases" (33).[30] Generally, an nganga needed to assess what ailed the client, and create the appropriate

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[29]Others have theorized this understanding of personhood as created in relationship to others. Janice Boddy writes of "dividuals" (Boddy 1998, 270, cited by M.N. Roberts 2013b, 70), Alfred Gell, discussing Roy Wagner, theorizes "fractal personhood" (Gell 1998, 140 discussing Wagner 1991, 163, both cited in A. Roberts 2013, 215), and David Shorter proposes "relations" (Shorter 2016).

[30] MacGaffey uses the past tense when writing about minkisi, in part because he usually writes about specific minkisi made long ago, many of which are now in western museums (see MacGaffey 1993, Janzen and MacGaffey 1974). Much of his most important work on minkisi was conducted with the Laman collection in Stockholm, which included texts written by Bakongo people in the early 20th century about the objects in the collection, which MacGaffey translated from Kikongo to English in his 1991 *Art and Healing of the Bakongo*. Art historian Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz (2013) uses the present tense to write about minkisi, reflecting his research experience with Kongo communituies in the late 1990s to early 2000s. I use present tense when discussing minkisi more broadly, but past tense when specifically discussing minkisi minkondi nail figures because my knowledge about such figures comes from scholarship based on objects made long ago and now in museums.

nkisi-object. Elements of the bilongo were chosen for their associations with the land of the dead, their names (and the opportunities for puns the names provided), and what MacGaffey terms "figurative" reasons (MacGaffey 1993, 62). As opposed to the better-known minkisi in European and American art museums, the majority of minkisi – and especially those made for ill individuals – were and are packets of the prescribed ingredients (Janzen and MacGaffey 1974) (see Figure 22). Some clients would have to take part in whatever ritual was necessary when undergoing initial treatment and continue to observe prohibitions specific to their nkisi in order to ward off future illness (MacGaffey 1993, 50).

Figure 22. Non-figurative Nkisi from the Lower Congo region, labeled as "Yombe." This nkisi is a wooden bell that has been repurposed. MO.0.0.41231. Approximately 35 cm x 18 cm x 16 cm. (Bought from G. Dehondt in 1945.) © RMCA.

Though most minkisi were and are created to help individuals, some minkisi have also been important actors in enforcement of social order. As such, they could also be seen to be able to "heal" an entire community. The most well-known forms of minkisi are those carved in wood covered with nails and iron fragments. In much of the Kongo region, these were called minkisi minkondi (sing. nkisi nkondi), and rather than being specific to a person, they assisted a community. The nkisi shown in Figure 21, which stopped Tsimba in his tracks when he visited

Bozar, is one such example. Each nail is associated with a case – such as vows or agreements – which was finalized by the insertion of the nail, acting like a signature (LaGamma 2015, 37; Thompson 1978, 207, 211). Allen Roberts (2019a) uses the term "interformance" to describe the relationships formed in the addition of a nail to an nkisi figure. "Inter" signals the "between-ness" of the action, involving several persons both in the world of the living and of the dead, while "formance" furnishes (meaning to supply but also to decorate, echoing the visuality of "performance") the experience, signaling the visual signifier of the nail (388). Roberts' neologism underlines the importance of the connections between people and minkisi spirits represented by an nkisi nkondi. The very display of the nails, purposefully not hammered all the way in, highlighted their use as a "moral medicine."[31] To break such a vow would mean to incur retribution from the nkondi, thus enforcing social norms (Thompson 1978, 212 and MacGaffey 1993, 87). Large minkisi minkondi could then heal a community suffering from disorder or disputes between families, with each nail a remaining witness to each disagreement and subsequent pact.

Bogumil Jewsiewicki (2016) first linked Tsimba's artistic practice to minkisi, writing that Tsimba "creates objects of power permitting him to open a space of healing and recreate social order" (13). The link between Tsimba's artwork and minkisi is clearest in regard to his figurative sculptures made of spent bullet casings, for which he is most well-known (Figure 23). Tsimba began making those sculptures in 1999, using shells collected from Kisangani, which had been a center of intensely violent fighting.[32] For Tsimba, each is linked to a life, and through reference

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[31] Thompson 1978, 211-212. Mary Nooter Roberts also makes this point in her teaching and scholarship on secrecy: "To own secret knowledge, and to show that one does, is a form of power. One function of art in Africa, then, is to act as a visual means for broadcasting secrecy—for publicly proclaiming the ownership of privileged information while protecting its contents (Nooter 1993, 24).

[32] Kisangani, a city of about 1.5 million people at the furthest navigable point up the Congo river, is the first big city armed forces would encounter after the large border cities (such as Goma and Bukavu) if moving from east to west.

to such tragic carnage, his art can heal. As accumulations of bullet casings representing lives or events, Tsimba's sculptures *formally* echo minkisi nail figures, which can include hundreds of iron nails, each likely representing an interaction between an nganga and a client. Jewsiewicki explains, "In an *nkisi*, each piece of metal from which a sculpture is formed conserves its identity and is witness to a past of which it is a ruin […]. Each used cartridge carries a history, and the place where it was collected also possesses an identity" (15). The parallel between the two is not exact; further, one cannot know whether a casing is from a lethal bullet, or what occasions linked to each metal insertion in an nkisi. To be clear, Tsimba is not an nganga and his sculptures are not minkisi. Nevertheless the visual parallels and the fundamental logic of an artwork as a home for a spirit remain.

A recent example of Tsimba's artwork was unveiled in Paris at the Théâtre de Chaillot on December 7th, 2018, the day before the reopening of the AfricaMuseum. The sculpture, entitled "Porteuse de vies" (Carrier of Lives), was created to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Figure 24). Presenting the sculpture was more than a symbol of the artist's successful commission, however. Tsimba points out that the bullet casings harvested in the soil of Congo were not made in Africa, but most likely in Europe, Asia, or the United States. The scores of victims from ongoing violence in Congo are not just a Congolese problem, and not only Congo needs Tsimba's healing work. When he makes a work out of spent cartridges, the spirits of those taken by the bullets have a place within the work, and are present

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The political violence in Congo from the 1990s to early 2000s is far too complex to go over here, but by 1999 both Rwanda and Uganda had forces stationed in the city. According to Jason Stearns (2011, 247) in one week in June 2000, over "6,000 artillery shells fell on the city […] accompanied by heavy machine gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades." For analysis of this time period, see Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, Turner 2007, Renton et al. 2007 (time period covered ends at 2000), Prunier 2009 (fighting in Kisangani in 2000 p. 240-243), Stearns 2011 (fighting in Kisangani in 2000 p. 235-247), and Berwouts 2017. Artists still work in Kisangani, however, and internationally-renowned choreographer Faustin Linyekula established his Studios Kabako in the city in 2006, which continues to be an important influence in the development of contemporary dance in the DRC (see Dupray 2013).

Figure 23 . "Silhouette effacée n.2222" (2006) by Freddy Tsimba. Dimensions: 92 x 62 x 33 cm. Photo: Beaux Arts London Gallery.

Figure 24: "Porteuse de Vies" (2018) by Freddy Tsimba, installed at the Théâatre de Chaillot in Paris. Photo from https://www.freddytsimba.com/realisations/ used with permission from the artist.

in Paris. When visitors see the work, he hopes that it touches them, that they examine it, and through discussing it they can begin to heal. Looking out the window in a Parisian restaurant, Tsimba explains, "I want to heal, they are sick here" (pers. comm., December 20, 2018).

Just as each nail in an nkisi can signify to the contemporary viewer how community objects are made up of individuals and their relationships with others, each name on the windows of "Shadows" is a reminder that those who died as a result of colonialism were not a vague, distant mass but individuals like any others, given names by their families, living and loving each day.[33] In the pre-renovation iteration of the museum, Congolese were more likely to be presented as "savages" or as nameless collectivities. Still, entering the museum through the introductory gallery visitors learn about many specific, identified Europeans while only a few Congolese are mentioned.[34] One name on the windows is particularly important to Tsimba: "Joseph Mavambo." Tsimba's full name is Freddy Bienvenu Tsimba Mavambu, and Freddy is sure that the "Mavambo" on the window is a misspelling of his father's uncle's name, Mavambu. Tsimba explains that in his family it was known that his grandfather's brother had left and never returned, but the story was never discussed. "It's sad," he says, that the story was only discussed vaguely, almost hidden (pers. comm. August 7, 2020). He was surprised to come across the name, in fact, since his family had assumed Mavambu was lost to history.

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[33] In her analysis of case studies of memorials commemorating slavery in the United States, Ana Lucia Araujo (2020) considers "walls of names" as a memorial practice which became a "major trend" in the second half of the 20th century. She cites Holocaust memorials, especially Jerusalem's Yad Veshem, as major examples of memorials centering names of victims. In contrast to genocides which are characterized by "the killing of large groups of nameless individuals," in identifying each victim with a name, the memorial creates a space where victims "regain the humanity that was taken from them" (Araujo 2020, S330). Araujo notes that names are not necessarily neutral, however, especially in the context of the Atlantic slave trade. Writing in 2020, I also note the importance of names, mourning, and justice as calls of "Say Her Name" are heard in protests across the country to demand justice for Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Miriam Carey, Kayla Moore, and many other black women who have been killed by police in the United States (African American Policy Forum, n.d.).

[34] These include Nchweke, Syms, Agika, and Matanda, artists of popular paintings which are displayed as part of the focus on Bogumil Jewsiewicki's collection of such paintings, and Kalulu, shown in a photograph with Henry Morton Stanley. "T. N'Gwe" is listed as the field collector of a giant rat, though I do not know this person's nationality.

The names written on the windows also evoke the importance of language and writing in the creation of minkisi. Among the medicines chosen for an nkisi bundle might be nuts or seeds whose Kikongo names create a verbal pun alluding to what the client is hoping the nkisi will do.[35] Words are as important to the nkisi bundle as the physical material.[36] The creation of the physical object is also linked to language by Martinez-Ruiz's presentation of minkisi as integral to a larger framework of Kongo graphic systems, and as a kind of three-dimensional form of Kongo writing. Each symbol made by an nganga while creating an nkisi relates to a written two-dimensional sign, so that one might "read" an nkisi (Martinez-Ruiz 2013, 180). Further, MacGaffey (2013) reminds us that the Kikongo term for carving, "nwata nsamba," also means "scarification," itself an act of inscribing on the human body (175), as is the case for Luba and Tabwa and probably other Congolese peoples as well (M. N. Roberts 2007; A. Roberts 1988). Tsimba's shadows are neither abstract nor figurative, but words acting as homes for ancestral spirits.

Finally, artistic repurposing of the AfricaMuseum's glass windows echoes one of the uses of mirrors and other reflective surfaces in many minkisi figures.[37] As mentioned above, components which shine, glitter, or sparkle draw spirits, and mirrors on the torsos of minkisi minkondi figures were especially important (Figure 25). Bilongo medicine packets were frequently placed in the lower torso of an nkisi figure, sometimes in a cylinder protruding from

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[35] MacGaffey 1998a, 231. As an example, MacGaffey explains that a kola nut, called "kazu," might be included because it sounds like the verb "Kazuma," to "bite off," therefore spurring the nkisi to "bite off" witchcraft (ibid.).

[36] Zoe S. Strother (2000) details the importance of speech acts in the use of power objects by Pende manganga, who have historically lived in inland areas to the southeast of the Kongo region.

[37] Mirrors and glass used in minkisi were also used as "eyes" or as a compass for identifying dangers (MacGaffey 1993, 65). In addition to covering the bilongo packet on the torso, mirrors and glass can frequently be found in the eyes of anthropomorphic figures.

Figure 25 a and b. EO.1967.63249 Kongo *nkisi* showing the importance of bilongo medicine in its torso. The packet had been closed with a glass (top) which detached from the body while in possession of the museum. The exposed medicine clearly shows a piece of glass. Studied by author during the University of Antwerp Summer School on conservation of ethnographic objects, 2017.

the torso (as evident in Figures 21 and 25).[38] Mirrors or reflecting glass are often found sealing

the bilongo packet of an nkisi figure, a location of upmost power and secrecy. According to

André Fu-Kiau kia Bunseki, one of Thompson's most important collaborators (and a published

scholar in his own right),[39] the piece of glass is "a wall or door which permits the witch or healer

to enter the other world" (quoted in Thompson 1978, 219), which Thompson describes as a

"sparkle at the point of intersection between worlds, where death and life lie counterpoised"

(ibid.). If, for Tsimba, the glass thresholds of minkisi are the location in the world of the living

where spirits of the dead can find rest, the windows in the museum also act as an "intersection

between worlds."

　　While Tsimba's "Shadows" may act as a resting place for the spirits whose names are

included on the windows, there is another resting place for some of these same spirits less than a

kilometer away. On the north side of the town church in Tervuren, there are seven raised tombs

for the seven Congolese who died during the 1897 World's Fair at Tervuren: Ekia, Gemba,

Kitukwa, Mpeia, Zao, Samba and Mibange. Ekia died on July 2, only five days after his arrival

in Belgium, and the other six died in what most sources describe as an unusually cold August

(Figure 26). Couttenier writes that the deaths caused protests, both from anti-colonial factions

who called for the closing of the exhibition, and from local Tervuren residents who did not want

the Congolese buried in their local cemetery (2005, 158). Anthropologist Filip De Boeck writes

that "apparently" more Congolese died during the exhibition but the true number was hidden by

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[38] Throughout his writings MacGaffey refers to this location as the "mooyo," which is translated as "belly" but also "life" (e.g. MacGaffey 1993, 43). Robert Farris Thompson (1978) refers to the cylinder protruding from the belly as the "kundu," which he describes as "the opposite of minkisi, the opposite of medicine, life made terrible" (218). Mulinda Habi Buganza, who worked at the National Museum of Zaire, calls this location the "ntima" or heart of the figure (Mulinda 1987, cited in A. Roberts 2019a).

[39] E.g. Fu-Kiau 1969 and Fu Kiau 2001. Like many Congolese of his generation, he changed his name so that while he is frequently referred to as "André Fu-Kiau kia Bunseki" (as in Thompson 1978) he later published as Kimbwandènde Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau.

the organizers. The deaths only became known when Flemish farmers local to Tervuren

protested having "pagans" buried in their Catholic graveyard (De Boeck 1998 52 n 1). De Boeck

describes the initial burial place as a "mass grave" (ibid), while Couttenier writes that they were

first buried in unconsecrated ground, usually reserved for adulterers and those who died by

suicide, before being moved to their present location in 1947-48.[40]

Since their initial burials, the seven graves have become an important lieu de mémoire.

Members of the Congolese Force Public were brought to Belgium for the 1930 Antwerp World's

Fair and visited the graves in Tervuren (Couttenier 2005, 158). Congolese "évolués" who were in

Brussels for the 1958 World's Fair (which also displayed Congolese people) held a ceremony at

the graves.[41] Couttenier (2005) reports that the deceased are also honored annually on All Saints'

and All Souls' Days (158). The day before the reopening of the AfricaMuseum, I attended a

ceremony to honor these same seven Congolese. The graves had been recently cleaned, roses

were placed on top of each, with candles at the bottom of each sarcophagus (Figure 26). The

ceremony was held almost entirely in Flemish, a notable choice since it is not spoken in the DRC

and therefore is understood by very few Congolese, even among those residing in Belgium. For

his part, Tsimba doubts that the tombs in the Tervuren graveyard even have bodies in them.

Knowing how the townspeople reacted in 1897, he asked me if I truly believe those same people

would allow for the burials in the church.

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[40] Couttenier 2005, 158. Contradicting Couttenier, in an endnote without citation, Stanard (2011a) writes "The tombs are empty; the dead were buried in a common grave" (280 n1).

[41] Ibid. "Évolués," literally translated as "evolved people," was a term used in the Belgian Congo to refer to Africans who had adopted European modes of living including dress, education, religion, habitation, and salaried work. See Kadima-Tshimanga 1982, Mutamba Makomgo 1998, Mutamba Makombo 2009, and Tödt 2012, among others. Jewsiewicki (2003) links the development of a class of "évolués" to the rise of "popular paintings" made to be displayed in a "modern" family's salon.

Figure 26. Graves at the church in Tervuren during the memorial ceremony, December 8, 2018.

In summary, analyzing "Shadows" while thinking *with* minkisi shows how Tsimba harnesses the power of the dead to confront colonial culture throughout the museum, therefore creating an artwork that both exposes and may begin to heal the wounds caused by Belgium's colonialism. Tsimba has brought a Congolese approach to memorialization into the museum while using the visual devices of a Belgian memorial. A space once meant to celebrate Belgian military achievements and honor those who died in military service in Congo is redirected to encourage reflection on the linked pasts of Belgium and Congo as nation states, and of Belgian and Congolese victims of colonialism.

"Shadows" Haunting the Lieu de Mémoire

Tsimba's installation of "Shadows" has, in a manner, turned the museum into a mausoleum. For Tsimba, however, it was already a mausoleum. He describes it as "a place of history, it's a powerful place (un lieu fort). It's death, really," and he characterizes his artwork as a "tomb" (pers. comm., December 20, 2018). Tsimba is unknowingly paraphrasing Theodor Adorno's (1967) opening of his essay on museums:

> The German word, "museal" ("museumlike"), has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present. Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are the family sepulchers of works of art. (175)

Rather than fighting against the association of a museum with death, however, Tsimba embraces it for his installation and does not see death as separate from "the needs of the present." For the museum to be a tomb is not necessarily negative, as the spirits of the dead are also not necessarily to be feared.

Museums are not just tombs for art as Adorno states, and natural history museums can be especially macabre. Though the AfricaMuseum no longer stores human remains, in 1964 the museum transferred 650 human skulls to the Royal Institution of Natural Sciences in Brussels (A. Roberts 2013, 145). De Boeck (1998) ties the graves in Tervuren to the development of ethnographic museums in the 19th century, describing the early AfricaMuseum as "a shrine for the premodern" developed out of a "nostalgia for lost worlds and identities" (30). This nostalgia led to a "crisis of memory" in which "memory itself becomes a museum, a burial-place where lost identities are mourned, [...] evolv[ing] into a site of death" (ibid.). In 1913, just three years after the museum's opening, Belgian sociologist Cyrille Van Overbergh described the various museums of Brussels as "lifeless beings" giving "the impression of a cemetery" (Van Overbergh 1913, 98, cited in Nys 2008, 113).[42]

Speaking in December 2018, Tsimba had hopes for the post-renovation museum, but still saw that major changes would be needed. In his words, the museum had been a "closed place" (lieu fermé), but thanks to the renovation it had begun to open up. As we discussed his idea of spirits of the dead coming to rest in the museum, I asked Tsimba about the many minkisi stored in the AfricaMuseum. Several people I had met had argued that these minkisi cannot rest *because* they are in the museum.[43] Tsimba did not acknowledge that dissonance. In a similar manner to how he discussed the "sick" residents of Paris, Tsimba proposed that the minkisi locked in the museum were making those associated with the museum sick, and were also sick

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[42] Ironically from a contemporary perspective, Van Overbergh's suggestion to bring life into museums was to introduce animal dioramas (Nys 2008, 113). For further elaboration on Van Overbergh and the grotesqueries of natural history museums in Belgium and elsewhere, see Roberts 2013, 144-145.

[43] There are many diverging opinions on this matter, and each object has its own history. Some minkisi show evidence that the bilongo packets were removed from them before being given to or taken by Europeans (e.g. LaGamma 2015, 264-265). Since minkisi were created by a specific nganga to meet particular needs of his (or possibly her) clients, a loss of association with such persons could lead to the loss of power and the nkisi spirit for the object (MacGaffey 1990, 49).

themselves.[44] "But how could one heal them?" I asked. "You have to liberate them," he responded. Tsimba did not present himself as a provider of solutions, however. "I don't know, but you have to find a solution. You have to ask people, their descendants, and the people need to decide. The village chiefs, people like that. Not me, I'm just an individual." Tsimba did have one proposal for "opening" up the museum however: include more contemporary art (pers. comm. December 20, 2018).

With "Shadows," Tsimba opened up the museum by inviting the spirits of dead into the building. Asked to "honor the invisible and nameless victims," Tsimba inscribed their names in shadow, practicing what Plato might term "skiagraphia," a word used by ancient Greeks to describe illusionistic painting but whose etymology breaks down into "σκῐᾱ́," shadow, and "γράφω," to write (Stoichita 1997, 28; Gombrich 1994, 13). Shadows have played important roles in histories of art, epistemologies, and politics around the world, the diversities of which are worth noting. In Europe, one of the first extant discussions of shadows is found in the allegory of the cave, a key story in Plato's *Republic* (514-520). Those in the cave believe shadows to be reality, ignorant to the outside world reflected by the shadows. In this allegory, the philosopher, after ascending to the realm of the true, returns to denounce the shadows as not true. However, the philosopher's attempt to liberate others with the truth fails when those in the cave prefer their cave reality to the outside world, and fight anyone attempting to force them outside. Contrary to Plato's interpretation of shadows as indicative of the "unreal," the story of the wedding of Damayanti and Nala in the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* depicts shadows as indicators of the "real." During the wedding, Damayanti is charged with choosing Nala out of a line of suitors, but four Gods have decided to trick her and have disguised themselves as Nala.

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[44] Tsimba compares the minkisi in storage to his own experience getting sick while in a Belgian detention center, discussed in Chapter Four.

Damayanti recognizes Nala, however, because unlike the Gods his feet touch the ground, he

blinks, and he casts a shadow. In this example, the shadow indicates Nala's "true" betrothed.

Whereas for Plato shadows are deceptive, in the *Mahabharata* shadows indicate the real Nala.

Art historian E.H. Gombrich recounts the story of Nala and Damayanti in his discussion

of shadows in Western art (1994, 11), concluding that the presence of Nala's shadow reveals the

gods to be "mere phantoms." In much of Western art, from Caravaggio's chiaroscuro to modern

photography, shadows have indeed alluded to phantoms, and have been used to instill fear of the

unknown and evoke Western connotations of darkness with evil (see Gombrich 1994 or

Baxandall 1995). Shadows, however, are not always negative, and they carry different meanings

around the world, as shown by the above examples.[45] Tsimba's "Shadows" perhaps has most in

common with Javanese *Wayang* or Turkish *Karagöz* shadow puppetry, in which shadows are the

medium of communication and representation. Further, for Tsimba the shadows are not "mere

phantoms" but homes for *actual* phantoms – to stretch a meaning of "spirit." That the shadows

take the form of names of the dead means they are not "mere" shadows but honor the memories

of those who had died.

Discussing "Shadows," Tsimba specifically used the verb "haunt" ("hanter") to describe

the installation's role within the AfricaMuseum as a useful concept for grappling with

postcolonial memories. Moving from Tsimba's experiences in Congo to Euro-American

academia, haunting has become a useful trope since Jacques Derrida coined "hauntology" in his

1994 *Specters of Marx* and Avery Gordon theorized haunting as a sociological tool in her 1997

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[45] Jun'ichiro Tanizaki (1977), for example, writes of the importance of shadow and darkness in Japanese
architecture, in which shadows create ornament, "mystery and depth" in what can be interpreted as an otherwise
simple room (18-21). Writing about Senegalese Mouride saint Amadou Bamba, Roberts and Roberts (2003) discuss
how artists and the saint's followers have celebrated the shadow in the only known photograph of Bamba, a shadow
so dark it obscures his right foot and sunshine so brightly reflecting off of one side of his face that it looks more like
a "constellation of black-and-white shapes" (55-56). The shadows in the photograph can be interpreted as part of
Bamba's saintliness and his proximity to enlightenment and God (53-53).

Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination. Both authors grapple with the presence of the past in the present. A brief search for "postcolonial haunting" in 2020 leads to vibrant academic discussions about books, and to a lesser extent, "texts" broadly defined, discussions which underscore that the "post" of "postcolonial" does not indicate a finality, as the effects of the colonial era continue into the present (Craps 2010, 468-469; Demos 2013, 8). Applications of Derrida and Gordon's approaches to haunting in regard to contemporary African arts, however, are almost absent in academic discussions (even if considerations of colonial memories and the occult in contemporary African arts are common). As thinking with minkisi shows how Congolese concepts of the interrelationships between the living and dead can illuminate understandings of Tsimba's artwork in the museum, thinking with hauntology can illustrate how "Ombres" also working within European modes of relating with the past and with the dead.[46]

Though most theorizing about postcolonial haunting occurs in the field of literary studies, specters, ghosts, and apparitions belong to a visual realm. The root of the word "specter" comes from Latin, in which the noun "spectrum" means "picture" and the verb "specio" means to look. One definition of "spectral" today, for example, means "produced merely by the action of light on the eye" (OED Online). Its synonyms include "apparition" and "ghost." The first definition of apparition is "the action of appearing or becoming visible" (OED Online). One of Gordon's

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[46] Tsimba's use of the word "haunt" also echoes an anecdote recounted by Robert Farris Thompson in his chapter "The Structure of Recollection: The Kongo New World Visual Tradition" (Thompson 1981c). Thompson draws connections between practices in the Kongo region and the American South, with one major focus being "bottle trees," that is, trees covered in shining glass bottles. Thompson writes that near Oxford, Mississippi, a "main purpose of building these gleaming structures was the catching of 'haunts'" (180). Further south, Eudora Welty describes bottle trees as a "lure" for spirits, attracted by the shining bottles, who once inside the bottles cannot get out and thus cannot enter the owner's home (quoted in Thompson 1981c, 178). Returning to the museum context, Thompson included bottle tress in his exhibition "Face of the Gods," whose altars were an early example of museum installations challenging previous understandings of museum displays (Thompson 1993, M.N. Roberts 2017).

(1997) definitions for ghost is "that special instance of the merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present" (24). To see a ghost is to see what cannot be seen, or to feel the physical presence of that which does not exist physically. Its invisibility depends on the existence of the visible.[47] Similarly, to see a shadow is to see an *absence* of light, and to see something that one cannot touch. Like a ghost's invisibility, its existence presupposes the visible and light.

The paradox of making visible the invisible perhaps explains why haunting is discussed more in relation to literature than to visual arts.[48] Art historian T.J. Demos, however, wrote *Return to the Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art* (2013) about European artists grappling with colonial histories, including three Belgian artists. Demos devotes a chapter each to video works by Sven Augustijnen, Vincent Meeesen, and Renzo Martens, two of which focus specifically on Congo (Augustijnen and Martens), and one of which is titled "Spectres" (the film by Augustijnen). Demos argues that haunting is an appropriate frame for his discussion because the colonial past "is a past that has not really past" (12), though specters "cannot be situated firmly within representation" (8). Whereas Tsimba is a Congolese artist who created artwork in Belgium addressing the specters of the colonial past and present, Demos presents Belgian artists who traveled to Congo to "investigat[e] the places where specters of colonialism reside and cause havoc" (160). These specters do not only haunt spaces in Congo, however,

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[47] This ghostly paradox is similar to Freud's understanding of the uncanny, in which the unfamiliar is also somehow familiar (Freud 1955). The uncanny also plays an important role in haunting and Gothic novels (see Roven n.d. for an introduction).

[48] Though not much has been written about postcolonial haunting in the visual arts, there is a significant body of writing about European and American photography and the occult, including haunting, especially in relation to 19th century spirit photographers (e.g. Chéroux et al. 2005, Kaplan 2008, Keller 2008, Polk 2012). In addition, in 2010 the Guggenheim organized the exhibition "Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance," and in 2020 the National Museum of Australia organized an exhibition "Haunting" about histories along the Murrumbidgee River in New South Wales.

which is why artworks such as "Shadows" by Tsimba (and others discussed in this dissertation) that awake colonial ghosts *in Belgium* are vital.

While Demos' work makes clear that European artists are crucial partners in discussions of colonial hauntings, African artists and African histories are central and deserve greater attention. Professor of comparative literature Ayo A. Coly addresses haunting in contemporary African arts in her book *Postcolonial Hauntologies: African Women's Discourses of the Female Body* (2019). She argues that colonial discourses about the African female body haunt present-day postcolonial discourses on that same subject. Across the six chapters of her book, Coly addresses discussions of women's bodies in African politics, from Nigerian anti-nudity bills to the 2009 Caster Semenya, case to the repatriation of Sarah Baartman's remains, among other events and texts. She dedicates one chapter to nine visual and performance artists based in six African countries.[49] Coly specifically analyzes how the artists both make work as African women (inhabiting haunted female bodies) and about African women. She focuses on representations of African female nudes by these artists, examining how the artists reject colonial haunting by "affirm[ing] the spectralized subject and assert[ing] agency for the subject haunted by the colonial statement of the African female body" (140). Building on Gordon's idea of haunting as "a critical awareness of a 'something-to-be-done'" (135, citing Gordon 1997, xvi), Coly argues that the artists use haunted and haunting female bodies to create an "emancipatory epistemology" (135) subverting Western and colonial norms (146).

Gordon borrows the concept of "something to be done" from Michel de Certeau. Writing about the practice of history, de Certeau (1988) argues that "writing places a population of the

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[49] In her chapter "Subversive and Pedagogical Hauntologies: The Unclothed Female Body in Visual and Performance Arts," Coly discusses the work of Nathalie Mba Bikoro (Gabon), Julie Djikey (DRC), Angèle Etoundi Essamba (Cameroon), Wangechi Mutu (Kenya), Zanele Muholi (South Africa), Grace Nditiru (Kenya), Valérie Oka (Côte d'Ivoire), Tracey Rose (South Africa), and Bernie Searle (South Africa).

dead on stage" creating a kind of gallery of history (99). He compares the writing of history to a

burial rite, which helps those in the present make sense of death (and the past), but also ties

writing to its physical action: "'To mark' a past is to make a place for the dead, but also to

redistribute the space of possibility, to determine negatively what *must be done*" (100). He also

defines writing as a tomb that "honors and eliminates" the dead, remembering them while also

taking them out of the present. The tomb is specifically "connected to the labor aimed at creating

in the present a place (past or future) to be filled, a 'something that must be done'" (101).

Tsimba's writing, his *marks* on the windows, create a tomb in an actual gallery, and previously a

gallery of colonial histories at that.

Tsimba's inclusion in the museum is both a call and response to the acknowledgement

that "something must be done." In framing the renovation as a "decolonization," the staff of the

AfricaMuseum demonstrated that they knew that something had to be done to acknowledge the

horrors of the colonial past. Tsimba was given some of that space where he put "the dead on

stage" but also changed the gallery into one calling for something more to be done. To

acknowledge the deaths of Congolese in Belgium before 1908 in the museum is to bring

attention to an aspect of Belgian history that until recently had not been discussed much by most

Belgians. The renovation and reopening of the AfricaMuseum has set in motion important public

discussions of Belgian colonial histories, in which artists are playing an important role.

Tsimba has invited ghosts into the museum.[50] Gordon writes, "ghosts appear when the

trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from

view" (xvi). Haunting, the "modus operandi" of ghosts (179), occurs "when the cracks and

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[50] Tsimba would not use the word "ghost" (fantôme) to describe the spirits of the dead he has brought to the
museum, but rather "spirits." "Ghosts" as used and theorized by Gordon is a useful translation, however, but as with
any translation cultural connotations are lost and gained. In the case of "Shadows" I do not use "ghost" to mean
something scary or ill-willed, but rather in the sense expanded upon above.

rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different than before, seems like it must be done" (xvi). Though the renovation construction may be done, the museum's cracks are exposed, and the disturbing feelings felt by many in regard to the museum are now more apparent than ever. Returning to Plato's allegory, Tsimba has created shadows on a wall illustrating a different worldview, encouraging viewers to investigate the histories that cast the shadows – one hopes visitors will embrace this opportunity, unlike Plato's cave dwellers. Tsimba has invited ghosts to haunt the museum not to stir up the past but to reckon with the present (184) and to subvert colonial norms (Coly 2019, 146).

Haunting is a necessary part of the memory work needed as the museum moves toward decolonization. "Ghost stories," Gordon explains, both "strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced" and create "a countermemory for the future" (22). On memory, she points to Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994), in which he writes that exorcism is needed "not in order to chase away the ghosts, but this time to grant them the right [… to a] hospitable memory […] out of a concern for *justice* (220). Such justice is part of the "something to be done" prompted by the ghostly haunting of the museum, and is key to the utopian vision of a decolonized museum. Gordon points to the opening line of Derrida's book, "Someone, you or me, comes forward and says: I would like to learn to live finally" (xvi, cited in Gordon 2008, 184). To learn to live, *finally*, to at last achieve reckoning with repressed pasts *in the present,* is to aim for a utopian ideal. While one can reckon with repressed pasts, these pasts will not achieve the state of having been reckoned with; while one can work to decolonize the AfricaMuseum, the museum will not achieve the state of having been decoloniz*ed*.

Tying Together Disparate Memorial Practices

Ghosts are in the museum, demanding justice in the shadows. "Something to be done" is a call to action, echoing Césaire and Fanon's mandates for the creation of something entirely new in pursuit of decolonization.[51] If, according to Césaire (2000), "colonization = thingification," (42), and it follows that "museumification = thingification," could "decolonization = de-thingification?" Or, to translate such an equation, could decolonization mean the acceptance that some objects in the museum are not objects at all, but beings, perhaps even persons (ghosts, spirits, minkisi or otherwise)? This line of logic reflects Amy Lonetree's celebration of reorganizing the Ziibiwing Center in Michigan around Anishinabe tradition and understandings of the world (Lonetree 2012), Donald Cosentino creating living shrines in his exhibition "Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou" (1995), or Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts offering prayerful interactions with icons of the Senegalese Sufi saint Amadu Bamba in their "A Saint in the City" (2003) program (see also M.N. Roberts 2017). Tsimba not only brings to the Memorial Hallway different memories, he brings a different way of thinking about memory informed by Congolese epistemologies (cf. Roberts and Roberts 1996).

While those writing about haunting might use words like "ghosts" or "specters" and Tsimba used the word "spirit" (esprit) when speaking with me in French, a return to Kongo worldview provides a framework for understanding the coexistence of the living and the dead. Whereas haunting and memory are frequently written about as "making the past present," for many in Congo, "the dead" do not live in the past, but in the present. In response to my inquiry as to how he would refer to the "spirits" of the dead – whom he described as roaming around in

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[51] In his *Discourse on Colonialism* (2000) Césaire urged readers to move forward from colonization by creating a new society (51-52). In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon (2004) argued that to focus on the past is to ignore the present, and that decolonization is a complete change, an "agenda for total disorder" (2).

nature – were we to speak in Lingala or Kikongo, Tsimba provided several translations. In Lingala, he might say "bilima" (sing. elima) or "milimo" (sing. molimo), and in Kikongo, "bisimbi" (sing. kisimbi) (pers. comm. September 21, 2020). *Bisimbi* are a class which MacGaffey (1993) glosses as "the tutelary spirit of a particular locality" (27) and Thompson describes as "immortal spirits […] transformed into time-resistant natural forces or natural forms" who have passed through the land of the dead and have returned.[52]

The spirits of the dead, including bisimbi, do not return from a different time but from a different place. Robert Farris Thompson (1981a) describes Kongo cosmology as an understanding of "mirrored worlds," one of the living and one of the dead, "circumscribed by the cosmic journey of the sun" (27-28). To move from the land of the living to that of the dead (called *Mpemba*), and back again, bisimbi cross the *Kalunga* line, a "watery barrier" such as a river or the ocean, a line which divides the two worlds (28; Martinez-Ruiz 2013, 31). These mirrored worlds are united by the circular movement of the sun which visits both worlds, such that midnight in the land of the living is noon in the land of the dead.[53] This concept is represented by the *Dikenga* cosmogram, a variation on two intersecting lines, of which the horizontal line represents Kalunga.[54] The Dikenga combines with the overarching concept of Kalunga so that certain locations in the land of the living are especially potent for communication and movement between the two worlds, such as a cemetery or a crossroads.

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[52] Thompson 1981a, 28. Thompson wrote that the "captured soul" of an nkisi object can be a simbi spirit, but also another kind of (unidentified) spirit (1981, 37). MacGaffey (1993) differentiates between bisimbi and minkisi, identifying the former as "public" spirits and the later as "private" members of the "land of the dead" (59). Martinez-Ruiz (2013) considers bisimbi as an overarching class of spirits, of which minkisi are a part (33-35).

[53] Thompson 1981a, 27; Janzen and MacGaffey 1974, 34. The idea of Mpemba as a mirrored world is also seen in the above-mentioned use of mirrors in minkisi as as "point of intersection between worlds" (Thompson 1978, 219).

[54] Martinez-Ruiz 2013, 71. The centrality of cosmograms in Kongo worldview is not without dissent, and MacGaffey 2016 cautions against a "fetishization" of the cosmogram.

Could "Shadows" be one such location, where a reflective surface calls on the spirits of the dead by name?

Moving from rural Kongo lands to the Kinshasa of the 1990s, Filip De Boeck writes that in Kinshasa, "the dead exhume themselves, while the living seem condemned to live in the disturbing company of these severed restless souls walking around" (De Boeck and Plissart 2004, 82). In Congo, the 1990s was a period of great violence, due in large part to consequences of the Rwandan genocide.[55] Death spurred political action: public mourning became protests against violence and poverty, and in Kinshasa the UDPS opposition party would announce "dead city days" (journées ville morte) (De Boeck and Plissart 2004, 132). Graduating from the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1989, the 1990s were a period when Tsimba was beginning his artistic explorations in metalworking in the Matonge neighborhood of Kinshasa, including his work with emptied bullet casings.[56] For many Congolese, living in cities or in the countryside, the dead live alongside the living.

Tsimba's artwork brings an alternative worldview into the museum, but not one that is entirely foreign to Belgium. In comparing "Shadows" to an nkisi and taking assertions of haunting seriously, Tsimba's work should not be understood to possess an exotic, dark, "other" point of view. To even suppose such a divide exists would be to ignore centuries of exchange

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[55] During and after the 1994 Rwandan genocide over a million people fled to Zaïre, settling in refugee camps. Some of these included the "génocidaires," who continued their attacks on Rwanda from their new Zaïrian base. In 1996 the new Rwandan government allied with a rebel group led by Laurent Kabila to create the AFDL, which after taking control of the refugee camps in northeastern Zaire continued west across the country. By May of 1997 Kabila was sworn in as the president of the newly renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kabila's march across the country is now generally referred to as the First Congo War, with the Second Congo War breaking out in 1998. This is also called Africa's World War as it involved nine African countries and is the deadliest conflict since the Second World War (Prunier 2009).

[56] Matonge is one of the most well-known neighborhoods of Kinshasa, considered the home of the city's nightlife. De Boeck wrote, "Everywhere, it seems, the dead themselves revive and multiply. At night, they attend concerts to dance to the popular tunes of Kin's orchestras. Places such as *Rond Point Victoire*, the center of Matonge, are said to be so crowded due to the numerous dead who are attracted by Matonge's night life" (De Boeck and Plissart 2004, 136).

(economic, religious, and cultural) between Europe and Central Africa, and Tsimba's own life experience. Tsimba and I converse in French, and have met in cafes in Brussels, Paris, and Kinshasa. Even minkisi, oft interpreted as symbols of savage, dark beliefs via Eurocentric biases, are made with at least some European materials. Nails and mirrors – signature characteristics of minkisi minkondi – were imported from Europe for use in Congo.[57] For example, Figure 21, which stopped Tsimba in his tracks, features a very small scallop shell at its topmost point. Such scallop shells were and continue to be symbols of St. James, whose emblems were appropriated by the Kongo King Afonso in the 16th century (Fromont 2014, 243; Thornton 2015, 92; see Chapter Three). As seen in Figure 21, the shell is part of a structure which sits on top of the figure's head. In some minkisi minkondi, this is where one might find an *mpu* fiber cap, a symbol of power and prestige. In others, the top of the head is the location of an additional bilongo packet, sometimes sealed with a scallop shell.[58] Further research is necessary to investigate this specific figure, but the choice of the top of the head is certainly important. According to MacGaffey (1993), the top of the head was a potent location for communication with spirits, who could enter through the fontanelle (65). Shells are also linked to the watery threshold of the dikenga line (Milbourne 2013, 42). Returning to Europe, visitors to Brussels today might also notice somewhat out-of-place golden scallop shells, placed into cobblestones in the center of the city. There, they guide visitors between the two churches dedicated to St. James, and along the medieval pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. Symbols and their

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[57] Fromont 2014, 247, MacGaffey 1986, 44, A. Roberts 2019a, 381-393. Not all nails were imported, and locally made nails can be seen on many minkisi minkondi in museum collections. Figure 21, for example, includes both locally made and European-made nails. See also Pietz's discussion of the broader idea of "the fetish," which he posits "originated in the cross-cultural spaces of the coast of West Africa during the sixteen and seventeenth centuries" (1985, 5).

[58] E.O.0.0.22438 in the collection of the AfricaMuseum is an example of one such nkisi. For discussion of that work, see Milbourne 2013, 40-43.

interpretations have long moved back and forth between Europe and Congo, intermingling in century-old minkisi and in Tsimba's "Shadows."

"Shadows" is not only an artistic intervention into the space of the Memorial Hallway, but acts as what James E. Young would call a "countermonument." Writing about Holocaust memorials in Germany, Young (1993) discusses monuments by contemporary artists built in Germany in the 1980s which act both as memorials to those lost during the Second World War and as monuments to the German duty to remember. Young describes them as "painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being" (27) and "are born resisting the very possibility of their birth" (28). Like the countermonuments Young discusses, such as a pillar designed by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz for Harburg that slowly sank into the ground, Tsimba's "Shadows" plays with absence and presence. The shadows are only seen with a source of light, though their potential is always present on the windows. Further, Young describes countermonuments as memorials whose "aim is not to console but to provoke" (30), which, as we have seen, is an aim shared by Tsimba's "Shadows." However, all of the artists Young discusses in his chapter on countermonuments in Germany are either German or Austrian, and are therefore making monuments in their own broader community and culture. Tsimba, a Congolese artist, is creating a memorial to Congolese *in Belgium*, and he is using some fundamental conceptual approaches foreign to Belgian thought.

This difference between the creation of memorials by members of a community in their own community and Tsimba's memorial created by a Congolese artist but installed in Belgium also points to the limits of Nora's lieu de mémoire, as I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.[59] Lieux de mémoire are legible as such within their own cultures but not necessarily

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[59] Nora (1989) leaves some room for multivocality in his theorization of lieux de mémoire, describing them as "ensembles constructed over time, which draw their meaning from the complex relations between their elements"

outside of their cultures; a lukasa, for example, is not legible as a memory device outside of the

Luba region (unless one lives in a Luba diaspora community or has studied the scholarship of

Mary Nooter Roberts) (Huyssen 2003, 96-97). What to make of a transcultural lieu de mémoire,

which brings together memories and memory practices from disparate traditions? Michael

Rothberg (2010) proposes "neouds de mémoire," that is, "knots of memory" to move beyond the

Nora's reliance on nation-state (7). For Rothberg, the "knot" suggests that "acts of memory are

rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at

territorialization" (ibid). Tsimba brings together strands of memory practices from Belgium (and

Europe more broadly) and ties them together with memory practices from Congo through his

nkisi logic, moving memory beyond the nation state and beyond cultural traditions.

The underlying image of noeuds de mémoire comes from the Black Atlantic.[60] Proposing

noeuds de mémoire as a new approach to memory, Rothberg cites both Martinican author Patrick

Chamoiseau and British scholar Paul Gilroy as influences, particularly Gilroy's question "Why

does it remain so difficult for so many people to accept the knotted intersection of histories

produced by this fusion of horizons?"[61] The image of a knot is meant to better describe the

dynamism of memory, as evidenced in its verb form describing the action of bringing separate

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(22). In the spirit of amalgamation, I do not mean to suggest that one should replace Nora's lieux de mémoire with noeuds de mémoire, but that this newer conceptualization of how lieux de mémoire work can highlight the disparate memory traditions brought together in specific sites.

[60] "Black Atlantic" is a term first theorized by Paul Gilroy (1993) to describe the hybridity of cultures combining influences from Africa, America, Europe and the Caribbean. While the focus of most scholarship on the Black Atlantic focuses on movements from east to west across the Atlantic, to travel from Africa to Europe by sea one must also "cross" the Atlantic, but from south to north.

[61] Rothberg 2010, 8, quoting Gilroy 2000, 78. Rothberg introduces the concept of noeud to mémoire in his introduction to the double issue of *Yale French Studies* which includes an article by Max Silverman, whom Rothberg credits with coining the term (pers. comm. December 10, 2019). Max Silverman used the term in his article about Chamoiseau and Rodolphe Hammadi's *Guyane: Traces-mémoires du bagne*, in which he discusses Chamoiseau's recurring use of the image of a knot and the verb "to knot" (nouer) in his writing (Silverman 2010, 237).

pieces (of thread, fabric, string and the like) together. A knot also describes a frustration, as experienced by anyone who has unsuccessfully tried to untie a knot. The Memorial Hallway and the museum in general are sites of memory but also sites of frustration and struggle.

Writing about a Kongo nkisi nkondi, Alfred Gell (1998) described it as "the visible knot which tied together an invisible skein of relations fanning out in social space and social time" (62). This knot ties together the visible and the invisible, connects people together within communities and across the kalunga line dividing the living and dead, while also linking memories together. In addition to nails driven into nkisi figures, many minkisi have pieces of fabric tied in knots, possibly *mfunya* associated with persons or situations about which the client has sought assistance (MacGaffey 1993, 101; MacGaffey 2000, 107). Returning to Figure 21, we see a remarkable knot unlike most mfunya usually tied to nails. This large knot, possibly made of a grass or leaf fiber and not fabric strips, was placed immediately below the center of the object's power, the protruding bilongo packet on the figure's torso (detail Figure 27). This unending prolong knot can be found in numerous Kongo objects, including the nonfigurative nkisi in Figure 22.

Figure 27. Detail of Figure 21 showing knot.

Knots and knotting are important symbols in Congolese meaning making as evidenced by Filip De Boeck's research in rural Luunda communities and in urban Kinshasa. De Boeck (2000) argued that "the logic of knotting and tying" guides Luunda worldview on the Congo-Angola frontier: "the knot both attaches and detaches, relates and separates, connects and demarcates or ties up. Hence knotting is always ambivalent; its meaning expands in various directions" (n.p.). Writing about Kinshasa, De Boeck (2015) wrote that knots are "rhizomatically non-orientable," and that "the knot, as a polymorphic form of amalgamation […] perfectly captures the rhythm of the city's limit-experiences" (53). Diviners in both rural communities and in the megalopolis of Kinshasa use knots in their baskets (or gourds or bags) as they make sense of the world around them (see also M. N. Roberts 2000 and Jordán 2000). De Boeck (2015) argued that as a city is an amalgamation of disparate parts, so too is a diviner's basket, used by the diviner to understand a client's problem and "unknot" possible blockages in the client's life (54). De Boeck was writing specifically about *kata* knots, used by diviners in Southern Congo, Angola, and Zambia, described with their Cokwe name that "refers to entwinement, enclosure, as well as the idea of rupture" (ibid.). At first glance, these knots seem to turn over onto themselves, almost like a Mobius strip.[62] Memory, too, is both external and internal, folding onto and into itself but used by people to make sense of their experiences and the world around them.

Returning to James E. Young's writings on countermonuments, he writes that "the surest engagement with Holocaust memory in Germany may actually lie in its perpetual irresolution,

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[62] A Mobius strip is a topological paradox through which a geometric form possesses only one side and one boundary curve. One can make a Mobius strip by taking a strip of paper, twisting it 180 degrees, and then taping the two sides together. If one were to draw a line along the strip, the line would be both inside and outside (in three-dimensional space) without crossing the edge of the paper.

that only an unfinished memorial process can guarantee the life of memory."[63] The image of a

knot of memory reflects the irresolvable aspects of transcultural colonial memories, especially

when memorialized in a museum built as a monument to colonialism. Similarly, decolonizing a

colonial museum is an act of perpetual irresolution, as a final state of "decolonized" is

unachievable for an institution whose entire existence, including its physical building, is based

on colonization. As a countermonument, Tsimba's work motivates visitors to grapple with

colonial pasts, including them in carrying the "burden of memory" (118) and challenging

previous examples of what Nora (1989) would call "commemorative vigilance" (12) with new

memories to be commemorated.

Can Tsimba's work of contemporary art actively participate in the decolonizing of the

museum? In the example of an nkisi, such objects not only house spirits but performance arts

associated with the objects spur them to action. An nkisi was/is agentic, providing important

interventions from the Other World to assist its host community among the living. Tsimba's

"Shadows" welcomes spirits of the dead, but the installation also fills a role in the renovated

museum. The association of art and the *work* they do also functions in French: an artwork is an

oeuvre, etymologically linked to *ouvrier*, "a laborer." De Certeau's phrasing echoes again:

"connected to the labor aimed at creating in the present a place (past or future) to be filled, a

'something that must be done'" (1998, 101). "Shadows" creates a place of and for remembering

– a site of memory, a lieu de mémoire – but also a place for questioning, given that memories are

inexorably contested, never static – such is their "audacity," as Gaston Bachelard had it (as

developed in Roberts and Roberts 1996: 16-47). Countering one memorial wall with another,

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[63] Young 2000, 92. In her discussion of contemporary Indian artist Vivan Sundaram's "History Project," a
temporary installation in a similar memorial-museum in India, Saloni Mathur comes to a similar conclusion about
the role of a contemporary art installation in a national museum (see Mathur 2015 and 2019).

"Shadows" challenges the Belgian national narratives concerning sacred sacrifices of "colonial pioneers." The installation prompts visitors to consider why Belgians memorialized in the gallery were in Congo at all, when, in afterthought, altruism seems such a remote likelihood; and what Congolese stories might be linked to each Belgian name? To paraphrase Lonetree (2012), exposing hard truths is an important component of decolonizing a museum. But like an nkisi, "Shadows" acts within *and upon* social relationships, and must rely on museum visitors and staff.

On June 18, 2019, I visited the museum on a beautiful, sunny day. I made my way to the Memorial Hallway, eager to capture a photo of the shadows. Instead, the shades were drawn (Figure 28). Including "Shadows" is an important first step toward decolonizing the AfricaMuseum, but more progress is yet to be made. Decolonizing the museum with contemporary artworks progresses in fits and starts, little by little, even on those rare days when the sun does shine in Belgium.

Figure 28. Shades drawn over "Shadows," June 18, 2019.

Chapter 2:

Petit à Petit: Aimé Mpane's "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo" and "Lusinga's Skull" in the Museum Rotunda

Haba na haba hujaza kibaba
Little by little one fills the jug
                            Swahili proverb

Kamwa kamwa wa ba dikumi, tshitembe bianza bimunyi
One by one is the brother of ten; with nine the hands are full.
                            Tshiluba proverb

Malembe malembe ndeke atongaka zala naye.
Little by little the bird makes its nest
                            Lingala proverb

Malimbe, malimbe, mwendo lungwenya
Slowly, slowly, the way the chameleon goes.
                            Kongo proverb [1]

Petit à Petit

During my first visit to the renovated AfricaMuseum on December 6, 2018, I walked

down the long underground hallway leading from the entrance pavilion to the main building. On

one wall the saying "everything passes, except the past" was installed in large silver letters, in

the four official languages of the museum: German, English, French and Dutch (Figure 29). The

saying poetically presents the museum's intentions to acknowledge the colonial past and its role

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[1] I am grateful to Allen Roberts, Aimé Mpane, and Sinzo Aanza for providing the Swahili, Tshiluba, and Lingala proverbs respectively. The Kikongo proverb is from Thompson 1981b, 43. (Ki)Swahili, Tshiluba, Lingala and Kikongo are the four official languages of the Democratic Republic of Congo in addition to French. Aimé Mpane, whose artwork is the focus of this chapter, grew up speaking Tshiluba and Lingala. Mpane translates the Tshiluba proverb into French as "un, un, c'est le frère de dix – neuf, ce sont les mains remplies." He explains that the proverb refers to counting on one's fingers, and that one by one you can reach ten, and even with nine your hands are full. Congolese author Sinzo Aanza also recommended I include a proverb from Kinande: Eliololiolo lio munyole lio lilakolayay'oko lusi / C'est la lenteur naturelle du ver de terre qui lui fait atteindre le ruisseau / It is the natural slowness of the worm that makes it reach the stream.

in the present of both Belgium and Africa. The label copy explaining the quote begins, "It could be an African proverb," and clarifies that it is the title of a 2006 book by a Flemish author about how people grapple with trauma.[2] Six months after my first visit on opening weekend, I returned to the museum, and noticed two new versions of the saying on the wall, one in Lingala, and one in Swahili, the two most widely spoken languages in Congo. Step by step, the museum moves toward decolonization.

Figure 29: "Everything passes, except the past" in German, English, French and Dutch, behind "La grande pirogue" in the underground passageway connecting the entrance pavilion to the old museum building. Photo taken December 9, 2018

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[2] No explanation is given for why this exact quote was chosen for this museum, other than the book mentioning, "among other things," South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Oddly, the label concludes by noting that the saying was used for a 2004 book review in a Flemish newspaper for a different book. One wonders at the choice, rather than choosing an *actual* Africa proverb. Alternatively, as an American the phrase struck me as more Faulknerian than African ("The past is never dead. It's not even past" [Faulkner 1951]).

Above ground in the main museum building, the large rotunda room (henceforth "the Rotunda") on the south side is the most spectacular space in the museum (Figure 30). The soaring dome dwarfs anyone in the room, and at least eight types of marble decorate the floor and walls. The interior of the dome is decorated with white plaster, evenly divided into 12 sections, six of which feature the symmetrical L's of Leopold II's insignia, circling the oculus. On the floor in the center of the room, yellow and red marble shapes form a five-pointed star, the symbol of the Congo Free State, surrounded by a garland with the Belgian royal crown on top (Figure 31). The north and south sides of the Rotunda have three window alcoves, and each alcove has two niches facing each other, perpendicular to the center of the room. The east and west sides of the Rotunda have steps leading up to long galleries, and each large threshold is framed by two sculptural niches facing the center of the room, four in all (Figure 32).

Today, visitors descend steps into the Rotunda from either the "Landscapes and Biodiversity" gallery or the "Resource Paradox" gallery, its size revealing itself as one walks down the long galleries and then step by step into the space. Prior to the renovation, the Rotunda served as the entrance to the museum, and visitors climbed the steps leading from the French formal gardens spread out to the south of the building. Before and after the renovation the Rotunda served as an artistic and architectural mission statement for the museum. Throughout the twentieth century, large golden allegorical figures representing Belgium's civilizing mission in Congo towered over visitors from the central niches, and the alcoves housed sculptures depicting a number of partially clad African men and women in addition to more allegorical figures. Today, installations by Congolese artist Aimé Mpane and Belgian artist Jean-Pierre Müller have been added to the room, bringing in new perspectives to engage with disparaging representations of Africans and African cultures.
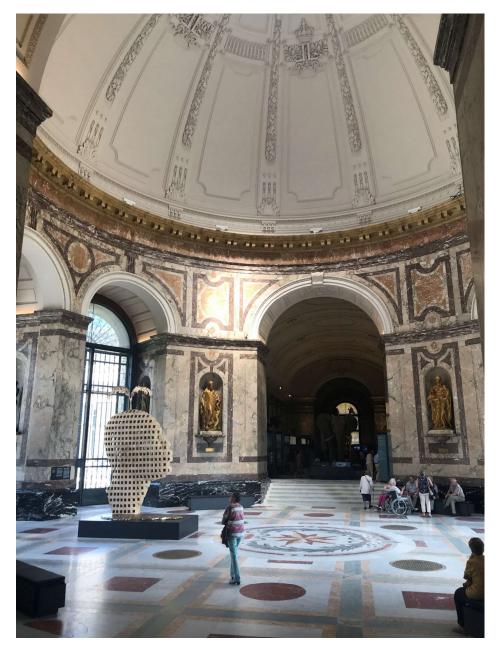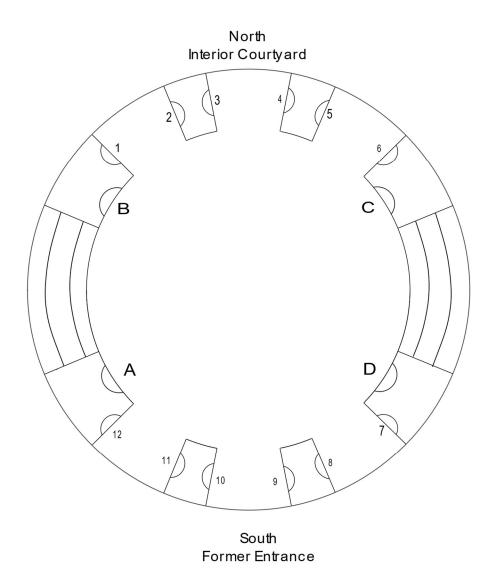
Figure 30: View of the Rotunda from the western staircase, June 2019. Mpane's "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo" is placed in front of the Royal Emblem of Leopold II at the center of the marble floor, with the five-pointed start of Congo at the midpoint.

Figure 31: The five-pointed star that was the symbol of the Congo Free State surrounded by a garland and below the crown of Leopold II inlaid at the center of the floor in the Rotunda.

North
Interior Courtyard

South
Former Entrance

A. "Belgium bringing well-being to Congo" by Arsène Matton (1922)
B. "Belgium bringing security to Congo" by Arsène Matton (1921)
C. "Slavery" by Arsène Matton (1922)
D. "Belgium bringing civilization to Congo" by Arsène Matton (1922)

1. "The Worker" by Arthur Dupagne (no date)
2. "Combat with Snake" by Arthur Dupagne (no date)
3. "Fertile Africa" by Ernest Wynants (1924)
4. "The Warrior" by Arthur Dupagne (no date)
5. "Man at his toilette" by Arthur Dupagne (no date)
6. "Justice" by Godefroid Devreese (1922-1923)
7. "Negresse à l'amphore" by Oscar Jespers (1924)
8. "Dry Season" by Arthur Dupagne (no date)
9. "The Rower" by Arthur Dupagne (no date)
10. "Dancer with drum" by Arthur Dupagne (1929)
11. "Belgian Expansion" by Frans Huygelen (1922)
12. "Charity" by Paul Du Bois (1922-1923)

Figure 32. Diagram indicating location of statues in the Rotunda. (Made by author.)

The first of such art installations, a large sculpture by Aimé Mpane titled "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo" (Nouvelle Souffle ou le Congo Bourgeonnant), was unveiled when the museum reopened in December 2018. The sculpture is a large lattice-work head carved of wood, hovering between a silhouette and three dimensions. The work stands over 4 meters tall but is less than a meter wide. The head sits on what looks like a pool of flowing bronze and has palm fronds springing from its crown (Figure 33). Looking closer, one sees through the holes of the latticework that the palm fronds connect to the metal at the bottom through a column at the center of the head. They are meant to echo the garland around the colonial star on the floor. From the golden bronze base the palm fronds rise up, lifting our gaze, raising the sculpture's head, chin, and eyes over the heads of visitors.

During the opening weekend in December 2018, Guido Gryseels, Director of the AfricaMuseum, described the Rotunda as a "site of remembrance," reflecting its significance throughout the institution's history (AfricaMuseum 2018b). As the main longstanding entrance to the museum, it was the first experience visitors had of what was meant to strike them as a most majestic building. At various times in the museum's history, one could find a bust of Leopold II at the center of the room or, more recently, a welcome desk. On my first visit to the museum in 2013, I took in the marble floors and golden statues, and was particularly disturbed by some statues depicting Africans which have since been moved to the "sidelined" gallery in the basement, but which still come to mind when seeing the benches that have replaced them today. The architectural details of the room seem to have their own memories, with the interlocking L's serving as witnesses to Leopold II's grandeur, the marble reflective of earlier Belgian opulence, the soaring dome evoking the magnitude of the colonial civilizing mission.
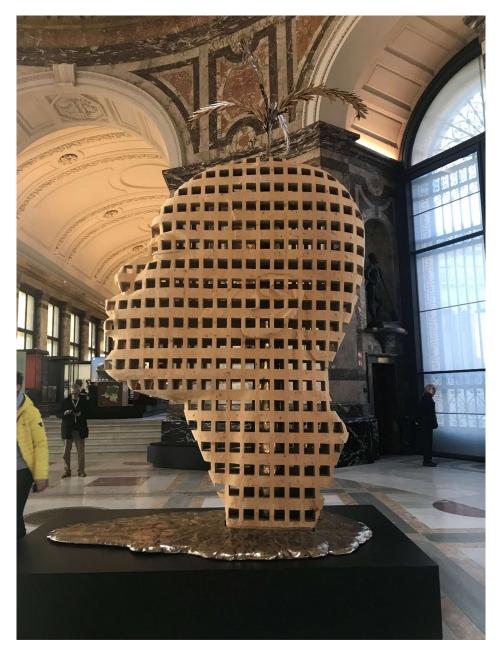
Figure 33. Side view of "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo." Looking closely one can see the bronze column rising up inside of the head.

The museum's very building is a monument to colonization, presenting a challenge to the museum's leaders who hoped to emphasize the new "focus on decolonization" of the post-renovation museum (AfricaMuseum 2018b, 33, 35). In the months leading up to the reopening the AfricaMuseum had embraced the rhetoric of decolonization, and the opening weekend press packet specifically highlighted the contemporary art on display as playing a major role in decolonizing the museum. Mpane, however, did not consider his installation a successful decolonization of the museum. In between press interviews on opening day, Mpane told me, "this decolonizing is only beginning, this is a work in progress, it will go little by little" (pers. comm. Dec. 6 2018). Like Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), who described decolonization as a "long-term process" (101), Mpane does not expect change to come quickly, or even in his lifetime. Rather, throughout our conversations in 2018 and since then, Mpane repeats "petit à petit," little by little, sure that change will come as he patiently continues to create art investigating colonial pasts.

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the history of the Rotunda and of the artworks on display there prior to the renovation. I identify and consider three different periods of the Rotunda's history: from its creation in 1910 to 1920, when the niches remained empty, the arrival of Arsène Matton's sculptures for the central niches in 1920-1921, and finally the creation and installation of the remaining sculptures from the 1920s through the 1960s. As Mpane predicted, change has come to the museum "petit à petit," and this chapter will then address two steps leading toward decolonizing the AfricaMuseum. I first analyze Mpane's 2018 sculpture "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo" as an attempt to draw viewers' attention away from the demeaning colonial sculptures still standing in the Rotunda. After the international press reviews of the reopening almost all mentioned the continued presence of Matton's sculptures in the

Rotunda, and a February 2019 visit by a UN working group judged the renovation inadequate, the museum invited Mpane to create an addition in the Rotunda. In response, he proposed a two-part installation. Facing "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo," he would add another head in the same lattice-work style, but this one would be a sculpture of the skull of Tabwa chief Lusinga Lwa Ng'ombe, whose skull is still in a drawer in Belgium's Royal Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels. Further, he invited Belgian artist Jean-Pierre Müller to work with him in designing veils to hang in front of the sculpture niches, the topic of the next chapter. Focusing on the sculptural additions in this chapter, I follow step by step as the meanings and memories highlighted by the Rotunda change over the course of more than a century.

<u>A History of the Rotunda</u>

<u>1900-1920: Early History of the Rotunda</u>

After the Brussels World's Fair of 1897, for which Leopold II's private estate in Tervuren hosted the colonial section and the "Palais des Colonies" (Palace of the Colonies), the king decided he would need a much larger building for his museum. If the architecture of the Palais des Colonies was inspired by Versailles' "Petit Trianon," the new building would be Leopold's own "Petit Versailles".[3] Construction lasted from 1905 to 1908, after which work on the interior design began. Leopold would not get to see the grand opening of his museum, however, as he died in December 1909. The completed Musée du Congo Belge opened on April 30th, 1910. Like Congo itself, the museum would be administered by the Ministry of the Colonies.

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[3] Couttenier 2010b, 13; Thys van den Audenaerde 1998, 15. The "Petit Trianon" is a small, square palace on the grounds of Versailles, built in 1768 and now most associated with Marie Antoinette (see Maior-Barron, 2019).

To build his museum, Leopold hired Charles Girault, a Parisian architect who had studied at that city's École des Beaux-Arts and worked in its eponymous style. After completing the Petit Palais in Paris for the 1900 World's Fair, Girault become one of Leopold's favored architects.[4] In comparing the AfricaMuseum with the Petit Palais, the building in Tervuren seems like a larger, rectangular Petit Palais. Both have monumental façades consisting of a central rotunda between two symmetrical wings which terminate in pavilions set slightly forward from the main façade (Figures 34 and 35). Both have quadrilateral floor plans set around an interior courtyard with peristyle, the Petit Palais being a trapezoid and the AfricaMuseum a rectangle. The buildings have raised first stories, allowing for a grand staircase into the rotunda and raising up the line of ornamental columns extending along the wings, which also feature a balustrade parapet and decorative amphoras. At thirty meters, the AfricaMuseum's dome is larger than that of the Petit Palais (approximately twenty-two meters), the latter of which features decorative murals by Symbolist painter Albert Besnard, whereas the former's ceilings remain empty.[5] Notably, Girault's plans for the Rotunda included the commissioning of sculptures for the niches, which meant that when the museum building became a protected monument in 2010, the niche sculptures were included as part of the "heritage," as repeatedly explained by museum spokespeople during opening weekend press events (Figure 36).

[4] In addition to the museum in Tervuren, Girault designed some of Belgium's most recognizable monuments, including the Royal Galleries of Ostend, Leopold's favored resort on the Belgian coast, a renovation of the Royal Palace at Laeken, and the "Arcade du Cinquantenaire," a tri-partite arch at the foot of the Avenue of Tervuren, which connects central Brussels to the museum (Coosemans 1952). The Royal Galleries of Ostend are still identified with Leopold II in Belgian culture, and have been the focus of protests (see Arnault 2011 and Silverman 2013, 31-32).

[5] Debora Silverman (2015) notes the relative emptiness of the AfricaMuseum's ceilings, writing that whereas the external building was completed with relative haste, "Girault spent five years at a representational impasse" (623). Dome heights from Couttenier 2010a, 15, and personal communication with the Petit Palais' press office.

Figures 34 and 35: Façades of AfricaMuseum (above) and Petit Palais (below). AfricaMuseum © David Plas ; Petit Palais photo by Gunnar Klack (CC): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Petit-Palais-Paris-02-2018.jpg

DOMAINE ROYAL DE TERVUEREN
MUSÉE DU CONGO

ROTONDE

COUPE SUIVANT AB DE LA FEUILLE Nᵒ 84

Echelle de 0ᵐ,0 2 pʳ mètre   Dressé par l'Architecte Soussigné
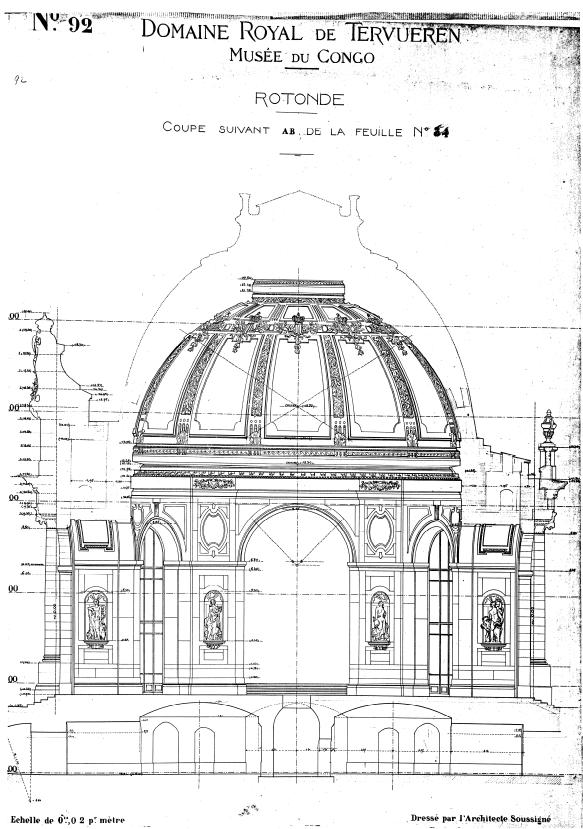
Figure 36: A copy of Charles Girault's plans for the Rotunda, showing his plan to include sculptures in the Rotunda's niches. Thanks to Matthias de Groof for sharing the plans with me.

When the museum opened in 1910 the sculptural niches in the Rotunda were empty, and

the room was not yet the main entrance to the museum but solely an exhibition

hall.[6] An ivory bust of Leopold II carved by Thomas Vinçotte stood at in the center of the

rotunda and chryselephantine sculptures made for the 1897 World's Fair were on display around

the periphery of the room (Figure 37). These sculptures had been displayed in the "Salle

d'Honneur" (Hall of Honor in the Palais des Colonies during the fair, where instead of a gallery

highlighting arts from the colony, visitors were greeted by a showcase of Belgian artistry using

Congolese materials interspersed with a few examples of Congolese arts.[7] In addition to

sculptures carved from Congolese ivory, the display cases and interior installations were made of

Congolese hardwoods, and all materials had been provided free of charge to the artists by the

king (Silverman 2011, 174 n23). Such a focus on what Belgium could gain from Congo rather

than a focus on Congo itself would continue in the displays in the new 1910 museum.

The chryselephantine sculptures displayed in the Palais des Colonies and later in the

Rotunda prefigured the later artistic and curatorial themes of the museum. Arsène Matton,

Godefroid Devreese (also spelled De Vreese) and Frans Huygelen, three artists whose sculptures

are currently in the Rotunda's niches, had ivory sculptures on display in the Palace (see Wynants

2003, 152-155). Sculptural subjects included nudes and portrait busts, but also works with titles

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[6] The Rotunda only became the main entrance under the directorship of Dirk Thys van den Audenaerde (Couttenier 2010a, 115). In Figure 36, a photo identified by Maarten Couttenier as from 1910, a sculpture is visible in the niche where Matton's "L'esclavage" (Slavery) stands today (Couttenier 2010a, 125). See also note 11, this chapter.

[7] Jarrassé 2016, 126-128, Couttenier 2015 26-31. Though the focus of the room was on European arts, dozens of "velours de Kasai" (Kasai velvet) cloths hung on the walls. Couttenier (2015) interprets their display as "on the same level as silk embroidery made by European artists" (26-27). While they were "on the same level" in that both were hung on a wall, the contrast between a frame holding eight different Kasai cloths and a frame holding a singular European silk embroidery could lead one to interpret the Kasai cloths more as décor and the European silk embroidery more as art. Further, Couttenier quotes the exhibition guide which lists a number of Congolese works on display in the Salon d'Honneur, but none are visible in the few published photographs of the gallery. However, the author of the guide, Théodore Masui, describes the Congolese objects as "art" and celebrates the artistry of the Congolese "masters" (quoted in Couttenier 2015, 27; see Masui 1897).

like "The slave," by Eugène De Bremaecker, or "Makoko," a sculpture by Arsène Matton

depicting a young Congolese boy (Couttenier 2014, 111). One, "Civilization and Barbarism" by

Philippe Wolfers, exemplifies the guiding philosophy of the early museum. The sculpture is

made up of a part of an elephant tusk held in place by a dragon and a swan made of silver

(Figure 38). On the tusk Wolfers delicately carved a lily, a symbol of purity and enlightenment,

while the dragon, representing barbarism, and the swan, representing civilization, trap the ivory

in between them.[8] The work was made as a gift for Edmond Van Eetvelde, the secretary of state

of the Congo Free State, and presented to him at a banquet held in his honor. The tusk held a

scroll with the text of the speech given in his honor at the banquet, which enumerated the steps

of bringing "civilization" to Congo, was signed by those present, a who's who of Belgian elites

who had profited from colonialism.[9] In parallel with the museum, which would highlight

Congo's raw materials to be taken advantage of and devote galleries to the civilizing mission of

Belgium in Congo, Wolfers' sculpture made of Congolese ivory illustrates the dichotomy of

civilization and barbarism. Further, both the museum and the sculpture have the enormous

profits made through exploitation of Congo as their reason for existence.

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[8] Aubry and Adriaenssens 2002, 12-13, 37-39; Silverman 2011, 144-146. The initial commission to Wolfers called for an ivory document holder "supported by two human figures, one white and the other black," which Wolfers reinterpreted (Aubry and Adriaenssens 2002, 37).

[9] Aubry and Adriaenssens 2002, 33-44, Silverman 2011, 144-146. Silverman describes this as a "reverse cornucopia" (146), as rather than overflowing with goods the tusk is stopped up with the scroll, featuring names of those taking advantage of the "plenty" offered by the Congo. To illustrate this profit-mongering, Silverman writes, "Profits from imports of Congo ivory, wild rubber, and palm oil traded by Belgian companies had soared to astonishing heights between 1888 and 1897 (stock dividends returned, *on average*, more than 220 percent from 1892 to 1897) (ibid.; see also 176 n25 for sources of such data).

Figure 37: HP.2002.1.16, collection RMCA Tervuren; publisher Michiels-Leblicq, Tervueren (Thill-Nels), 1910. An ivory bust of Leopold II by Thomas Vinçotte sites on a plinth at the center of the room. A dark sculpture is visible in the northeast center-facing niche, where Matton's "Slavery" stands now.

Figure 38: "Civilisation et Barbarie" by Philippe Wolfers, 1897. Coll. King Baudouin Foundation, entrusted to the Art & History Museum, Brussels, Belgium, © Studio Philippe de Formanoir.

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<u>1920: Arsène Matton's Four Central Sculptures</u>

The niches in the Rotunda were not meant to remain empty for long, and in 1910 the

Ministry of Colonies commissioned sculptor Arsène Matton to create four allegorical group

sculptures for the center-facing niches. Matton, then thirty-seven, was a relatively successful

sculptor and had just been hired as a professor of sculpture "d'après l'antique" (in the ancient

manner) at l'Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.[10] After preliminary studies for the

commission, Matton decided that he would have to travel to Congo to best represent the colony

and its peoples. In 1911 he departed for the colony, making him the first Belgian sculptor to

travel to Congo and display his work there.[11] The Ministry of Colonies funded the journey,

during which Matton undertook what he considered both an artistic and scientific mission to

make plaster casts of people from different Congolese communities .[12] Four sculptures resulted,

known today as "Belgium Bringing Well-Being to the Congo" (La Belgique apportant le bien-

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[10] Vanden Bemden 2018. Thijs Dekeukeleire (2020) cites an "unlocated, handwritten note" that suggests that Matton may have been chosen for the museum commission due to his connection with Victor Dessyn, the "chef de cabinet" for Jules Renkin, Prime Minister at the time (265n15).

[11] Arnoldi 2003, 226; see also Dekeukeleire 2019 on Matton's time in Congo. There is some confusion in the published material about the timing of the creation of the sculptures. Couttenier (2010a) published an image of the eastern half of the Rotunda with the date 1910 and which shows a sculpture in the niche now occupied by Matton's "Slavery" (125; I have included it in this chapter as Figure 37). The photograph is not sharp enough to discern if the sculpture is indeed "Slavery," however. Wynants (2003) published a photograph of the Rotunda taken from the opposite direction, facing west, which shows empty niches. Wynants dates the photograph to 1911 and writes "At this time, there were not yet sculptures in the niches; only ivory sculptures from 1897 decorated the rotunda" (148). Adding to this mystery, some sources date Matton's "Slavery" to 1929 (Peffer 2008, Silverman 2013), including the documents related to the 2020 RE/Store project by the artists Jean-Pierre Muller and Aimé Mpane discussed in the next chapter. It seems the official photograph of Matton's "Slavery" provided by the museum and used by Peffer and Silverman dates the statue to 1929. In his recent dissertation, Thijs Deukeleire (2020) identified photos of two Congolese male models from Matton's time in Congo which might correspond to those described as "le grand" and "l'Arabe" in Matton's journal from the time and who posed for a sculpture referred to as "the Arab" (303). Based on Deukeleire's reading of Matton's journal, Matton was certainly working on "Slavery" during his trip to Congo in 1911, so that sculpture could not have been on display in the Rotunda in 1910.

[12] Ibid. The museum had an exhibition of his plaster casts, referred to "moulages de types indigènes" in 1913, and continued to have some of them on display in the ethnographic section into the 1950s. In an interesting parallel with African arts, Matton's plaster casts were initially not considered fine art but rather ethnographic evidence; when he cast some in bronze and changed their names from such descriptors as "chef Bateke" to "Roi nègre" they became fine art (Arnoldi 2003: 228-229).

être au Congo), "Belgium Bringing Security to the Congo" (La Belgique apportant la sécurité au Congo), "Slavery" (L'Esclavage), and "Belgium Bringing Civilization to the Congo" (La Belgique apportant la civilization au Congo) (Figures 39-42).[13] Their creation and installation were delayed due to the First World War, but in the 1920s, they were all present in the niches where they remain to this day.

The four sculptures embody the initial arguments for Belgian involvement in Congo, as expressed by Leopold II's address to the 1876 meeting of the Brussels Geographical Conference:

> To open up to civilization the only part of our globe which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness in which entire populations are enveloped, is, I venture to say, a crusade worthy of this age of progress, and I am happy to perceive how much the public feeling is in favor of its accomplishments. […] It is the concurrence of the great number which brings success, it is the sympathy of the masses which it is necessary to invite and to succeed in obtaining.
>
> What resources, in fact, should we not have at our disposal, if all those to whom a franc is nothing, or very little, consented to throw it into the treasury devoted to the suppression of the slave trade in the interior of Africa? (Banning 1877, 152-153)

In this excerpt, Leopold mentions "civilization," "crusade," and "the slave trade," all topics reflected in Matton's four sculptures.[14] If the entire museum served as an appeal to the Belgian public to support involvement in and later colonization of the Congo, the Rotunda served as an introduction to the museum's main themes and purposes. Visitors were meant to learn about

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[13] These were not the original titles for the works. In the same order, the original titles were "The coming together of Belgium and the Belgian Congo"; "The conquest of Congo by Belgium"; "The civilization of the Belgian Congo"; and "The glorification of the colonial work of Belgium" (Morris 2004, 68n2, citing Van Lennep 1993, 496. I could not access this last book due to COVID-19 restrictions). A newspaper at the time gave the titles as "Humanity bringing together Congo and Belgium;" "Militant Belgium conquers the Congo" "Missionaries bringing to the blacks the benefits of Christian civilization;" and "The Congo under Arab domination" (Dekeukeleire 2020, 278n40).

[14] In her 2003 MFA thesis, Belgium-based South African artist Wendy Morris makes the connection between the Brussels Geographical Conference speech and two of Matton's sculptures, focusing on Leopold's use of the words "civilization" and "crusade" (57-58). Building on this interpretation, I also note his discussion of "the slave trade."

Belgium bringing Christianity and European rule of law to Congo, in addition to Belgium's role in banishing the east African slave trade in Congo and protecting Congolese from violent aggressions coming from within and without its borders.[15]

The first work (starting in the southwest and moving clockwise), celebrating "Belgium Bringing Well-Being to the Congo," depicts three figures centered on a female allegory of Belgium with a beneficent smile (Figure 39). She holds a naked African child on her right hip, who reaches toward a similarly naked, long-haired European girl, who is herself reaching back toward him with her left hand while meeting his gaze.[16] "Belgium" holds the girl's head in her left hand, and gazes down at her approvingly. The maternal figure alone is dressed, wearing a flowing dress and cloak hanging from her head. While the cloak recalls representations of the Virgin Mary, her flowing dress emphasizes her body rather than hiding it, even indicating her navel. This sculptural group represents the paternalistic (or perhaps maternalistic) approach Belgians took toward Congolese people, in which the Belgians imagined themselves as the "bon père" performing the paternal duties for the colonized "child" (Young 1965, 59-72, Cohen 1970, and Stanard 2017, 130, among others). Depending on the region, Congolese interpreted the relationships as paternal, though many in the western part of the country referred to Belgians or the Belgian state as "noko," that is, maternal uncle.[17] Following allegorical sculptural tradition,

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[15] Exploitation of Congo's natural resources was also an explicit focus of the early museum's displays of minerals, forest products, and the like meant to stimulate commerce in conjunction with Worlds Fairs and related events in which Belgium actively participated This is evident in side alcoves, as discussed below.

[16] The reciprocal gazes and outstretched between the African and European children reflect the original title of the work, "The Coming Together of Belgium and the Belgian Congo." The pair suggest a hopeful future, possibly still led by the European girl, but perhaps less paternalistic.

[17] On more recent Congolese interpretations of this relationship, see Rubbers 2009. He explains that in Haut-Katanga, in the southeast, "the former colonizer is considered a 'father'" whereas in Kinshasa (where most people come from matrilineal societies) he is *noko*, a maternal uncle (272-274, 286 n8; see also Devisch 1994 and Lannoy et al 1986).

Figure 39 (left): Arsène Matton. "La Belgique apportant le bien-etre au Congo" (Belgium Bringing Well-being to the Congo). Gilt bronze, 1922. Photo © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, with permission.

Figure 40 (right): Arsène Matton. "La Belgique apportant la sécurité au Congo" (Belgium Bringing Security to the Congo). Gilt bronze, 1921. Photo © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, with permission.

Figure 41 (left). Arsène Matton, "L'esclavage" (Slavery). Gilt Bronze, 1929. Photo © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, with permission.

Figure 42 (right). Arsène Matton, "La Belgique apportant la civilisation au Congo" (Belgium Bringing Civilization to the Congo). Gilt bronze, 1922. Photo © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, with permission.

which uses female figures, Belgium here is a mother and not a father, but the parent-child relationship remains clear.

Next, "Belgium Bringing Security to the Congo" depicts a stoically posed woman dressed as a feminized roman centurion (Figure 40). She wears gladiator sandals laced up her shins, an odd breastplate emphasizing her nipples, a tunic beneath a roman military belt (cingulum militare) and sword, and carries a large banner. Her blank stare gazes upward, ignoring the young African man at her feet on whose hair she rests her right hand. This naked African youth kneels in front of her, his arm reaching across to her left hip, his face cast upward in supplication even as she imperiously gazes upward. A Congolese child sits behind her left calf, with a somber face and downcast eyes, perhaps sleeping. For Leopold and many Belgian men, Congo presented a rare military endeavor for the neutral nation. Under the guise of bringing peace to warring tribes, Belgian-led forces vanquished rebellions and wrested control of the Congo basin from East African traders (discussed below).[18]

In using the word "crusade" to describe Belgian military involvement in Congo Leopold was reminding listeners of the Catholic church-sanctioned "holy wars" of the 11th - 13th centuries waged by European Catholics in the Levant in order to claim holy sites for Christian rulers rather than Muslim ones.[19] In addition to bringing peace to "warring tribes" in Congo, Leopold ordered an "Arab Campaign" against the "Arab-Swahili" traders from the eastern coast of Africa with the

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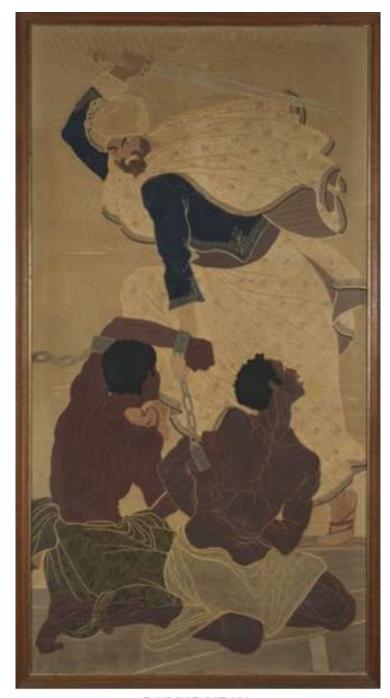
[18] The idea of Congo being made up of "warring tribes" was literally on display during the 1930 Antwerp World's Fair, which included dioramas with themes such as "war sowing destruction" and "war-making tribes" placed in contrast with the peace brought be Belgium and especially Catholicism (discussed in Stanard 2011, 59). The stories of the *anioto*, as discussed in the preceding chapter, also illustrated the Belgian idea that prior to Belgian arrival the Congo basin was full of violent, warring tribes.

[19] The military actions now referred to as the "Crusades" are of course much more complicated than I can discuss here. The simplified view, which continues to this day, of a Christian "us" vs. a Muslim "them" would have been familiar to Leopold's audience, especially since many European folk tales of knights and ladies are set during the period of the Crusades.

pretext of eradicating the East African slave trade (Alpers 2009). The campaign was rather focused on gaining political and economic control of the eastern part of the Congo Basin from the East African traders who had set up trading posts there. Prior to the opening of the 1910 museum building, the theme of Arab slave traders was displayed in the 1897 Palais des Colonies in the same Salon d'Honneur as the chryselephantine sculptures. Framed by walls covered in Kasai "velvets" (polychrome cloths with geometric patterns), eight embroidered silks designed by Isidore de Rudder and embroidered by Hélène du Menil depicted representations of "before and after" Belgian colonization, with titles like "Fetishism" "Barbarism," "Civilization," and "Christianity," including "Slavery" (Figure 43). This last embroidered silk depicts a bearded man in flowing robes, wearing a turban and holding a sword over his head, threatening the two chained and kneeling African men at his feet.[20] In the nearby Ethnographic gallery, Charles Samuel's sculpture group "Vuakusu Batetela Defends a Woman from an Arab," which depicts a "noble" Vuakusu Batetela defending a naked woman from a turbaned assailant, was displayed among African-made shields, knives, spears, and *efomba* coffins (Couttenier 2015, 27-28, 32, 34; Morris 2003, 66-68; Saunders 2006, 87-88).

Matton's sculpture "Slavery," depicting an "Arab" or Swahili slave trader, thus references a favorite theme of early colonial popular narratives about the Congo as presented in the illustrations of European explorers' accounts like David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) and Henry Morton Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878). Matton has made use of several visual devices to emphasize the slaver's preseumed barbarism. The slaver wears a loose robe with a curved dagger (possibly a *jambiya*) at his waist

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[20] Isidore de Rudder also made two sculptures for the 1898 exhibition, "Zappo Zap Blacksmiths" and "Bangala Fishermen."

Figure 43. "Slavery" (1897) designed by Isidore de Rudder and embroidered by Hélène de Menil (sometimes referred to Hélène de Rudder). Along with seven other silks, this hung in the "Salon d'Honneur" in the Palais des Colonies in 1897 and was transferred to the Royal Museums for Art and History in 1987 (Inventory Number Tx.3249). Photo © Royal Museum of Art and History, used following Fair Use.

and a turban on his head, the latter two details often used to exoticize depictions of Arabs while suggesting potential danger. He holds a whip in his right hand, which John Peffer (2008) identifies as possibly copied from a *chicotte* whip on display elsewhere in the museum (58). Ironically, this hippopotamus-hide whip, which became one of the symbols of Leopold's reign of terror in Congo, is here in the hand of Belgium's foe.[21] With his left hand, the slaver grasps the arm of a clearly distressed, naked African girl with his left. A dead African boy is sprawled at the bottom of the sculpture upon whose leg the ruthless monster treads (Figure 40). He seems to show no emotion, his eyes squinting, lips closed and jaw jutting forward, his callous cruelty altogether inhumane. Who would *not* wish to save such innocent children, however disparaged they might be by colonial assessments of their irredeemable "primitivity"?

The similarity between Matton's slaver's face and an illustration by Edouard Riou in Victor Giraud's 1890 book recounting his explorations in central Africa points to another of the sculptor's visual tools (Figures 44 and 45).[22] Riou's illustration is titled "Makutubu, négrier" and is meant to depict "Makutubu," a trader on the eastern shores of Lake Tanganyika whom Giraud visited in order to sell some ivory (Giraud 1890, 460-464). Though Giraud had a camera with him in Africa, he does not mention taking it with him, and the illustration is likely wholly Riou's creation.[23] At the time, illustrations of Africans were influenced by physiognomy and phrenology, and Europeans "read" such representations as indicative of personal morality and

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[21] See Peffer 2008, as well as Edouard Manduau's 1884-1885 painting "Civilization in Congo" discussed in the previous chapter and Tshibumba Kanda Matulu's painting "The Belgian Colony, 1885-1959" (Fabian 1996, 68-69).

[22] I am grateful to Allen Roberts for alerting me to the existence of this illustration and the similarity between the sculpture and the illustration.

[23] See A. Roberts 2013, 235-239. In this Appendix, Roberts provides an important discussion of such illustrations and their relationships with the racist European practices of physiognomy and phrenology of the time. He also highlights the work of Riou, a successful student of Gustave Doré, who illustrated Jules Verne's early novels and provided images for Stanley's *In Darkest Africa*.
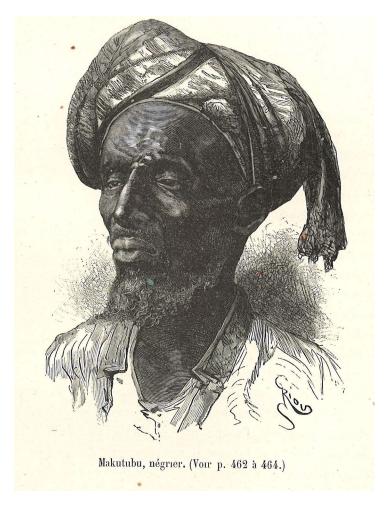
Figure 44. "Makutubu, négrier" (1890), Edouard Riou. Illustration in Giraud 1890, 467.

Figure 45: Mirror-image detail of Matton's "Slavery" (Figure 41) for comparison.

decency (A. Roberts 2013, 235-239). Compare Giraud's description of Belgian Emile Storms, described as having "a physiognomy that was frank, open, energetic" (Giraud 1890, 390-391, cited in A. Roberts 2013, 236) with Makutubu and Matton's slaver, whose close-set squinting eyes, furrowed brows, sharp cheekbones, and angular noses are the opposite of "frank and open." We are meant to read their faces as those of villains.

Finally, "Belgium Bringing Civilization to the Congo" is another three-person sculpture, this time representing Belgium as an older, bearded man, identifiable as a priest by his rosary, cope, and cassock (Figure 42).[24] He holds an African toddler sleeping in his left arm, while an African child with an elongated head stands in front of him on his right, naked except for a modesty apron of leaves. The Catholic missionary and the boy exchange a gaze, while the man tenderly rests his hand on the boy's shoulder, whose oddly diminutive hands are clasped in prayerful supplication. The boy's elongated head would identify him to a Belgian viewer as "Mangbetu," that is, a member of the Mangbetu state in northeastern Congo where people practiced head elongation. Mangbetu people were frequently depicted in illustrations or photographs from the colonial period, and even on a 1930s Belgian Congo stamp (Schildkrout and Keim 1990, Schildkrout 1999, Schildkrout 2008). As in "Slavery," Matton is making use of widely circulated illustrations of people in Congo during the early colonial period to emphasize difference between Europeans and Africans.

Of the colonial trinity of Church, State, and Industry, only the Church is represented in the four central Rotunda sculptures, though it was intimately linked with the state (Young 1965, 10-14; Markowitz 1970; Mudimbe 1994, 105-153). In Belgium, the conservative Catholic Party

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[24] I have yet to identify an image of a colonial-era priest that could have served as Matton's inspiration, and so I do not know if the priest's face is based on a specific person. A number of acquaintances have noted a resemblance with Leopold II.

had an absolute majority in government from 1884-1918. Seven out of ten of the Governor-Generals of Congo from 1908-1950 were from the party, and Jules Renkin, the Minister of the Colonies from 1908-1918, was a powerful member of the party (he became Prime Minister of Belgium in 1931).[25] In Congo, a 1906 Concordat between the Vatican and the Congo Free State meant that land would be granted to missions and priests paid by the Congo Free State (and later the Belgian Congo), as long as the denominations were originally based in Belgium (Young 1965, 13; Northrup 1988, 312). In the 1920s the Catholic missions were given subsidies to operate local schools, which Protestant missions only gained in 1948.[26] The "civilizing mission" in whose name many Belgians left for Congo and supported colonialism was not only meant to teach European values, but specifically Catholic ones, and the missionary works were celebrated elsewhere in the museum.

Matton's monumental works encapsulate the historical entanglements of the museum vis-a-vis the colonial project. All four depict aspects of Belgium's self-declared role as savior of Congo, saving souls, bringing peace and prosperity, and eliminating the east African slave trade. They provide visual argument for colonization, as when an "Arab" slave trader serves as a foil for Belgium's benevolent interventions (Morris 2003, 59). Depicted as beautiful women or an august missionary, Belgium is gloriously contrasted with the cruel venality of a Muslim slave trader. Further, when the sculptures were first installed, an ivory bust of Leopold II would have

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[25] Markowitz 1970, 238. Before the 1960s divisions along linguistic lines, Belgian politics was defined by the division between Catholics and anticlerical liberalism, which included a period called "The School War" (1879-1884) centered on the rights of Belgians to send their children to secular public schools, but which ended with 80% of all students attending private Catholic schools (see Witte et al 2009, 89-92).On the intersections of Catholicism and colonialism in Belgian politics, see Viaene 2008.

[26] Markowitz 1970, 238-241; Boyle 1995, 453-455. This special treatment given the Catholics was also reflective of the Belgian view that the Protestant missions, frequently run by American or British missionaries, were a threat to the colonial project. Given that the early evidence of Red Rubber atrocities came from such missions, this view was not entirely unfounded.

been at the center of the rotunda, bathed in sunlight, the focus of the architectural narrative. In the beaux-arts style rotunda influenced by Baroque architecture, Leopold stood where one might otherwise find a church's high altar.[27]

Mpane designed his installation keeping in mind just such museographic history and aesthetic argumentation of the room. His initial proposal was to remove the allegorical sculptures and place his sculpted head in the center of the Rotunda, exactly where one could have once found the bust of Leopold II. But when told he could not remove them (they were included as part of the "interior design" when the building earned protected status), Mpane decided to put his work in dialogue with the sculptures, understanding his choice as a conversation among past, present, and future. Discussing Matton's sculptures with me, Mpane noted the visual trope of hierarchical scale depicting Europeans as physically larger than Africans to show their importance and superiority.[28] The large scale of Mpane's sculpture and its central placement uses size and place to draw attention away from the colonial sculptures ("capturer l'attention") so that even though his "New Breath" is in dialogue with Matton's works, it remains the dominant figure in the room, "dialoguer en dominant" as Mpane puts it. In so doing, he hoped to suggest that the earlier sculptures are historical documentation of certain understandings of the past, to be kept in mind by visitors as they look toward possible futures. Rather than welcoming a visitor with an image of an inferior African, Mpane's work draws attention toward different, more positive representations of Africans. Mpane therefore appropriates the tools of the Rotunda's

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[27] Saunders 2005, 79. The bust remained there until November 22, 1944, when a V1 bomb landed in the museum's courtyard. This bust is now on display in the gallery devoted to the "Resource Paradox."

[28] This visual tool of depicting more important people as physically larger is also found in the arts of Africa as in, for example, Benin bronze plaques. The use of proportion to emphasize specific parts of a figure, frequently the head, has even been named "the African proportion" due to its frequent occurrence across the continent (Abiodun 2014, 2-3). One such example can be found in the Tabwa Lusinga figure discussed below (A. Roberts 2013, 178-179).

first architect and scenographers in order to "truly participate" ("vraiment arriver à participer") in the museum and reinterpret the rotunda's meanings (pers. comm. December 3, 2018).

1920 – 1970: Additional Sculptures in the Rotunda

While Matton's works may continue to attract visitors' attention in the Rotunda, twelve more large colonial-era sculptures in niches also make significant statements.[29] These were made and installed between the 1920s and 1960s and remain on view.[30] Of them, the three earliest depict broad allegorical themes: Frans Huygelen's "The Colony Waking up in Civilization" (La Colonie se réveillant dans la Civilisation) of 1922, Paul Du Bois's "Charity" (La Charité) of 1922-1923, and Godefroid Devreese's "La Justice" (Justice) of 1922-1923.[31] Huygelen, Du Bois, and Devresse were all sculptors of Matton's generation, and made figures in a similarly academic neoclassical style.[32] The next commissions went to younger artists, and in 1924 the

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[29] These sculptures will be further discussed in the following chapter, where I have included images.

[30] The administration of the Belgian Congo had begun to change by the 1920s and was significantly different by the 1930s. Though the colony had already been transferred to Belgium when Matton visited in 1911, over the ensuing decade the Belgian government took greater control of administration across Congo and began to encourage Belgian settlement (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2003, 33-41).

[31] The timeline of creation and acquisition of the sculptures reflects Mary Jo Arnoldi's (2005) research published as the essay "Les sculptures de la rotonde du Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale (1910-2005)" in the book accompanying the exhibition *La mémoire du Congo: le temps colonial*. She notes that Huygelen was commissioned in 1914 to create two different sculptures, "The Colony Waking up in Civilization" and "Belgian Expansion," but never completed the second, and that the sculpture in the rotunda has since been wrongly given the title "Belgian Expansion." Further, when Morris was writing her thesis, the sculpture's Dutch title was given as "België zoekt nieuw arbeidsvelden," meaning "Belgium seeks new field of labor," a more specific way of describing "Belgian Expansion," but the French title was still "The Colony Waking up in Civilization" (2003, 41). In my recent visits, the incorrect title is given in both languages. Like "Justice" and "Charity," "Dawn" was also a typical allegorical figure of the time, and for his sculpture Huygelen replaced the typical European woman with a Congolese woman (Arnoldi 2005, 182).

[32] Like many Belgian artists of the period, the artists' work frequently intersected with the colonial project. Huygelen, for example, designed the monument to founder of the Congolese Railway Company Albert Thys in the Cinquantenaire Park, and Devreese designed medals celebrating colonialism. Note that the label at the museum gives Paul Du Bois' dates as 1829-1905. He was born in 1859 and died in 1938 (see Aubry and Van Loo 1996).

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museum installed "Fertile Africa" (L'Afrique féconde) by Ernest Wynants and "Negresse with Amphora" (Negresse à l'amphore) by Oscar Jespers.[33]

The seven remaining sculptures were all made by Arthur Dupagne. Also a generation younger than Matton, Dupagne was born in 1895, and lived and worked in the Belgian Congo from 1927-1935 as an industrial engineer (Arnoldi 2003, 229-233). He was a prolific sculptor, and much of his work depicted Congolese themes made for display both in Europe and in Congo – his "Monument du Rail" still stands on the grounds of the Institution of National Museums of Congo on Mount Ngaliema, near his monumental sculpture of Henry Morton Stanley overlooking the Congo River (Figure 46).[34] The museum first bought the bronze "The Paddler" (Le Pagayeur) in the 1940s, and after his death in 1961 Dupagne's wife and daughter donated five plaster sculptures to the institution (one, "Negresse assise au marché," is not on display). Later, Dupagne's former employer the Compagnie Forminière (Société internationale forestière et minière du Congo) donated "The Worker" (Le travailleur) in 1966. Finally, the museum purchased "The Warrior" (Le Guerrier) in the 1960s. By the time Congo became independent, the Rotunda had become a gallery of Belgian sculptor "africanistes" – artists known for their treatment of African subjects during the colonial period.[35]

In addition to sculptures for the niches, the museum added four larger-than-life works by the British artist Herbert Ward were added to the rotunda in the 1950s. Unlike the artists whose

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[33] I translate "negresse" to "negress" here, keeping in mind that it is the female form of the French term "nègre." Both terms are offensive and paternalistic, usually more insulting than "negro" but not always comparable to that term's most offensive alternative. In both English and French "negress" is dated and demeaning.

[34] Matton and Vinçotte also made monuments displayed in the former Leopoldville, including a bronze of the same bust of Leopold II that was in the Rotunda. For an online collection of photographs of Kinshasa from the 19th century to present, see the blog "Kinshasa Then and Now:" http://kosubaawate.blogspot.com/. For a focus on the monuments on Mount Ngaliema, see Justin Makangara (2020)'s recent photo essay as part of *Congo in Conversation*.

[35] Arnoldi (2005) notes that Dupagne's last sculpture was not acquired until *after* Congo became independent. For a full treatment of so-called "africaniste" Belgian artists, see Guisset 2003.

Figure 46: Arthur Dupagne's "Monument du Rail" in the parking lot at the Institution of National Museum of Congo on Mount Ngaliema in Kinshasa. Photo October 2019. The bas-relief was originally made in 1948 for Leopoldville's central train station making the 50th anniversary of the completion of the Matadi-Leopoldville rail line, during which thousands of laborers died (discussed in Chapter One).

works still occupy the Rotunda's niches, Herbert Ward was not Belgian but British. He was born in London in 1863, ten years prior to Arsène Matton, and traveled the Pacific before arriving in the Congo Free State in 1884. There he worked for the Sanford Exploring Company, working his way up to station chief before joining Henry Morton Stanley's 1887 Emin Pasha Relief Expedition.[36] He only began his formal artistic training in 1893, and turned his focus to sculpture in 1900. Most of his oeuvre was dedicated to African subjects, and despite his admiration of African sculpture and living in Paris during the rise of the modernist avant-garde, he worked in the conservative academic tradition (Arnoldi 1992, 432, 437). The AfricaMuseum's four Ward sculptures were completed in 1912, but donated to the museum by Ward's widow in 1930. These plaster casts were first displayed in the galleries devoted to "Civilization and Catholic Missions" in their original white plaster before being painted and moved to the Rotunda (Breedon 2010, 278). They were still present in 2013, and their representations of Africans were long an enduring memory of the museum. During the renovation, however, they were the only Rotunda figures removed from the room, and they are now found in the "sidelined" gallery in the basement (Figure 47).

Entitled "The Artist" (Le Dessinateur, literally "the drawer"), "The Tribal Chief" (Le Chef de Tribu), "The Idol-maker" (Le Sculpteur d'Idole), and "[Making] Fire" (Le Feu), they are

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[36] Arnoldi 1992, 430. The Sanford Exploring Expedition was founded by Henry Shelton Sanford, an American financier who played a key role in making the United States the first government to recognize Leopold II's claim over the Congo basin (Pakenham 1991, 242-244). In return, his Exploring Expedition was the only concession company allowed to operate in Congo in 1886, other than Leopold's International Association of the Congo (White 1967). The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition was undertaken to locate and relieve Emin Pasha, who was the Governor of Equatoria province in what is now South Sudan, immediately to the north of the DRC. From 1881-1885 Sudanese Mahdist rebels fought and eventually overthrew the Khedivite of Egypt, an autonomous state within the Ottoman Empire which had been conquered by the British in 1882. In 1885 Emin Pasha was a Silesian-born physician who worked for the Ottoman Empire in southern Sudan, and was cut off from the rest of the empire after the Mahdist overthrow. The British sought to relieve him at his post on Lake Albert and take control of the Equatoria province, and Stanley agreed not only to lead the expedition but to go via the Congo Free State, therefore also advancing some of Leopold II's agenda. See Smith 1972, Pakenham 1991, 316-335, as well as Stanley 1891.

painted black plaster casts of bronze figures Ward had donated to the Smithsonian Institution (Arnoldi 1992 and Arnoldi 1998). Each depicts a loincloth-wearing African man performing an activity, but their postures or facial expressions can project childlike or simian qualities. Describing Ward's sculptures, Saunders (2005) writes, "something's lacking: each figure is awkwardly displayed, as if devoid of self-consciousness or control" (86). Hugh Marles (1996) interprets the sculptures as exemplars of "racially grounded theories about the aesthetic and intellectual propensities of African people," thought to be led more "by instinct rather than by deliberation" (24, 26). Looking at "The Artist," one notes that he draws without tools, using his finger to make lines in the dirt (Figure 48). This seemingly simple task nevertheless demands great focus, indicated by his furrowed brow and hunched shoulders.[37] When placed on the floor immediately below Matton's golden sculptures, the comparison between the fully-clothed Belgians standing tall and the almost naked bent-over Africans further promoted the Rotunda's contrasts between "civilization" and "barbarism" (Figure 49).

Artist Wendy Morris (2003) convincingly argues that the European sculptures in the rotunda create a visual environment of colonial desire (13). She notes that most of the African women are naked, and the European women wear draping garments "that function as sculptural devices through which the female body is shaped" (23) falling on breasts and thighs just so. The African men's genitalia are either covered or inexplicably absent, and the only European man is a Catholic priest. In contrast with depictions of African men in other parts of the museum (such as in Ward's sculpture "Defiance," discussed in Chapter One), those in the rotunda are sex- and defense-less. In the central Matton sculptures, for example, the male Africans are either children

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[37] Marles (1996) reports that the Smithsonian catalogue record from the time indicates that the works "was intended to typify the rude beginnings of art" (25). The piece had also been referred to as "L'Ecrivain," (The Writer), and Marles reminds us that at the time European scientists believed that picture-writing was "a preliminary phase in the development of written language" (ibid.).

Figure 47: During the renovation, Herbert Ward's sculptures were moved from the Rotunda to the new "Sidelined" gallery in the basement. From left to right: "The Tribal Chief," "The Idol-Maker," and "Making Fire."

Figure 48: Ward's "The Artist" on view in the "Sidelined" gallery in the museum's basement. On the left we can see the back of Ward's "The Tribal Chief," where he was added human skulls to the back of chief's seat. In the back right we can see Charles Samuel's "Vuakusu Batetela Defends a Woman from an Arab."

Figure 49: Before the renovation Ward's four sculptures depicting Africans were placed below Matton's four allegorical sculptures. Photo by Kirsty Breedon, published in Breedon 2010.

or diminutive men, clinging to the European figures. All but one of the African women in the rotunda look away from the viewer. Barbara Saunders (2005) picks up on Morris' arguments, terming the rotunda's visual devices "Congo-Vision," arguing that the Rotunda sculptures place the viewer within an "economy of 'seeing,'" which "locate[s] the spectator in the role of 'desirer'" (79). Morris (2003) explains, "The voyeurism implicit in the viewing of representations of bodies of colonized women, whose own gaze is firmly diverted, is sanitized of shame in the culturally approved setting of the museum. Here seeing is given scientific sanction as the pursuit of knowledge and cultural sophistication" (41). The colony is presented as a "sexualized and available female" (43), and the Rotunda centers the male Belgians as its intended audience, represented by the bust of Leopold II in the early years of the museum.

2018: New Breath or Burgeoning Congo

In 2016 the museum announced a competition for the commission of a new work of art for the Rotunda. At first, Mpane, the ultimate winner, was not interested, knowing that the museum was colonial and feeling that its history was too "sad" (triste). As he considered the competition, however, he concluded that the museum was home to "our history, our past," and that his artwork could create an opportunity for dialogue (pers. comm. Dec. 3, 2019). Mpane proposed placing a giant bust of an African man where there had once stood one of Leopold II. He hoped his work might reclaim the museum for Congolese people like himself. Mpane's original plans, which looked slightly different from what was unveiled in December 2018, sought to engage the rotunda in four different ways. First, he planned to make the head much larger, but was informed that he could not due to budget constraints. Second, he wanted his work to stand in the center of the room. Third, Mpane had asked for Matton's figures to be removed,

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but to no avail. Fourth, what would become "New Breath" was meant to be directly on the floor, with the bronze base flowing into the marble, rather than placed on a black podium. The artist hoped that with the placement of his sculpture into the rotunda, he would break the interplay of colonial, European-male-centered gazes (pers. comm. Dec. 6, 2018).

Despite these changes to his proposal, "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo" draws in viewers. Mpane states that he was "seduced" by the light in the room and by the upper windows through which it descends. How could he harness the energy of the room and redirect it from the niche sculptures so "stéréotypées" and "clichées"? (pers. comm. Dec. 3, 2018.) One answer to this was size, and, after his proposal was selected, he would make the head as monumental as possible. Although Mpane's initial idea was not executed at the size he had hoped because of budget constraints, he raised his work with a platform so that its height would align with the bottom of the central niches and compete for attention (ibid.). Mpane also created a lattice, not solid yet not fully transparent, inviting the viewer to look closer at the inside and beyond the sculpture. Looking within the work one sees that the metal pool below has been drawn up through the center of the head, sprouting into a crown of four palm fronds (Figure 33).

Speaking about the leaves sprouting from the head, Mpane says:

I'm trying to pick up the same shapes, the same number of palm leaves, the same patterns that were there, and turn them around. It's like a plant, a symbol of something that blossoms, that goes towards the light. So I'm interested in making a shell as a wooden head, but it's all that happens inside that is more interesting. That is to say it is this energy that we see inside, this energy which goes inside and which will grow towards the light. The idea also was that when we enter the room and we are attracted to the work, then we are forced to turn like that, to go higher [up the stairs] to look at the crown, and when we look at the crown and suddenly we do not forget the light, and when we walk down we will see less of what is happening in the Rotunda, and we will not see much of the objects around. It takes attention, it will capture attention. (Pers. comm. Dec. 3, 2018.)

Mpane has taken the garland in the marble at the foot of the sculpture, part of the symbol of colonial domination, and redirected such energies through "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo." "Bourgeonnant" is difficult to translate, as it can mean the budding of a flower, but also the action of a new plant shoot sprouting out of the ground. Shared across possible translations is the sense of pent-up, inchoate potential, not yet fully flowered or grown. Within Mpane's sculpture, delicate palm fronds reach upwards toward the light coming from the oculus of the dome.[38]

The artist has created latticework in a number of other works to highlight the interiority of the human figure and the energy so possessed. In "Yebela," a sculpture of a large hand realized in 2017, a large hand points its index finger in reference to activism in the DRC when protestors took the streets demanding elections (Figure 50). Protestors pointed their figures and yelled "Yebela," "you must leave."[39] The inside of this hand is painted red, a technique Mpane also uses in his smaller lattice works to bring attention to the interior of the figures. "Classical sculpture is always about anatomy, about appearance, but I wanted to go further, deeper than appearance," he says. Though he explores the human figure in almost all of his creations, Mpane pushes beyond physicality. In his attempts to bring viewers to look inside of his sculptures and consider what is beyond their surfaces, he hopes they will look "not to anatomical interiority, but the interior of one's spirit, like one's consciousness" (pers. comm. Dec. 3, 2018).[40]

How might the colonial monuments ensconced in the museum's rotunda be addressed? Mpane first asked if they could be removed, but was given the oft-repeated explanation that since

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[38] In a wonderful coincidence of etymology, "oculus" in Latin also means the bud of a plant (OED Online).

[39] "Yebela" has also been translated as "sache-le," an ominous warning to "be aware" or "know that" we are watching, we are angry, we have had enough (see Luboya 2016). The protestors prevailed and elections were held in December of 2018.

[40] In addition to this lattice sculptures, Mpane has made several sculptures by gluing matchsticks together, such as "Congo: Shadow of the Shadow" (2008) or "Don't Touch Me" (2010). These are significantly more fragile than this lattice-work sculptures, and are displayed with a light so that their shadow is projected onto a wall, further highlight Mpane's investigation of interiority beyond the physicality of a sculptural body.

Figure 50. "Yebela" by Aimé Mpane (2017). Installed as part of 2017 exhibition "J'ai oublié de rêver" at Museum Ianchelevici, La Louvière, Belgium

they were part of the architecture, they could not be removed due to being covered by the "heritage" designation of the building as a whole. "What if we just rotated them?" Mpane half-joked, imagining what it might be like to have their backs turned to the rotunda (pers. comm. Dec. 6, 2018). Instead, he contextualized colonial views through dialogue of his works with Matton's. Mpane proposed that the figures could instead become a kind of "documentation," acting witnesses to the colonial past and to a possible positive future meant to leave them and the colonial approach to Africa behind. In this, Mpane echoed earlier descriptions of African ethnographic objects displayed to symbolize pasts to be left behind as "civilization" was brought to "darkest Africa," while acting as witnesses to glorious colonial histories celebrated by the museum.

Addressing complexities of colonial pasts is beyond a single gesture, however dramatic. Mpane repeated "petit à petit" – little by little – throughout our conversations about his work in the museum's rotunda. He was aware that the museum would not – could not – change drastically, but instead described his work as "a foot in the door" ("un pied là-dedans") to participation in dialogues, discussions, and decisions made by the museum about Belgian and Congolese histories. At the press opening as the AfricaMuseum was presented to its publics, Mpane pointed out to me that though Matton's works were still there, the smaller Ward sculptures had been moved. For him, decolonizing a museum is a process always under construction ("un chantier"). "What will it be like in a century?" he asks. He hoped to propose a temporary installation into which some of the colonial sculptures might be placed, after which the museum would realize it could not return them to their earlier prominence. Mpane explains, "Little by little like this, so it's us decolonizing, but also them. That's what it means to me, to work together. Because if we always refuse to work together again, we will not move forward"

(pers. comm. Dec. 6, 2018). I end the interview doubtful the museum will continue its work toward decolonizing through contemporary art after the attention-grabbing opening has passed, and curious and hopeful about Mpane's optimism.

2019: A UN Visit

Perhaps there is reason to hope. On February 27, 2020, the AfricaMuseum announced an update to its rotunda installation. Over the course of the previous year, it had become clear that Mpane's initial sculpture did not do enough to draw attention away from the large allegorical figures, still mentioned in most reviews of the museum's renovation. In February of 2019, a United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent visited Belgium and spent some time at the AfricaMuseum. In their statement to the media, the experts included the following points:

> 15. The most visible postcolonial discourse in a Belgian public institution takes place within the recently reopened Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), which is both a research and a cultural institution. RMCA has sought to review its approach to include critical, postcolonial analysis - a marked shift for an institution originally charged with promulgating colonial propaganda. The Working Group is of the view that **the reorganization of the museum has not gone far enough**. For those communities that do engage in vibrant postcolonial discourse, i.e., civil society and activists, the reorganization falls short of its goal of providing adequate context and critical analysis. The Working Group notes the importance of removing all colonial propaganda and accurately presenting the atrocities of Belgium's colonial past. **The RMCA admits that decolonization is a process** and reports its intention to evolve towards sharing power with people and institutions of African descent.

> 50. The Working Group urges the relevant authorities to ensure that the RMCA be entrusted with tasks and responsibilities in the context of the International Decade for people of African Descent. In this context, the Working Group recommends that the RMCA be provided with appropriate financial and human resources, which would allow it to fully exercise the potential of this institution and engage in further improving and enriching its narrative, thus contributing to a better awareness and understanding of the tragic legacies of Belgian

colonialism as well as past and contemporary human rights challenges of people of African descent.

51. The Working Group encourages the RMCA, in collaboration with historians from Africa and the diaspora, to **remove all offensive racist exhibits** and ensure detailed explanations and context to inform and educate visitors accurately about Belgium's colonial history and its exploitation of Africa.

52. The Working Group urges the Government to provide specific, directed funding to the RMCA to enrich its postcolonial analysis. This funding should allow for innovations like QR codes on museum placards to provide more context and enrich intersectional analyses, including the historical and current interplay of race, gender, sexuality, migration status, religion and other relevant criteria. (Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights 2019, emphasis added.)

Less than three months after the celebratory reopening, the AfricaMuseum was publicly chastised for failing to provide sufficient context, and soon took action.

Responding to the criticisms, the museum asked Mpane to add to his installation, and he proposed a two-part update. First, he would create another sculpture to face the original. Second, he would work with a Belgian artist to veil Matton's figures. Mpane decided to work with Belgian artist Jean Pierre Müller, with whom he designed large, semi-transparent veils to hang in front of the allegorical sculptures, creating a new installation entitled "RE/STORE" that opened in late February 2020, just weeks before all Belgian museums were closed to the public due to COVID-19. The "RE/STORE" veil project is the topic of the next chapter. Below, I will discuss Mpane's sculptural addition, "Lusinga's Skull."

2020: Lusinga's Skull

Across from the head of "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo," Mpane positioned a large-scale, latticework skull in a compressed shape (Figures 51 and 52). "Lusinga's Skull" is named for the cranium of a Congolese man currently held in the collections of Belgium's Royal Institute

Figure 51: View from southwest corner of the rotunda, showing "Lusinga's Skull" and "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo" by Aimé Mpane on either side of the royal colonial emblem in the marble floor. Photo © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, with permission.

Figure 52: Mpane has included the museums labels on Lusinga's actual skull to his sculpture of the skull (but on the right side of the sculpture, whereas they are on the left side of the actual skull). Photo © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, with permission.

of Natural Sciences. The work commemorates Lusinga Lwa Ng'ombe, a Tabwa chief living to the west of Lake Tanganyika from circa 1840 until December 4th, 1884, when he was decapitated by mercenaries of Émile Storms, a Belgian military officer. Taking advantage of his geographic and political position at the time, Lusinga had become a darkly successful participant in the east African trade of ivory and enslaved people (A. Roberts 2013). His fate was met at the hands of Storms, sent west of Lake Tanganyika as commander of the fourth expedition of the International African Association and an important player in Leopold II's strategizing toward his eventual command of the Congo.[41] In adding his sculpture depicting Lusinga's skull, Mpane strove to disallow museum staff or its visitors from ignoring the violence of the Belgian colonial project.

Given estimates that many millions perished from the brutalities of Leopold II's Congo Free State, Lusinga was certainly not the only Congolese chief to have been killed by a Belgian, yet he has become important to present discussions of decolonization because of unusually detailed documentation of his assassination and subsequent dehumanizing reification (see Bouffioux 2018). After Lusinga's beheading, Storms brought the chief's skull to Brussels along with a large collection of ethnographic and natural-history items, including the crania of Tabwa chiefs Malibu and Kapampa. All three were studied by the noted Belgian physical anthropologist Émile Houzé, using craniometry as alleged "evidence" of African degeneracy, thus "justifying" Léopold II's "civilizing mission" (A. Roberts 2013, 143-156). Roberts notes that the skulls were thus "chosifiés" (echoing Césaire's thing-ification discussed in Chapter One) and separated from

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[41] The histories, memories, and implications of the encounter between Lusinga and Storms cannot be covered in detail here. They are the subject of Allen Roberts' 2013 monograph, *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo*. Also see Maarten Couttenier's *Congo tentoongesteld: Een geschiedenis van de Belgische antopologie en het museum van Tervuren* (2005) for discussion of their encounter within the context of Belgian anthropology.

the persons to whom they once belonged (154-155). In 1930, Storms' widow donated his Congolese collections to what is now the AfricaMuseum. Lusinga's skull was then transferred to the Royal Institute of Natural Sciences in 1964, along with 649 other human skulls in the museums' collections (145). After becoming a "thing," in recent years the skull has become a symbol for demands that Belgium return human remains and art objects to the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In 2018, Belgian investigative journalist Michel Bouffioux published a series of articles about Lusinga's skull in the Belgian edition of *Paris Match*. If activists had been aware of human remains in Belgian museums and their ties to colonialism before, they now had a name and an unusually detailed story to rally around. Prior to the publication of Roberts' and Couttenier's books and a photo project by Congolese artist Sammy Baloji (discussed below), no one knew the name Lusinga outside of a small region in Congo along Lake Tanganyika (A. Roberts 2013). After the publication of Bouffioux's article, the journalist created a website, lusingatabwa.com, where he aggregates his own articles on the topic along with interviews and guest writings on Congo-Belgian social activism. One participant, Kalvin Soiresse Njall, a former leader of the "Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte contre les Discriminations" and one of the most outspoken activists in Belgium, described Lusinga as a Lumumba figure, whose only crime was to resist Belgian oppression (Njall 2018). Lusinga, who as a historical figure was a murderous plunderer of local polities, has become a symbol of a fight against colonial oppression. His skull symbolizes the almost entirely anonymous human remains and objects of cultural heritage taken from Congo and stored in the kilometers of storage rooms across Europe. By the time Mpane decided to add the sculpture of Lusinga's skull to the Rotunda installation,

finding information about the man and the history of how his skull had arrived in Europe was not

nearly as difficult as it had been a decade prior.

Oddly enough, Mpane had to leave both Europe and Congo to learn about Lusinga. He

visited Los Angeles in 2013 to attend the opening of "Shaping Power: Luba Masterworks from

the Royal Museum for Central Africa" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, at the

invitation of the exhibition's curator, Mary Nooter Roberts. While the AfricaMuseum was closed

for renovation, Roberts was able to borrow some of museum's "treasures," but also included

Mpane's 2005 work "Congo, Shadow of the Shadow" (Figure 53).[42] Like much of Mpane's

oeuvre, this installation commented on Congo's past and present, featuring a male figure made of

matchsticks standing over a grave whose marker reads "1885," the year of the creation of the

Congo Free State. On the floor, Mpane placed wooden silhouettes of people and abandoned

shoes, referencing shoes left behind after present-day rebels attack communities in eastern DRC.

Mpane visually links present deaths to past colonization, and a light projected through the

matchstick figure projects a large, haunting shadow over the wooden silhouettes. The outline of

the figure shows a strong male body, but as a shadow it lacks solidity, and the matchstick figure

is extremely fragile while also holding the possibility for an explosive situation. Like Congo, the

figure is both strong and fragile, full of powerful potential.

In 2013 Allen Roberts had just completed his *Dance of Assassins* monograph about the

epic contest of Lusinga and Storms, and during long conversations with Mpane in Los Angeles,

he introduced him to the story. Returning to Belgium, Mpane shared the account with his activist

friends. Long before sculpting Lusinga's skull, Mpane had made a different countermonument to

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[42] Mpane's work is in the collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art (2009-10-1). It was first exhibited in 2006 at the Dak'Art biennial in Dakar, Senegal, where it won the Fondation Jean-Paul Blachère prize.
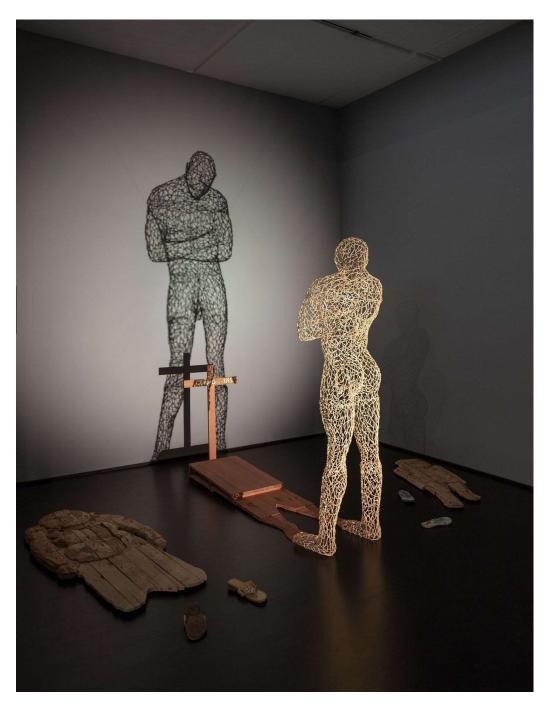
Figure 53: Mpane's "Congo: Shadow of the Shadow" (2005) as installed at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2013. Thanks to Allen Roberts for the photograph.

General Storms, whose bust is in the Square de Meeûs in the Ixelles neighborhood of Brussels. Made of plaster to be easily replaced, Mpane designed his own bas-relief "bust of Lusinga," which combined Storms' formal military jacket with a superimposition of Mpane's face upon a portrait of Patrice Lumumba (pers. comm. June 3, 2020). Before it could be put in place in front of the bust of General Storms however, Mpane's proposal to include his sculpture of Lusinga's skull in the rotunda was accepted, and during the protests of spring-summer 2020 Ixelles promised to remove Storms' bust (though it is still present as of this writing).

Mpane's sculpture is not the first artistic treatment of Lusinga's skull by a Congolese artist, nor is it the first in a major European ethnographic museum. The prominent photographer Sammy Baloji, now one of the most successful Congolese artists, took photos of Lusinga's skull for his 2009 series "Allers et retours," created while Baloji was in residence at the musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris and now in the museum's collection.[43] "Allers et retours" consists of five black and white photographs of the skull from different angles, one photo of the same black background as the other photos but without the skull, and a two-channel video of ocean and coast scenes, in reference to the Middle Passage of the transatlantic slave trade (Arndt 2013). Writer and curator Lotte Arndt describes Baloji's technique as a "nearly exact reproduction of the register in which anthropometric photography operates," which usually has six views (ibid.). Since there are only five views of Lusinga's skull, one side of the skull has not been photographed. In an email to Arndt, Baloji explained that traditionally the sixth photograph would have been of the lower jaw of a skull, missing in the case of Lusinga's cranium (ibid). Baloji's sixth photograph is of an absent skull, showing only the black fabric background, which

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[43] These photographs were recently on view for the musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac's 20th anniversary exhibition, which ran from September 2019 to January 2020.

he explains is a photograph of the absence of "Others' history" (ibid.). Arndt interprets this photograph as the location of "the leftover of the skull's objectification," a space for "the inscription of the skull's untold story" (ibid).

While the photograph of the black fabric does indeed provide fertile ground for interpretation, there is another photograph that could have been included, depicting the left side of the skull. Baloji's five views of the skull depict the front, right side, back, top, and bottom (missing the lower jaw). Imagining the skull like a cube, the left side is missing, and it is this side that has become the most-reproduced image of the skull in media coverage and activist writings about Lusinga, for it is this left side that has the clearest tie to brutal colonial histories. On this side, someone has written "Lusinga" in nineteenth-century cursive, while below it is an inked acquisition number "AA 151" with "Lusinga" again, in block letters (A. Roberts 2013, 145). Why has Baloji chosen to depict the side without any writing, and to omit the perspective that clearly identifies it as Lusinga's?[44] Arndt interprets Baloji's series of photographs as a commentary on the "objectifying representation" of the skull found both in the practices of museum display and in anthropometric photography, and she specifically describes the last, empty photo as a place that "allows the inscription of the skull's untold story" (Arndt 2013).

While I do not disagree with this interpretation of the photographic series, the most obvious representation of the museum's objectification of the skull is on the left side of the skull, not included in Baloji's photographic series. The inscription on the skull both personifies it by linking it to a human with a name, and objectifies it, entering it into the letter-number

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[44] As I came to this realization, I wondered if this could reflect Baloji's conspiring approach to the project. Arndt (2013) recounts that in order to access the skull in the collection of the Belgian Museum of Natural Sciences Baloji had to pretend to be a scientist. Further, while Baloji has told Arndt that he is following the "ordering logic" of anthropometric photography, the logic of such photography also calls for documenting anything unusual – writing on the skull, for instance.

classification system of the museum shared with such other specimens as dinosaur fossils and gems – hence its "chosification" (A. Roberts 2013, 154-155). Arndt (2013) questions whether Baloji's approach to photographing the skull is a successful critique of anthropometric photography, or if it instead reproduces its failures, as the viewer still learns nothing of Lusinga. Baloji's choice not to photograph the side of the skull with the inscriptions, however, adds another variable to be interpreted. Is he commenting on the objectification of the skull while protecting Lusinga's identity? Or, if the empty photograph "allows for the inscription of the skull's untold story" and Lusinga rejects the inscription *on* the skull, is he also refuting any European telling of his story?

Reference to Lusinga's skull in Belgian activist circles has occurred without reference to what Lusinga and his community would have wanted and expected to be done with this skull. In his book on the fateful encounter between Storms and Lusinga, Roberts (2013) devotes an entire chapter to how a chief might have been buried in Tabwa lands, adopting eastern Luba practices (193-217). Based on his own interviews in the 1970s and archival research among the records of the White Fathers who lived in the area when Lusinga was killed, Roberts deduces that regardless of how a chief was killed, following one strain of funerary logic, the man's community would wait until the skull naturally detached from the corpse and then the skull or part of the skull would be removed to a shrine within the compound. The rest of his body, folded into a large jar, would be brought to a shallow pool and the skull of the chief's predecessor would be placed with it.[45] Later, the man who would become chief would revere his predecessors

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[45] A. Roberts (2013) also cites Charles Delhaise, a colonial administrator, who reported that some Tabwa would divert the course of a stream in order to bury a chief, and then redirect the stream over the grave (200).

skull as a time-defying physical manifestation of lineage.[46]

Death for ordinary Tabwa people would not receive as much ritual attention as the death of a chief, and usually the dead's soul ("mutima") would travel to the cavern of Kibawa, a "chthonic spirit" in charge of the souls of the dead. Roberts (2013) mentions two specific cases when a mutima would not be able to reach Kibawa. First, "those of persons who have died by violence or who have otherwise left life with unresolved conflicts wander as vengeful ghosts (*vibanda* or *vizwa*)" (209). Second, by separating the skull from the body of a recently deceased chief, that chief's "mutima spirit" cannot reach Kibawa's cavern, and would remain among the living (210). Roberts supposes that the skull could be "enjoined to inhere in the *nkisi ya mipasi* figure maintained by his successor," existing in a state in which it could be asked to "effect supernatural undertakings" as did the minkisi discussed in the previous chapter (ibid.). Such spirits are "unpredictable," except for their demands of attention (ibid.). Both exceptions apply to Lusinga, who died by violence and whose skull was immediately separated from his body and taken to Belgium. Is Lusinga's spirit eternally wandering between our world and Kibawa's cavern, denied a resting place?

Moreover, current discussions of Lusinga's skull rarely acknowledge that it is not the only "part" of Lusinga taken from Congo to Brussels. In fact, a second part of Lusinga's person is currently on view in the AfricaMuseum, in the "Colonial History and Independence" gallery. I am referring to a sculpture, commissioned by Lusinga to "embody his matrilineage and the dynastic name he sought to establish" (A. Roberts 2013, 175; idem 1985) and like many similar figures commissioned by chiefs in the region, an important tool for visually representing one's

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[46] For a broader overview of funerary traditions and their arts across Africa, see John Mack's 2019 book *The Artfulness of Death in Africa*.

authority (Figure 54).[47] Further, the sculpture is an nkisi, inhabited by Lusinga's matrilineal spirits. A. Roberts (2013) writes, "For Lusinga, the figure that Storms would eventually capture and bear away to Europe 'was' his dynastic lineage as a living essence with which the chief could commune while sharing freshly brewed beer and long meditative hours through the night" (183). Demands (so far made by people based in Belgium) for the return of Lusinga's skull without demanding the return of the nkisi figure continue a Eurocentric worldview prioritizing human remains over the sculpture where Lusinga's "soul" resides. That the Lusinga figure is now understood as a "treasure" of the museum complicates the issue greatly (see Verswijver et al. 1995).

Finally, Roberts' investigations into how Lusinga's skull might have been treated had it remained in the Congo led him to include an endnote in reference to his first mention of Lusinga's skull in the collections of the natural history museum: "I have decided not to publish a drawing or photograph of Lusinga's skull in deference to the secrecy in which it would have been revered by his family had it remained in their hands" (2013, 256 n9). An important step in Lusinga's skull becoming a potent symbol of colonial violence and the need to confront colonial pasts has been the images of the skull circulated in Belgian media since publication of Roberts's monograph. But is there a difference between photos of the skull used in newspapers, Sammy Baloji's treatment of the skull in his artwork "Allers et retours," and Mpane's sculpture in the Rotunda? Such questions only engender more questions about the nature of art, photography, and

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[47] A. Roberts 2013, 177. This Lusinga figure is now on view in a small cave-like case on a display island in the gallery, part of a section on Storms' raid against Lusinga. In between an interactive timeline about "Imperialism and the Independent Congo State (1896-1908)" and a display case about Tippu Tip, the label copy includes an excerpt from Storms' diary and a brief explanation that Storms killed Lusinga and replaced him with a chief loyal to the Belgians. In a note at the bottom of the display, a label specific to the nkisi explains that it is an "Ancestral statue known as Lusinga, which Storms claimed as war booty. Storms also brought Lusinga's skull back to Belgium. It is now stored at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS) in Brussels."

Figure 54: Ancestral figure of Lusinga and his matrilineage. EO.0.0.31660. 70 cm x 18 cm x 16 cm. Photo: JMVandyck © RMCA, included here following Fair Use.

politics of representation that cannot be broached here.[48] For now, as Mpane says, it seems that the best approach to decolonization of the AfricaMuseum is "petit à petit," – one object, one step at a time.

Calling on Lusinga to Decolonize the AfricaMuseum

Mpane's depiction of Lusinga's skull is context-specific. In response to my asking if he had considered what Lusinga's past or present family might think of having a giant representation of his skull in the museum, the artist admitted that he had not thought of it. For him, the situation in Belgium presented an opportunity to change minds and to take a small step toward decolonization. Considering how Lusinga's skull had so recently become a symbol of the need to publicly discuss the brutality of Belgian colonialism, Mpane said that for him,

> The remains become a weapon, since he was a chief, and his skull is a tool that will decolonize us, that will push things forward, and that's the priority. I wouldn't make a sculpture like this in Congo, since it wouldn't change anything. Here, we are not among the traditions, but we are in a struggle to change minds. He was a chief who sacrificed himself, who wanted to protect his village, his people. His skull now protects the diaspora, and his spirit continues to act. This is why my sculpture has holes, because it continues to release energy. This struggle, when we talk about decolonization, it's a struggle of spirits against spirits, in the collective unconscious, among immaterial things. So *we* need our spirit to chase away spirits too (pers. comm. June 3, 2020).

In the struggle to decolonize not only the museum but also contemporary Belgian culture, Lusinga's skull has become a tool and has returned a leadership role to a Congolese community chief, in a manner. For Mpane, the strong spirit that resides in the skull and in his representation

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[48] Questions – here without answers – include: does addressing Lusinga's skull from the point of the view of an artist differ fundamentally from how a scholar may understand the same object? How does the point of view of a contemporary Congolese artist differ from that of a contemporary scholar (or artist) of European heritage? Is "Congolese" a useful term for these questions, since such an identity did not exist in 1884?

of the skull can join with other voices calling for decolonization to push forward a movement

that at its heart seeks to recognize the humanity of all Congolese people.[49]

Emile Storms died in 1918, still in possession of Lusinga's skull, and with the Lusinga

nkisi figure displayed on the mantelpiece of his opulently appointed salon (A. Roberts 2013,

157). In 1930, his widow donated his collections and writings to the museum. In ensuing

decades, the nkisi figure became one of the "masterpieces" of the collection (Verswijver et al.

1995), touring the world and now one of the chosen artworks featured on a postcard for sale in

the museum's gift shop. The skull was never on display, perhaps following the same logic

preventing the display of travel diaries, which curator Frans Cornet deemed "liable to provoke

controversy" (A. Roberts 2013, 234). Were it not so controversial, the skull would most likely

have been presented in the Memorial Hallway, alongside Storms' effects in the cabinet dedicated

to his experiences in what would soon become the Congo Free State. Instead, the nkisi figure

was separated from the skull, one displayed as high art, the other relegated to storage cabinets in

a natural history museum. Though the skull remains there, it has returned to the AfricaMuseum

insofar as Mpane's large-scale sculpture graces the rotunda, reminding viewers of the

controversies once hidden.[50] The artist hopes the work will serve a different function in the

future, reminding visitors of a skull once held in the cruel anonymity of Belgian museums but

finally returned to the man's descendants in the DRC.

Mpane has chosen the sculpture locations with visitors in mind. Though he first wanted

to place "New Breath" over the star in the center of the rotunda where an ivory bust of Leopold

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[49] The concept of having Lusinga's spirit inhabit Mpane's sculpture follows the same "nkisi logic" discussed in the previous chapter.

[50] A full circle of connections can be made here: "Lusinga's Skull" looks back at Matton's "Slavery," which depicts an "Arab slaver" possibly based on an imagined portrait of Makutubu, also a Tabwa trader on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. This imagined portrait illustrates a description of Makutubu by Victor Giraud, who was himself friends with Emile Storms, the man who beheaded Lusinga and brought his skull to Brussels.

had once stood, he realized that moving the work adjacent to the royal emblem meant that visitors now stand upon the star while considering his sculpture that suggests hopeful futures (pers. comm. Dec. 3, 2018). With the addition of "Lusinga's skull," the visitor stands on the royal emblem between two works dedicated to challenging those views long celebrated by the colonial museum. Mpane notes that visitors probably do not realize the significance of where they are standing in "a little unconscious moment" but one that can bring thought to those who seek them (pers. comm. April 27, 2020). "Lusinga's skull" stands as a reminder of difficult pasts, and explicitly of the deaths inseparable from the historical colonial project. "New Breath" looks more evidently to future possibilities, its eyes gazing above visitors' heads and on out the windows of the rotunda's confines.

Chapter Three:

RE/STORE: Adding Layers to the Rotunda

A Palimpsest of the Rotunda

In search of a metaphor for how memory works in the human psyche, Freud landed on

the mystic writing pad: a writing tool made up of a layer of wax, beneath a sheet of wax paper,

itself beneath a sheet of clear celluloid (Freud 1961). To use such a pad, one would write on the

celluloid layer with a pointed stylus, writing on the celluloid layer. The pressure of the stylus

connects the wax paper to the wax, creating a mark on the wax paper. When the wax paper is

separated from the wax, however, the mark disappears from the paper, but remains on the

bottommost wax layer. The mystic writing pad both receives new information from the inscriber,

and keeps a record of it, albeit imperfect and under layers. In keeping a record of different

inscriptions made at different times, perhaps by different people, the writing pad produces a

palimpsest. The mystic writing pad was Freud's approach to theorizing memory, which has since

been incorporated into broader discussions of palimpsest as a metaphor for memory.[1]

In the large rotunda of the AfricaMuseum, two contemporary artists, Congolese Aimé

Mpane and Belgian Jean-Pierre Müller, have created a visual palimpsest. As discussed in the

previous chapter, the Rotunda has long been the museum's focal point, encapsulating the

museum's curatorial motivations. Different layers of the museum's history are on view in the

room, and many visitors will bring their own memories of the space with them when they visit.

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[1] My understanding of palimpsests and Freud's mystic writing pad is thanks to two professors and their influential classes: Virginia Jewiss' "The City of Rome" (Yale) and Mary Nooter Roberts' "Performing Memory" (UCLA). Sarah Dillon (2005) argues that the frequent association of the mystic writing pad with the palimpsest is "erroneous," as it ignores De Quincey's belief that the palimpsest only retains information as a means to an end, whereas the mystic writing pad's whole purpose is to retain information. Nevertheless, both are useful as metaphors for analyzing traces of memory and the very means of collecting the traces of memory are what is relevant here.

Mpane and Müller have have added new layers of meaning and opportunities for reflection by placing semi-transparent veils in front of older, colonial-era sculptures. Seemingly unrelated histories of and from Europe and Africa interrogate the art and architecture of the AfricaMuseum as well as colonial memories on both continents. Rather that covering over symbols of Belgium's racist, paternalistic view of Congo, the veils loosely conceal and reveal museal pasts.[2] The symbols are not relegated to a distant past, but their continued presence, refracted through the artists' interventions, speaks to such views today and the necessity of acknowledging and challenging them now.

Since the 19th century, the idea of a palimpsest has been an important tool in literary and cultural studies, aiding in the analysis of how memory works and the roles it plays in both personal and collective understandings of the past. Interpreting and theorizing with the palimpsest can be traced to the 1845 essay "The palimpsest" by Thomas De Quincey (Dillon 2005, discussing De Quincey 1998).[3] "Palimpsest" initially referred to writing, from the Latin "palimpsestus," meaning a "paper or parchment which has been written on again" and from the Greek "παλίμψηστος," meaning to be "scraped again" (as one would scrape a parchment or board to remove ink), itself a word made up of "πάλιν" – "again" – and "-ψηστός" – "to rub smooth" (OED Online). Prior to De Quincey's essay, "palimpsest" was primarily used in relation to the study of seventh- to fifteenth-century vellum parchment, which would be reused as it was an expensive material, although it could only be imperfectly erased (Dillon 2005, 244). Since

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[2] I purposefully echo the title of the exhibition and book, *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals* (1993) conceived and curated by Mary Nooter Roberts (then Mary H. Nooter) at the Museum for African Art in New York, based upon her dissertation research with Luba people of SE DRC in the late 1980s. In the exhibition and book, scholars investigate tactics for concealment and knowledge-making through visual and performance arts across Africa, highlighting the power of secrets and esoteric knowledge. As she would teach students in her classes, frequently the power of a secret comes from making its existence evident while still concealing its subject-matter.
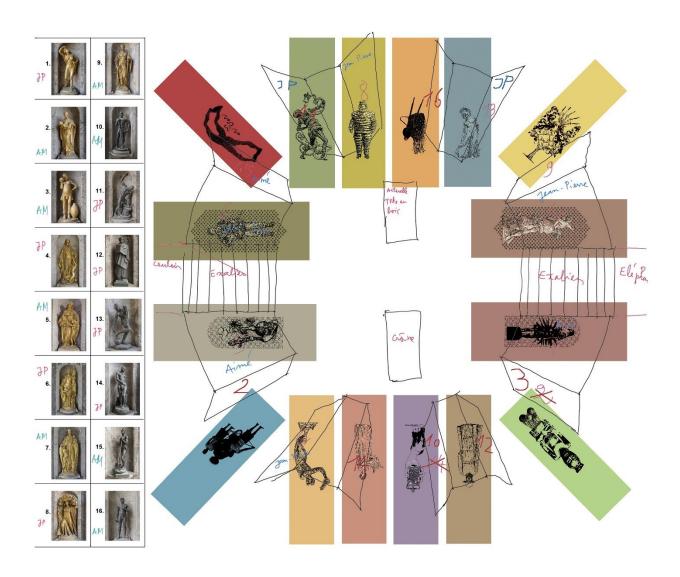
[3] Dillon notes that De Quincey was not in fact the first to use palimpsest as a metaphor, a tradition going back at least to Plutarch (1st to 2nd century C.E.) (Dillon 2005, 260 n1).

DeQuincey's 1845 essay, the notion of palimpsest has been used to interpret individual memory as well as collective understandings of the past and its influence on the present.

Palimpsests are necessarily created over time. The Rotunda has hosted various exhibitions since its inauguration, and even its architectural niches were filled with sculptures over the course of decades. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the months following the December 2018 reopening it became clear that "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo" alone was not a forceful enough statement, with several articles highlighting the continued presence of the colonial statues in the Rotunda's niches as evidence of the museum's continued colonial mentality. The museum returned to Mpane, asking him to add to his initial work. In February of 2020 the museum unveiled the most recent addition to its galleries, the project "RE/STORE" by Aimé Mpane and Jean-Pierre Müller. In addition to a second wooden sculpture, Mpane invited Müller to work with him in creating a total of 16 veils to hang in front of the niches still displaying colonialist and exoticizing sculptures (Figure 55). Made of semi-transparent fabric and placed about a foot in front of the niches, the veils cover but do not hide the sculptures. Featuring drawings and designs by both artists, Mpane and Müller's illustrations respond to and reinterpret the colonial-era sculptures.[4] Like the specters discussed previously, veils can create a paradox of visibility: they obscure, but by their presence they indicate the existence of that which they obscure. Little by little – petit à petit – the museum is adding layers of interpretation to its historic building as it attempts to reconsider its colonial past.

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[4] As indicated by the etymology of "palimpsest," drawing in particular has an important place in the art history of palimpsests. South African artist William Kentridge is especially significant in his use of drawing while recounting stories of apartheid, creating an animation which shows traces of the previous drawings in the same animation. Further, he has characterized his artistic creation as one that indirectly addresses apartheid, that is, an era of South Africa's colonial history, working around it rather than facing it openly (Krauss 2000). As with Mpane and Müller's veils, history is in the artwork, but under layers of interpretation.

Figure 55: Diagram of Rotunda showing placement of veils. Designed by Aimé Mpane and Jean Pierre Müller. See also Figure 32.

South – Previous entrance toward gardens

RE/STORE

Though the addition of "Lusinga's Skull" certainly instigates new meaning-making within the Rotunda, Mpane wanted to further address the large Rotunda sculptures which overpowered the space. He and Belgian artist Jean-Pierre Müller designed veils to hang over the niches to challenge oppressive associations long promulgated by the sculptures. Each conceived of visual ripostes to two of the four central allegorical figures as well to six of the figures in peripheral alcoves. Mpane designed the hangings for "Belgium Bringing Civilization to the Congo" and "Belgium Bringing Well-Being to the Congo," while Müller did the honors for "Belgium Bringing Security to the Congo" and "Slavery." Of the alcove figures, Mpane's veils lent new senses to Paul du Bois' "Charity"; Oscar Jespers' "Negress with Amphora"; Arthur Dupagne's "The Warrior" "The Worker" and "The Rower," and Godefroid Devreese's "Justice." Müller was in charge of Dupagne's "Tamtam Dancer," "Dry Season," "Man at his Toilette," and "Battle with the Serpent," as well as Huygelen's "Belgian Expansion" and Wynants' "Fertile Africa" (see Figure 55).

Mpane decided to name this new project "RE/STORE" as a play on words in both English and French. He explains that the idea came to him over the course of the year, as he reflected on his artistic production.

> J'entendais une petite voix qui me disait, 'tu fais de la restauration.' Restauration ? Mais je ne vais pas commencer à étudier la restauration des œuvres d'art, moi! Je suis artiste, je ne fais pas de la restauration. Mais j'ai dit non, c'est de re/staurer, je re/store, je fais la restauration, c'est la restitution tu vois.

> A little voice told me: 'you are doing restoration.' Restoration? But I'm not about to go start studying art restoration! I'm an artist, I don't do restorations. But I realized it's re/staurer, [a homonym for] re-store, I am restoring, it's restitution, you see. (Pers. comm. Oct. 17, 2019.)

Mpane is playing a bilingual game with words. In French, "restauration" means to repair something with the aim for returning it to its initial state, as in a work of art. The verb "restaurer"

can also mean to rest or recuperate, and to feed someone or, reflexively to eat (related to the word "restaurant"). Further, "staure" in French is a homonym with "store," which in French refers to window blinds. Changing languages, "store" in English means to keep, collect, or preserve, as in storage, one of a museum's fundamental roles. To re-store could also mean to make the museum storage all over again.

Mpane explains further:

To do something again is to restitute it. Now we are where we must restitute, redo a new collection, redo a new vision of stereotypes, a new vision, recreate universal heritage. (Pers. comm. Oct. 17, 2019.)

There is a slippage here between restituting, which means to return something, and restoring, which means to repair something but also to return something (in both English and French). Mpane uses this word play to argue for a new understanding of heritage and of museum collections. For Mpane, restitution, restoration, and RE/STORE are about more than the return of objects to Africa. The project is about a restoration of dignity and a recognition of the need to create a new relationship among peoples, a new collection, and new memories. As we sat in a café in Kinshasa discussing a museum in Belgium, Mpane explained, "it's memory that interests me. We will create a new layer of memory" (ibid.).

To add new layers of memory, Mpane and Müller added drapes of fabric, which they call veils ("voiles") (Figure 56). Since they are made from semi-transparent fabric, the sculptures in the niches can still be seen. Each veil is of a different, muted color, and has a black ink drawing imprinted upon it as designed by one of the two artists. In a similar manner to his use of lattice-like construction in his sculptures, Mpane hopes the semi-transparent nature of the veils draws visitors to look closer. They allow Mpane to conceal and reveal what is behind the hangings. Whereas in 2018 Mpane designated Rotunda sculptures as "documentation" of colonial views of the past, in 2019 he rephrased: "Let these sculptures become a memory, a completely negative

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memory, but which is still there. And we [Mpane and Müller], as symbols of the two cultures, we add out interventions to react, to give another dimension. We are adding layers of memory" (ibid.)

Continuing his drive to bring Belgians and Congolese into conversation, and to help Belgians understand that they are as implicated in Belgo-Congolese histories as Congolese are, Mpane cites one of the most celebrated 19th century Belgian painters as an influence for the veil project. As we discussed the works, Mpane recounted the story of Antoine Wiertz and his painting "Deux Jeunes Filles (La Belle Rosine)" of 1847 (Figure 57). A 19th-century interpretation of the "death and the maiden" motif and *vanitas* paintings, "La Belle Rosine" depicts a nude young woman in profile, standing face to face with a skeleton (Binion 2004, 128-129). In an eerie parallel with Lusinga's skull, the skeleton's skull in the painting also has a label, indicating "La belle Rosine."[5]

More exciting for Mpane, however, is the scandal that accompanied the painting's unveiling. Mpane recounts that the painting's subject matter was unacceptable for the very Catholic Belgian society of the time, and people demanded the painting be taken down. Wiertz, however, was the most celebrated Belgian painter at the time, so to censure him would also cause controversy. Rather, it was decided (by whom is unclear) to hang a veil in front of the canvas, but to cut a hole at about 1.5 meters (approximately 5 feet) from the floor so that men could gaze at the painting.[6] Mpane joked that this was the first installation art, and that the scandal and

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[5] On Lusinga as *memento mori*, see A. Roberts 2013, 165. Four decades later, James Ensor, another one of Belgium's best-known painters, frequently painted skeletons, including in his self-portraits (Moran 2007). Wiertz' painting currently hangs in the Wiertz Museum of Brussels, immediately across the street from the Museum of Natural Sciences where Lusinga's skull is in a storage drawer.

[6] Mpane's interest in this story and the male viewers is but one example of his fascination with power and the gaze, discussed below.
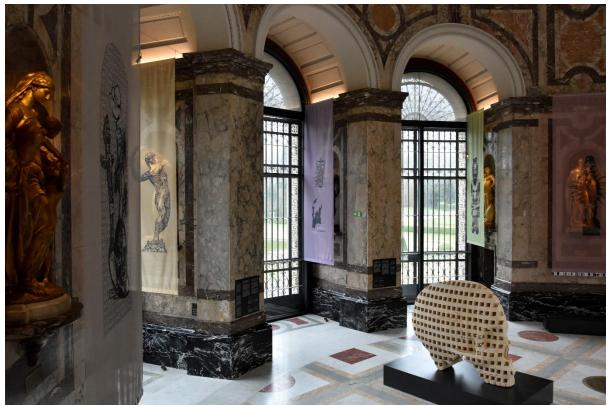
Figure 56: Veils hanging over sculptures on the south side of the rotunda, with "Lusinga's Skull" in the foreground. Photo copyright Maria-Krisztina Nagy, with permission.

Figure 57. "Deux Jeunes Filles (La Belle Rosine)" by Antoine Wiertz, 1847. Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, inv. 1935, © RMFAB, photo: J. Geleyns

response was and is representative of Belgium at large.

> Belgium is a surrealist country. An official painter, he paints a nude, and everyone rejects it. And the bourgeois get together and decide, "We'll but a veil in front of it and make a little hole," and then the painting is accepted. I'm thinking to myself, I'll play the same game, I'll make veils. Belgium always repeats, that's Belgium. (Pers. Comm. June 3, 2020)

Mpane's use of the veils in the rotunda is not only a commentary on Belgian views on Congo, but also a reference to Belgian art history and Belgian society more broadly.

Veils for the Four Central Sculptures

The two central figures on the west side of the Rotunda, "Belgium Bringing Well-Being to the Congo" (Figure 58a) and "Belgium Bringing Security to the Congo" (Figure 60a), present opposing visions of women. The first reflects the view that Belgium would care for Congo as a mother does her children, with the racist trope of all Africans being childish in their "simplicity" rendered quite explicitly. "Belgium Bringing Security to the Congo" depicts the kingdom as a Minerva-like warrior while a male African imploringly reaches up to her. She stares imperiously ahead, ignoring those she is expected to save from "savagery." Her demeaner offers rational conquest, while her sensual femininity mitigates her militaristic aggression (Morris 2003, 43; see also previous chapter).

Mpane created "Well-being RE/STOREd" to hang in front of "Belgium Bringing Well-Being to the Congo," by depicting a spoon holding a skull with flowers growing out of it (Figure 58b). The spoon is derived from one that Mpane saw on a visit the 2017 exhibition "From the Jordan River to the Congo River: Art and Christianity in Central Africa" at the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris which was curated by AfricaMuseum curator Julien Volper (Figure 59; see Volper 2016, 49, 66). Carved of wood, the handle depicts a woman (identifiable

by her breasts) in a crucifixion-like pose and comes from the Kongo region on either side of the Congo River. The white orchids growing out of the skull mirror the imagery found in the two sculptures Mpane designed for the Rotunda, uniting the skull of Lusinga with the leaves growing from the head of "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo."

This spoon was interesting to Mpane because, he says,

I knew crucifixions, but I never saw Christ on a spoon. I thought this was great – these [Bakongo] people do not care about it, they do not care about Europeans. It also meant for me, "You made us swallow your religion, but we don't need you. Your Christ is dead, and when you leave, it will be a woman." I thought to myself, I'd love to put this in the Rotunda. The "civilization" and "well-being" you brought us? It was only death. It was to bury us. But we are smart, and we didn't refuse it. And there we made it grow, it blooms, and it will give us something else, which will lead to something else. And we see religions like Kimbanguism, which were born out of misunderstanding, out of pain, and we invent other things.

Charismatic churches, evangelical churches in Congo – it's inculturation, they have invented something else. And yet this is something that we were supposed to refuse, because it was almost death, it was destroying African culture. So what I found interesting was to play with this idea, we feed death, and we wait. With patience we make something that will spring up (jaillir). (Pers. comm. June 3, 2020.)

Mpane is inspired by Congolese appropriations and adaptations of European religion as examples of resilience. Linking the spoon to Kimbanguism and Congolese revival churches, he celebrates those who have taken things introduced by Europeans and made them defiantly Congolese.[7] Can artistic interventions in Belgium's AfricaMuseum harness such defiance?

The carving of the woman with her hands outstretched on the spoon's handle may not necessarily be a crucifix, but the image of her arms outstretched forming a cross in one that resonates both in European Christian and Kongo indigenous traditions in what Cécile Fromont has termed a "space of correlation" (2014, see especially 78-79). As discussed in Chapter One,

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[7] The Kimbanguist Church was founded in 1921 by Congolese Baptist Simon Kimbangu, who attracted followers through his teachings and miracles. He was deemed a threat to colonial order and imprisoned that same year.

Figure 58 a, b, c: Matton's "Belgium Bringing Well-Being to the Congo" with Mpane's "Well-being RE/STOREd" (Digital and silkscreen print on fabric, 2020). Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 59: Spoon with crucifix. Kongo, Beembe, made before 1930. Collection of musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, inv. No. 71.1930.29.355. Photo: Claude Germain.

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the intersection of two lines can represent a Kongo *Dikenga* cosmogram, indicative of locations which are especially powerful for communication between the land of the living and that of the dead (Thompson 1981b, 43-44, Martinez-Ruiz 2013, 71). Inhabitants of the kingdom of Kongo began converting to Catholicism circa 1500, adopting many of its symbols into their own visual traditions (discussed in further detail below). In both Christian and indigenous Kongo beliefs, a cross symbolizes movement between life and death, referencing Jesus' resurrection or crossing the *Kalunga* line, or both.

The connection between life and death is the main subject of Mpane's "Well-Being RE/STOREd" veil. In addition to the spoon-crucifix, Mpane drew flowers sprouting out of a skull, illustrating the tension between tragic histories of Congo (up to the present) and his optimism for the future. As demonstrated by the story of Lusinga's death or the infamous Red Rubber era of the Congo Free State (among many other examples), Belgian involvement in Congo has been notoriously deadly for Congolese. Mpane specifically chose to depict white orchids, symbolizing beauty, elegance, and innocence (pers. comm. Nov. 14, 2020). Viewed together (Figure 58c), the fully drawn orchid on the veil directly covers the Belgian "mother's" face, the European child stands behind the shorter, more scribbled flowers, and the African infant is behind the Kongo female spoon-figure. As opposed to the hopeful message of a flower growing out of a violent past, the context of the Rotunda leads to a darker interpretation: the white, pure, maternal Belgium – as allegorical figure or as orchid – is rooted in violence. The skull is not something to move beyond, but rather the nourishment from which the flower grows. The hopefulness here, then, is in Mpane's interpretation of the spoon figure, which interposed in front of the African infant represents Congolese creativity and resilience.

Müller created "Security RE/STOREd" to hang in front of "Belgium Bringing Security to

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the Congo" (Figure 60a). In front of Matton's three-person sculpture, Müller depicts a Belgian

para-commando from the 1964 Stanleyville hostage crisis (Figure 60b) as illustrated by Chris

McNab (Figure 61).[8] This specific reference is to operation "Dragon Rouge," organized by the

Belgian Army and the American CIA to free almost 2,000 European hostages held by anti-

government Simba fighters (aligned with the Conseil National de Libération).[9] Echoing its 19th

century behind-the-scenes strategizing to secure international support of Leopold's claims in the

Congo basin, in the midst of the Cold War the American government supported the Belgian

Army in defeating the Simbas, some of whom had sought guidance and support from the Soviet

Union and China. The operation was part of a larger one against rebels in northeastern Congo,

who at one point controlled almost one third of the country. To put down the rebellion and

solidify his power, Prime Minister Moïse Tshombe relied on a mercenary army in addition to aid

from the US and Belgium. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) writes of the Simba that their "second

independence movement was the single major threat to Western neocolonialism in the Congo"

(135). The images of Belgian paratroopers jumping out of American planes served as a reminder

that independence did not lead to a disentangling of foreign interests from Congolese affairs.[10]

     Müller's image of the Belgian commando juxtaposed with "Belgium Bringing Security to

the Congo" (Figure 60c) recalls Léopold II's use of force to conquer Congo and keep it under his

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[8] McNab 2000, 95. There is one notable difference between McNab's drawing and Müller's image: Müller has enlarged the soldier's eyes. Chris McNab is an historian of military history and has written over 100 books on the topic, most with detailed illustrations. One could consider him an heir to Belgian artist James Thiriar, who was also a prolific illustrator of military uniforms and battles, including a portrait of Émile Storms which was displayed in the memorial hallways for decades prior to the renovation (A. Roberts 2013, 220-2220. Thiriar also illustrated guidebooks to the Belgian colonies as well as posters and maps for the Office of Tourism (Nicolaï 2012).

[9] I only give a broad overview here, gleaned from several sources: Weissman 1978, Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, Michaels 2012, Robarge 2014 and especially De Witte 2017.

[10] The uprising and other events of this period were frequently depicted in popular paintings, and paratroopers and military planes became a visual trope. See especially the paintings of Tshibumba Kanda Matulu in Fabian 1996.

Figure 60 a, b, and c: Matton's "Belgium Bringing Security to the Congo" with Müller's "Security RE/STOREd" (digital and silkscreen print on fabric, 2020). Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 61: "Warrant Officer Belgian Paracommando Stanleyville 1964." Illustration from McNab 2000, p. 95. Müller likely found it from http://miniaturasmilitaresalfonscanovas.blogspot.com/2013/07/uniformes-militares-modernos-n-1-europa.html via a google image search.

control, and the continued use of violence to maintain Belgian control in the colony. In an

interview, Müller scoffed at McNab's portrayal of a "heroic" paratrooper: "as a Belgian you

cannot help but laugh because we are not gods … the irony of having Belgium bringing

security!" (Pers. comm. April 30, 2020.) Not only was Müller speaking to Belgian self-

deprecation and self-conception as "little Belgium" informed by French scorn and all-too-easy

German occupation during both World Wars, but he was also alluding to the violent horrors in

Congo after Belgium's arrival. He obscured the female figure of benevolent militarism with a

recognizably aggressive figure of a man in modern military fatigues holding a machine gun.

Müller explains, "I used this uniform of a Belgian paratrooper and that illegal operation in 1964

in Kisangani against the last remnants of rebellion, [undertaken] so that everything is back in

business and we can do business again" (ibid.).[11] Both figures are united in this last statement;

from its beginning as a free trade zone through the 1964 operations to present-day battles in

northeastern regions, foreign military presence in Congo has not been about order and justice as

much as about profit. Finally, unlike McNab's original illustration, the eyes of Müller's

paracommando are wide open and staring straight into the Rotunda, as if provoking the viewer to

engage with the history the artist brings our attention to.

The two central figures on the east side of the Rotunda are "Belgium Bringing

Civilization to the Congo" (Figure 62a) and "Slavery" (Figure 64). The opposition sets up an

"evil" slave trader as a foil to the benevolent priest, a standard tool for strengthening an

argument for colonialism in visual form. The priest cares for the young Africans who look to him

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[11] While I do not know Müller's exact intention in referring to the 1964 operation as "illegal," it is likely in
reference to how Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) characterizes Operation Dragon Rouge: an exploitation of
"humanitarianism and the right of humanitarian intervention as a smokescreen concealing their [American and
Belgian] interests" (138). In addition to US fears of global communism, then as today Congo is one of the most
minerally-rich countries on the planet, including but not limited to uranium.

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for protection. The slave trader twists the body of a naked adolescent girl, emphasizing not only

the evils of slavery but also of sexual exploitation. Mpane and Müller use their interventions to

point out the hypocrisy of such narratives. For Mpane, "bringing civilization" meant, rather, near

annihilation of Congolese civilization already present. Müller highlights the fallaciousness of

identifying sexual assault only with Africans by alluding to one of the foundational myths of

Europe, that of the establishment of Rome and the abduction of Sabine women.

Mpane created the veil "Civilization RE/STOREd" for "Belgium Bringing Civilization to

the Congo" (Figure 62b). At first glance, "Civilization RE/STOREd" looks like a drawing of a

Kongo nkisi nkondi nail figure (Figure 63; compare with Figure 21). Indeed, Mpane began his

work via an online image search for "African art" which led to the nail figure shown in Figure

63. He then modified it, however, adding dozens of knives, pointing outwards from the initial

sculpture. For Mpane, his image refutes the idea of Belgium needing to bring civilization to

Congo. "We had our civilization," he says. The knives point outward because the figure is meant

to be aggressive, "as if African culture got angry" with the idea that there was no culture or

"civilization" before the arrival of Europeans (pers. comm. June 3, 2020). Paired with the

sculpture of a Belgian priest (Figure 62c), we are reminded of popular images of European

priests condemning such objects as "fetishes," confiscating them and sometimes burning them.[12]

As arbitrary as Mpane's choice of African sculpture may seem, the choice of a nail figure

is a fitting illustration of Mpane's intention. The original image Mpane chose was of a Vili nail

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[12] A photograph of shields being burned is included in the basement introductory gallery of the AfricaMuseum, accompanying a text which briefly explains the relationship between the museum and missionaries. The histories of the missionaries, converts, and local arts are more complicated than straightforward iconoclasm, however (Corbey and Weener 2015). Many objects ended up on the international art market, but also in missionary museums such as that of the London Missionary Society or the Vatican's Ethnological Museum (see Coombes 1997, Wingfield 2017).

Figure 62 a, b, and c: Matton's "Belgium Bringing Civilization to Congo" with Mpane's "Civilization RE/STOREd" (Digital and silkscreen print on fabric, 2020). Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, design courtesy artist.

Figure 63. Vili nkosi power figure. Mpane found this image through a google search for "African art" which led him to an auction website: https://www.binocheetgiquello.com/lot/26931/5965175

figure presented for sale at a 2016 auction in Paris (Figure 63).[13] While many would refer to such

a figure as an nkisi, Chivili speakers in the northern Kongo region would use the word "nkosi" to

refer to an object empowered by a spirit of a deceased person such as that in Figure 63.[14] Dunja

Hersak's (2001) etymological investigation of the word "nkosi" points to such an object's power,

linking it to lions and witches, both known to hunt at night (620). An nkosi figure, therefore,

houses an aggressive spirit called upon to nocturnally hunt wrongdoers.[15] The many iron blades

in its torso are indicative of the numerous times community members called on the spirit to

intercede for them, and its large eyes and ears remind viewers of its extraordinary abilities to

pursue offenders. The specific figure Mpane chose, however, has had its "magical bundle" of

medicines removed from both its torso and its head.[16] Mpane's own additions of knives to the

sculpture then can be understood to return aggression to the once belligerent nkosi. One wonders

if, like the spirit of Lusinga called on by Mpane's sculpture "Lusinga's Skull," a Vili spirit has

also been called into the Rotunda as witness and warning to the museum and its visitors.

Matton's "Slavery" (Figure 64a) is paired with Müller's "Le viol" (Figure 64b). In front

of Matton's sculpture depicting a tall "Arab" slave trader (Figure 64c), a dead child, and a naked

young woman whose body twists to show her breasts, Müller has presented Giambologna's

"Rape of the Sabine Women" (1581-1583), another three-person sculpture in which a man holds

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[13] The auction catalogue notes that the figure is likely by the same artist or atelier as one in the collection of the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac (Binoche et Giquello 2016). I have been unable to locate the figure in that museum's online database, but an image of it can be found in Lehuard 1980, 176 (that book's Figure 95) with the Musée de l'Homme inventory number 31 87 13.

[14] Hersak 2001, 619-620. Hersak reports that in the Kwilu region of Congo-Brazzaville "nkisi" is used to refer to "nature spirits" who would never empower nkosi figures (618-619).

[15] Ibid. It bears repeating that in Kikongo "nkondi" means "hunter" and an nkisi nkondi was a specific nkisi figure whose spirit would "hunt" out offenders (see MacGaffey 2000).

[16] MacGaffey (1990) describes nkisi figures whose bilongo medicine packets are removed as "dead" or "empty" (49). LaGamma (2015) suggests that communities purposefully removed such bundles in order to deconsecrate the objects before Europeans acquired them (264-265).

a woman against her will, her body twisted to display her breasts with similar prominence (Figure 65).[17] Both images refer to one of the foundational myths of their respective cultures, be it the scourge of Arab slave traders as an excuse to colonize Congo or the abduction of Sabine women to become wives of the nearly all-male citizens of a newly founded Rome. Müller explains:

> I wanted to use something subversive about rape. I thought something really based on our mythology - and the mythology of Rome defines the Western world better than anything - so if at the start of Roman history there is rape, it is quite interesting, it means it's a universal thing. There is not a war without rape, and rape is a founding stone on which Europe was built and it's all embodied in that sculpture. (Pers. comm. June 28, 2020.)

In addition to being a foundation of European mythology, rape is also a prevalent image in representations of the DRC today in relation to ongoing violence in the northeastern regions of that country, and likely on the minds of visitors to the AfricaMuseum (discussed below). For Müller, Matton's sculpture clearly evokes rape, showing either the antecedent or aftermath of sexual assault (ibid.).

In European tradition, the "rape of the Sabine women" refers to an event in Roman mythology when Roman men, realizing their city's strength and future was at risk due to a small number of women and very few progeny, abducted women from a nearby community of Sabines and made them their wives (Livy 1.9). The word "rape" is used in this context because of the original Latin "raptio" used to describe the incident, which is now frequently translated as "abduction." Today the episode is also referred to as the "abduction of the Sabine women" to avoid confusion, since recounting of the mythical event did not explicitly mention sexual assault

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[17] Unknown to Müller when he chose Giambologna's work for the Rotunda, Giambologna is in fact Jean de Boulogne, educated in Antwerp and born in Douai, which was a part of Burgundian Flanders at the time of his birth (and is now a part of French Flanders). Settling in Italy to study and work as an artist, he is known by the Italian version of his name (Pritchard 2016).

Figure 64 a, b, and c: Matton's "Slavery" with Müller's "Le viol" (The Rape) (Digital and silkscreen on fabric, 2020.) Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, design courtesy artist.

Figure 65: Giambologna's Abduction of a Sabine Woman (1581-83). Marble, 410 cm high (Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence). Photo: CC Smarthistory.

– though one imagines that abducting women in order to increase a city's population would eventually include intercourse with unwilling women.[18] Regardless, this episode, along with the stories of Romulus and Remus suckling at a she-wolf's teats and Aeneas landing in Italy, is one of the founding stories of Rome, whose empire is still a unifying symbol of European heritage.[19]

While stories of rape are not generally the first images that come to mind when one mentions "Europe," rape is one of the first associations many people make with the DRC, tied to the ongoing violence in its northeastern provinces. The reasons for the conflicts are too numerous to cover here, but can be traced to the extraordinary mineral wealth in the area and ongoing consequences of the genocide in Rwanda.[20] In August 2010 UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, called the DRC the "rape capital of the world," and the label has stuck regardless of the impossibility of proving such a characterization (BBC 2010). More recently, Doctor Denis Mukwege won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 for his work treating victims of rape in northeastern DRC. In a similar manner to how Europeans and Americans rallied around calls to end the terrible practices in the Congo Free State, many now donate to the multitude of humanitarian agencies dedicated to women's health and safety in the

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[18] Ancient Roman writers were in disagreement about how to present women's experiences of this episode. For example, in his *History of Rome* (Ab Urbe Condita), Livy claims the Romans reasoned with the women to earn their affection (Livy 1.9). In *Art of Love* (Ars Amatoria), however, Ovid focuses on the women's terror (Book I; Ovid 2002, 11).

[19] The name "Europe" also comes from an ancient myth of rape-as-abduction, that of the "rape of Europa," in which Zeus, disguised as a bull, carries Europa away to Crete. Like the abduction of the Sabine women, the rape of Europa is not only a key event in mythologies of Europe, but also an important image in European art history. For Rape of the Sabine Women, see Nicolas Poussin's paintings of that name (the 1633-34 version is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the 1637-38 version is at the Louvre), and Jacques-Louis David's 1799 painting "The Intervention of the Sabine Women," at the Louvre. The most well-known depiction of the Rape of Europa is Titian's 1560-1562 painting of that name at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and has been depicted by innumerable artists including Paolo Veronese (ca. 1570), Jacob Jordaens (1643) and Francois Boucher (1747).

[20] On the complex histories of the numerous conflicts in northeast DRC, see Prunier 2009, Autesserre 2008, Austesserre 2012, Stearns 2011, and Berwouts 2017, among others. Why rape is so prevalent as part of this conflict is a question at the heart of extensive scholarly research, including Mukwege and Nangini 2009, Baaz and Stern 2009, Meger 2010, Mukwege et al 2010, Banwell 2014, and Schneider et al 2015.

DRC (Hunt 2008, Autesserre 2012, Laudati and Mertens 2019). While rape is a significant

problem in Congo, the manner in which it has come to symbolize all of the country's problems

and drown out all other narratives about violent Congolese politics continues centuries-old

descriptions of Congo as a dark land of savages and/or victims.

Continuing Mpane's exploration of the gaze, all four central veils have a patterned

background of eyes, printed in the exact shape of the niche behind them. Works by Mpane have

a background of stylized eyes (Figures 58 and 62), whereas those on Müller's veils are more

naturalistic (Figures 60 and 64).[21] For Mpane the eyes convey that "we [Congolese] are watching

you [Belgians]." Throughout his interventions in the Rotunda, Mpane has attempted to harness

the power of the museum visitor's gaze to draw attention to his counternarratives of Belgian and

Congolese colonial histories. Such an approach to the presentation of art finds its influences in

Lacan (1981) and Foucault (1970, 1977)'s writings on vision and power, and feminist theorists

who critiqued the expectation that men were intended spectators for artwork and women only

considered when on display (Mulvey 1989, Pollock 1988, hooks 1992). In the Rotunda, Belgian

men had been the assumed spectators, and the women and African men depicted in sculpture

were passive objects of their domination.[22] Mpane's sculptures and Mpane and Müller's veils

look back into the Rotunda.

The eyes used by Müller for his two central veils can also be found in his earlier work

"The Long March (A Prelude)," installed at the Five Years Gallery in London in 2018. This large

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[21] The eye designs Mpane used as a background for his central veils come from the cover of a book he found at the Jeu De Balle flea market in Brussels (*Une tradition géométrique en Afrique: les dessins sur le sable* by Paulus Gerdes [1995]). The dot-and-lozenge pattern Mpane borrowed from the cover was not originally designed to depict eyes, but Mpane read the dots as such.

[22] In addition to the feminist theorists listed above, a number of scholars have theorized the "imperial gaze" of the colonial encounter, such as McClintock 1995, Kaplan 1997, and the collection of essays in Hunt and Lessard (ed.) 2002.

Figure 66: Veil with eyes showing Henry Morton Stanley, part of Jean-Pierre Müller's installation "The Long March (A Prelude)." Copyright Jean-Pierre Müller, with permission.
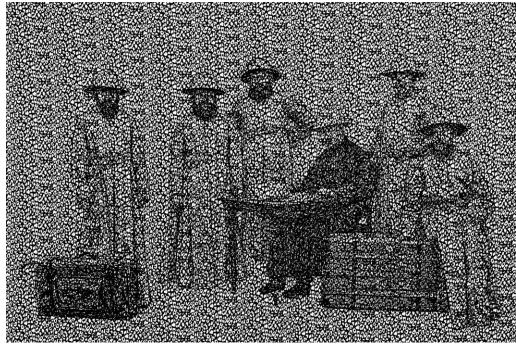
Figure 67: Veil showing the "Broeders van Liefde" (Brother of Charity), part of Jean-Pierre Müller's installation "The Long March (A Prelude)." Müller would use the image of the man second from the left for his veil "Draped." Copyright Jean-Pierre Müller, with permission.

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installation consisted of dozens of semi-transparent veils hanging floor-to-ceiling, around which visitors could ambulate. One such veil featured a reproduction of a famous portrait of Henry Morton Stanley wearing his explorer's hat and holding his trusty repeating rifle, with a background of eyes, prefiguring the motif he brought to his works in the Rotunda (Figure 66). Considered together, one wonders if the paratroopers are 1960s Stanleys, descending on what was then Stanleyville. On another veil in "The Long March (A Prelude)," Müller printed an entire colonial-era photo of the Ghent-based order of the Brothers of Charity (Broeders van Liefde), from which one brother's portrait would be included in RE/STORE (Figures 67 and 86b, discussed below). On yet another, he printed a close-up of an image of Antwerp's Brabo Statue, the entirety of which is on "The Thrown Hand" veil (Figure 92b). Finally, included at the bottom of many of the hanging textiles or on the floor beneath them, Müller placed a black and white frieze of images, a technique he and Mpane would also use for the four central veils in the Rotunda.
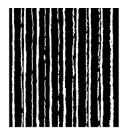
Each central veil also has a bottom frieze of black and white images making up a visual free-association poem co-written by Mpane and Müller (Figure 68). For example, interspersed across all four friezes, one sees

These five images were added by Müller and show, from left to right, a detail of a fluted shaft of a column, an outline of the large intestine or colon, a detail of a baroque column, an image of the Costa Rican currency the colón, and another detail of the fluted shaft of a column. Müller's

reasoning for including them all is what unites them: in french, the colonne, côlon, and colón are

all homonyms for "colon," that is, "colonizer." Viewers are left to make their own associations,

thinking perhaps about the structural support purposes of columns and the colony,

gastrointestinal issues of Belgians in the tropics, and the greed driving the "colons." Further,

Mpane's and Müller's interventions may serve as digestive aidss for the bitter pill of colonial

histories. Other images on the friezes include a portrait of Joseph Conrad, sketches of chains

evoking the transatlantic slave trade, a portrait of Lumumba, the coupola of Brussels' Place of

Justice, and a sketch of a Pende *Mbangu* mask. Though seemingly random associations made by

the artists, Mpane explains that they are meant to provide context on colonial histories, while

also expanding into an imaginary universe "pour surpasser cela, pour aller au-delà" (to overcome

this to go beyond). While my study explicates the allusions to history, monuments, or myths

made by the veils, Mpane and Müller do not limit themselves to the concrete. They also think

about the "au-dela," the "beyond" outside of the museum, of Belgium, or of this land of the

living, hinting in their friezes and in their patterns of eyes, watching you take in their installation.

Figure 68: An example of a frieze at the bottom of the central veils. This is at the bottom of Müller's "Security RE/STOREd" (Figure 20). Photo © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, with permission.

Veils for Side Alcoves

To discuss the interventions in the alcoves on the north and south sides of the Rotunda, I will begin in the northwest and move clockwise around the room. The first alcove is home to two sculptures by Arthur Dupagne, "The Worker" and "Battle with the Serpent." "The Worker" has been covered by Mpane's "Métamorphose," and "Battle with the Serpent" by Müller's veil, also titled "Battle with the Serpent." Both of Dupagne's sculptures depict barely clothed African men, their musculature emphasized by their near-nudity and posture. "The Worker" shows a man holding a shovel with the handle at his chest and the blade dug into freshly turned earth. The man looks straight ahead, far above viewers' heads. "Battle with the Serpent" shows a man about to kill a very large snake. The man is bent over a snake, his left leg on the same rock where the serpent, maw agape in fear and anger, is held down. Energy rises from the man's right leg up through his very defined torso and into his raised arm, holding the rock with which he is about to kill the snake.[23] While "The Worker" is at rest, perhaps contemplating a task achieved, the man battling the serpent is in the throes of violence.

"The Worker" (Figure 69a) is covered by the least figurative of all the Rotunda's veils, Mpane's "Metamorphosis" (Figure 69c). Mpane seems to have drawn two pairs of pigeon-toed legs coming out of one torso (Figure 69b), so that feet are both on top and bottom. The body is black and covered in an almost leopard-print pattern of dots, and serpent-like lines fall from the upper feet. Mpane's drawing is a response to the overly muscular representations of the African men found throughout the Rotunda, and the implied labor their bodies are meant to provide. For him, the sculptures evoke some aspects of the idealized, athletic bodies of socialist realism (pers.

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[23] The snake-killer's pose is most likely not how one would kill a snake in the wild; one can imagine that any tool attached to a handle would be a superior weapon. Further, it is possible that Dupagne has given the figure a stone tool rather than a metal one to again show the "primitivism" of the Africans he is depicting.
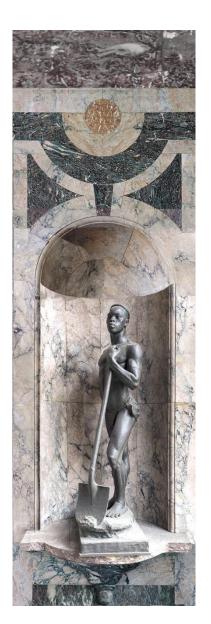
Figure 69 a, b and c: Dupagne's "The Worker" with Mpane's "Métamorphose." Photos ©Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

comm. June 3, 2020). He explains, "it's an imaginary body. To contradict [the sculptures], I made an image that is like the body of a snake, a bizarre body, like a monster, abstract." His abstraction is a refusal of the idealized laboring bodies of the colonized subjects meant to work for their king. Further, the spots that cover the body are like the naturalistic eyes forming the background of Müller's veils in the central niches. For Mpane, these exhort visitors to "look at yourselves," challenging them to consider their own positions in the Rotunda, in the museum, in Belgium, and in human histories.

Immediately facing "The Worker" and "Metamorphosis," a viewer sees two epic battles between African men and serpents. The first is the sculpture by Dupagne "Battle with Serpent," (Figure 70a) and the second is on the veil designed by Müller, on which he has reproduced a brilliant political cartoon by British artist Edward Linley Sambourne, published in *Punch* magazine in 1906 and often reproduced ever since (Figures 70b and 71). "The Rubber Coils" depicts a Congolese man entrapped by a vast serpent with the open-mouthed head of Leopold II, ready to swallow its prey. Sambourne's caricature was published the same year as E.D. Morel's *Red Rubber*, and with other polemic, resistance to genocidal actions of Leopold II's Congo Free State led to the monarch to grudgingly give up what had been, it bears repeating, his personal property since the Berlin Conference of 1885. Paired with Dupagne's sculpture, the image makes a straightforward statement about which serpent the Congolese "battled" in the early years of the 20th century when Dupagne's sculpture was created (Figure 70c). This is the only direct reference to Leopold II in the Rotunda, damning him and his memory in what was once a temple to his rule in Congo.

Moving to the right, behind "New Breath or Congo Burgeoning," the second alcove has Ernest Wynants' "Fertile Africa" and Dupagne's "The Warrior." In this case, "Fertile Africa"

Figure 70 a, b and c: Dupagne's "Battle with Serpent" and Müller's "Battle with Serpent." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 71: "In the Rubber Coils. Scene – The Congo 'Free' State." By Linley Sambourne. Published on November 28th, 1906.

has been paired with Müller's "Rubber Man" (Figure 72), and "The Warrior" with Mpane's "Throwaway Bananas" (Bananes à jeter) (Figure 75). Wynants' "Fertile Africa" shows a woman in flowing dress carrying a basket overflowing with fruit. She carries the basket on her head and looks straight ahead, on her way to bring the fruits of Congo to market. While many of the figures showcase what Belgium brings to Congo, this is one of the few figures that explicitly shows what Congo brings to Belgium, although others do imply what they might bring to Belgium through their sexualized, laboring bodies. Neither the fruits nor the women of Congo regularly made it to Belgium, however. They both stand in for other raw materials harvested in Congo and exported to Belgium, such as rubber and ivory.

Müller's "Rubber Man" explicitly refers to raw materials by depicting an early version of the Michelin Man, also known as Bibendum (Figures 73 and 74). Müller chose an early photograph of a man on roller skates dressed as the Michelin man to depict on the veil in front of "Fertile Africa." This photo, which Müller found simply through an internet search, shows a somewhat recognizable rotund man of tires, on roller skates, smoking a cigar.[24] This photograph reflects Michelin's early business as a manufacturer and purveyor of bicycle tires. The tire company was founded in 1889 by the two Michelin brothers, who previously ran a rubber factory in Clermont-Ferrand, France. While visiting the 1894 World's Fair in nearby Lyon, they saw a stack of tires that resembled a man. (The next World's Fair would be the 1897 Universal Exposition in Brussels.) Four years later, the brothers met the cartoonist Marius Rossillon, known by O'Galop, and the first image of the Michelin Man was born.[25] The early Michelin Man

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[24] Like Müller, I also found this image through an internet search https://www.pinterest.com/pin/376754325054195391/. None of the websites hosting the image, however, provide any information about where the image is from, who took it, or when it was taken.

[25] The tire man became known as "Bibendum" because of this first ad. O'Galop had first designed a poster for a German brewery, featuring the quote from Horace "Nunc est Bibendum," "Now is the time to drink." The brewery

Figure 72 a, b and c: Wynant's "Fertile Africa" with Müller's "Rubber Man." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 73 (Left): "Fête sportive à la Commune libre de Montmartre : les deux bibendum."Agence de presse Meurisse. Paris, 1922. Bibliothèque National de France, Meurisse 1615 A. ark:/12148/btv1b9039234d
Figure 74 (Right): Source for Müller's "Rubber Man" from Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/pin/376754325054195391/

rejected the ad, but when O'Galop showed it to André Michelin, he suggested replacing the original drinking figure with a man made of bicycle tires (Harp 2001).

was made of skinny white tires and wore a pince-nez, and within a few years was also depicted

smoking a cigar. The tires were white (as they still are for today's Michelin Man) because carbon

was only regularly added to tire rubber in 1912 (Michelin n.d.). Though usually depicted in

cartoon form, there are a few photographs of men dressed up as the Michelin Man attending

sport events in the early 20th century. Michelin's success and that of the Michelin Man was

dependent on the popularity of bicycles and then of automobiles, which in turn required rubber

tires, feeding the demand for rubber worldwide.[26] When the museum-goer views the underlying

statue through the veil, he or she sees that the cigar smoking Michelin man replaces the idyllic

representation of the African woman, but fits perfectly beneath the large basket on her head as if

he might carry it away.

Mpane's "Throwaway bananas" depicts an overturned wheelbarrow with bananas

hanging off of it, tied to the wheelbarrow with string (Figure 75b). On its own, the veil speaks to

the need to throw out hurtful stereotypes of Africans, represented by the bananas. One thinks of

incidents with European soccer fans throwing bananas at players of African descent while

making monkey noises (e.g. Jackson 2014). Mpane also reflects upon Josephine Baker's

notorious banana skirt, through which "bananas" highlighted Baker's own sexual allure (Figure

76).[27] He explains:

> It's a play on words. You know the banana as a stereotype – like with Josephine
> Baker – the banana has become a symbol of black sexuality, of the black man. It's
> stereotypes about the black man that remain today - the black man who seduces
> all the European women, all the women of the world, who is made just for this,
> for sex. It has become a symbol of black sexuality, whether in reference to a man

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[26] Steven Harp (2015) identifies one 1913 advertisement in which the link with central African rubber is made
explicit. One poster by O'Galop showed the birth of the Michelin man, who "descended from the clouds, hungry.
His appetite was so ravenous that 'all of the negroes spread out in the virgin forests and set about to gather and
coagulate the precious rubber'" (69).

[27] Josephine Baker is the subject of much scholarly research. Publications which address the banana skirt
specifically include Sowinska 2005-2006, Cheng 2011, Hardin 2015 and Hammer 2020.

or a woman, that's the symbol of the banana. It is one of the clichés that's in people's heads today. I want to throw them away. And then this sculpture, it is the only sculpture by Dupagne where he did not put genitalia. And Jean-Pierre and I, we said it's terrible, it's like he has cut himself with his own knife.

For Mpane, bananas are linked to black men, and specifically to their supposed sexual power.

Of all the presentations of African men in the Rotunda, Dupagne's "Warrior" (Figure 75a, 77) is the only one who might challenge a white man's authority. Those who are not pleading with Europeans (as in "Belgium Bringing Security to the Congo") are eroticized objects for the "voyeuristic gaze" of the white man (Morris 2003, 35). Though a standing naked man with a spear and dagger might not be a great challenge to a man with a rifle, his stance is more confrontational than that of the laborer, his weapons more dangerous than the rower's paddle. Further, unlike any of the other sculptures in the Rotunda, the man's spear and dagger are separate objects made of metal, and his face has prominent scarifications (Figure 77). His facial scarifications would identify him as "Bangala" to Belgian audiences, whose interest in these specific Congolese people had been piqued by ethnographic reports of their violence and cannibalism, published alongside photographs, and by World's Fairs where ethnographic sculpture groups, plaster casts of Congolese "types" and actual "Bangala" people were on display (Figure 78).[28] In spite of his arms and his muscular strength, however, his masculinity – as represented by a penis – is missing, taken from him by the artist, and he unable to challenge the male voyeur's imagined sexual prowess. Toppling over the wheelbarrow, Mpane emphatically rejects the simplification of the African man to sexual predator/emasculated laborer, and of the African woman to fertile matriarch/sexual victim.

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[28] On Belgian fascination with Bangala scarifications, sexuality, and cannibalism, see Couttenier 2005, 136, 160-161 and Silverman 2012 176-181. I put "Bangala" in quotation marks when referring to the people identified as such because the label was given to people by Belgians, possibly based on a mispronunciation of the river "Mongala," though the term has been embraced by some today (Bawele 1973, Hustaert 1974, Samarin [1989] 2019, Goyvaerts 1995, Meeuwis 2020).

Figure 75 a, b and c: Dupagne's "Warrior" with Mpane's "Throwaway Bananas." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 76: Photo of Josephine Baker in her famous banana skirt at the Folies-Bergères, Paris (1926). Photo by Waléry. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baker_Banana_3.jpg

Figure 77: Detail of Dupagne's "Warrior" shown in Figure 74a.

Figure 78: Plaster cast "Bangala" by Arsène Matton in the collection of the RMCA (EO.1976.46.5). Photo ©RMCA.

The last alcove on the north side features Dupagne's "Man at his toilette" (Figure 79) and Devreese's "Justice" (Figure 81a), paired with Müller's "Achilles" (Figure 79b) and Mpane's "Justice" (Figure 81b), respectively. As with Dupagne's "The Warrior," his "Man at his toilette" depicts what Müller interprets as a feminized, muscular man, in this instance bending back to rub his heal (Figure 79a). Discussing Dupagne, Müller acknowledges that "he was a good artist. But there is something so ridiculous, as if it was this natural scene, as if you walk around naked and just pick up a stone to rub your foot." While some might consider it ridiculous, a Congolese friend of mine notes that one can find naturally occurring pumice stone in Congo near Mt. Nyamuragira near Goma. Considering Dupagne's sculpture with an artist's eye, Müller recognized a visual reference to a sculpture of Achilles, and quickly found Charles Guméry's "Achilles Wounded in the Heel by Paris," created for the 1850 Prix de Rome, the most prestigious art prize in France (Figure 80). The two sculptures showcase the male body by having it twist to the right and reach down toward the figure's foot, slightly bent at the knee. Dupagne's African figure is more twisted, whereas the torso of Guméry's Achilles faces the viewer at a fully frontal angle.

Guméry's sculpture of Achilles shows the moment when Achilles has been pierced by Paris' arrow, which leads to his death. Müller's referencing of Guméry's sculpture of Achilles not only links Dupagne's African figure to the heroic figure of Achilles, but also to Achilles's tragic fate. By choosing this specific moment of Achilles' story to display, Müller is reminding viewers of the death toll of colonialism and its place in the long history of European conquest and warfare. Further, like an arrow to a foot, exoticizing depictions of Africans at work or in repose seem innocuous at first. But the sculptures are just one part of a massive colonial project,

Figure 79 a, b and c: Dupagne's "Man at his toilette" and Müller's "Achilles." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 80: Charles-Alphonse-Achille Guméry (1827-1871). *Achilles Wounded in the Heel by Paris*, 1850. Plaster, 128 x 65 x 60 cm. Image from *The Legacy of Homer: Four Centuries of Art from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris* (Schwartz 2004, 170).

whose success depends on acquiescence from Belgians at home and the dehumanization and exploitation of Africans in Congo.

Mpane has created his veil "Justice" (Figure 81b) for Godefroid Devreese's sculpture of the same name (Figure 81a). Devreese's sculpture is a version of the familiar allegorical representation of Justitia, a blindfolded woman holding a balance in one hand and a sword in the other. On his veil, Mpane has depicted the coat of arms of King Nzinga Mvemba, also known as Afonso I, the second Christian king of the Kongo Kingdom, who ruled from 1509 to 1542 (Figure 82). Mpane explains that in first considering Devreese's "Justice," he asked himself "has there been justice in Congo in regard to colonial violation?" He concluded that no, there has not been any in the colonial past, but his mind quickly skipped to a different question: was there ever a time when the relationship between Europeans and Congolese was not one of "violation?" To this question, Mpane's answer is affirmative, citing the early history of exchange between the Portuguese and the Kingdom of Kongo, which he represents via the 16th century heraldry.

Many visitors to the museum might be surprised to learn that exchange between Europe and Congo began in the 15th century, since 19th and 20th century colonial histories are so much better known. Yet Portuguese captain Diego Cão first landed on the shores of the Kingdom of Kongo in 1483, initiating centuries of exchange. The Kongo king at the time, Nzinga a Nkuru (r. 1470-1509) converted to Christianity, taking the name João I, and his son, Afonso I Mvemba a Nzinga (r. 1509-1542) made Christianity the state religion. Afonso I's ascension to the throne was challenged by his (non-Christian) brother. Afonso emerged victorious from a battle in which his soldiers invoked Saint James, who appeared with other heavenly hosts and terrified the opposing faction. He wrote about this event in several letters, including one to the King of

Figure 81: Devreese's "Justice" with Mpane's "Justice." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 82: The coat of arms of the Kingdom of Kongo is at bottom right; the others are of Scotland, Poland, and Bohemia. António Godinho. *Livro da Nobreza e da Perfeição das Armas dos Reis Cristãos e Nobres Linhagens dos Reinos e Senhorios de Portugal (Book of Nobility and of the Perfection of the Coat of Arms of the Christian Kings and Noble Lineages of the Kingdoms and Landlords of Portugal),* ca. 1521–41. Portugal, Lisbon. Pigment and gold on parchment; H. 17 (43 cm) x W. 12 1/2 (32 cm) x D. 2 1/2 in. (5.5 cm). Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2015/kongo/blog/posts/bringing-together-historical-perspectives

Portugal, who commissioned a coat of arms for the king of Kongo with symbols reflecting the event (see Thornton 1998, 258 and Thornton 2012, 413).

Mpane has reproduced part of António Godinho's "Coat of Arms of the Manicongo Kings," an illustration from a 1548 armorial book of heraldry (Figure 82). The royal emblem shows a shield with five arms carrying swords pointing upward, under a field with a cross and scallop shells and at the base of which a triangle features the coast of arms of Portugal framed by broken "idols." The shield is under a crest of a helmet, out of which rise five forearms holding swords straight upwards. Art historian Cécile Fromont (2014) provides a detailed analysis of the coat of arms of Kongo, based in part on letters written by Afonso himself. On the emblem reproduced by Mpane, the motif of five swords, which would have been forged of locally smelted iron, unify Kongo concepts of kingship and Portuguese attributes of knighthood (47-50).[29] The cross and scallop shells allude to the miraculous apparition of the cross and the intercession of St. James (whose symbol is a scallop shell) during Afonso's battle. The Portuguese coat of arms at the base of the shield indicates its status as Kongo's benefactor and ally, and the two broken "idols" flanking it indication the end of Kongo's unchristian era (26-33; 57-59). In Godinho's armorial, the coat of arms of Kongo is illustrated alongside those of Scotland, Poland, and Bohemia, literally placing the Kingdom of Kongo on the same page as kingdoms in Europe and immediately before depiction of the Portuguese coat of arms.

Throughout his elucidations of RE/STORE, Mpane returns to the concept of dignity. It was a driving concept in his "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo," created to reclaim dignity for Congolese people in a museum that had never afforded it to them and, in the opinion of some,

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[29] Like foundational stories of kingdoms across Central Africa, the foundation of the Kingdom of Kongo is linked to the arrival of a civilizing hero who brought knowledge of ironworking with him (e.g. de Heusch 1972).

still largely fails to do so.[30] Mpane considers the brief period at the end of the 15th and beginning

of the 16th centuries as an example of Congolese and Portuguese participating in horizontal

exchange, through which both parties acknowledged each other as fellow human beings.[31]

Discussing Afonso I, Mpane emphasizes the king's later criticism of Christian hypocrisy and

condemnation of European slave trade practices. Mpane does not go into detail, but thanks to

Afonso's letters we know of Afonso's anger that some Portuguese had wrongly purchased

people who were his royal kinsman and that, for example, in 1525 he seized a French ship

because it was trading illegally (Thornton 2010, 44-45 and Thornton 2012, 82; Thornton 1998,

39). Such African self-assuredness and the dignity Afonso demanded of Europeans exemplifies

Mpane's hopes for the impacts of the RE/STORE project.

The southeastern alcove contains Oscar Jespers' "Negress with Amphora" and Dupagne's

"Dry Season." In front of "Negress with Amphora" Mpane has hung "Bope Pelenge" (Figure 83)

and in front of "Dry Season." Müller has hung his veil entitled "Draped" (Figure 86). The

Jespers and Dupagne works both depict women, but in almost opposite forms of dress. "Negress

with Amphora" is naked except for a small loincloth and anklets. She is sculpted in an Art Deco

style, and, following such perspectives so important to Belgian arts of inter-war years, far more

stylized than the other sculptures in the Rotunda (as especially noticeable in her hair).[32] The

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[30] For a collection of writing of on the renovation and its failures, see the special issue "Tervuren, Décolonial?" of *Ensemble* (Lismond-Mertes and Martens 2019), which also features an in-depth bibliography of reactions to the renovation. See also Luntumbue 2015, Hassett 2019, Mathys et al 2019, Luntumbue 2020, Demart 2020 and Clette-Gakuba 2020.

[31] Fromont (2014) writes, "It is crucial to understand that the cross-cultural interactions between the kingdom of Kongo and Europeans were not ruled by colonialism or unfolding under dynamics of oppression and resistance. Instead, owing to the successful intervention of Afonso and his successors, the Kongo enjoyed a rare status among non-European polities in the early modern era, one defined by its independence and its standing as a Christian land (31-32).

[32] The sculpture was commissioned by Louis Franck, a Belgian Minister of Colonies, based on a photograph in *Le Congo Belge* (Morris 2003 citing Boyens 1982, 95). Morris analyzes the differences between the photograph and the sculpture, bringing attention to the original woman's confident posture – hands on her hips, looking directly at the

woman in "Dry Season" is clothed from head to toe except for her face and her feet, and because her garment is so stylized, the treatment of her face is the more striking, with its concentration on her lips. "Draped" and "Fertile Africa" are the only two sculpture in the Rotunda in which the African women are clothed.

Both Mpane and Müller laughingly recounted their unwillingness to work with Jespers' sculpture, as they did not know what to make of it. The aesthetic is completely different from the other sculptures in the Rotunda, and from their points of view the woman's body is not depicted as an ideal, sensuous sex object. In our conversation, Mpane drew a tenuous line from the aesthetic being out-of-place, from "ailleurs," to deciding to pair it with a representation of a sculpture that is currently neither in Belgium nor in Congo. On his veil, Mpane has depicted an *ndop* figure of a Kuba king but with a bag of soccer balls in place of the symbolically important motifs that identify one king from another. Though there is an historically significant ndop displayed as a "treasure" of the AfricaMuseum a few hundred meters from the Rotunda, and another on view in Kinshasa (returned by the Belgians to the Institution of National Museums in Zaire in 1976; see van Beurden 2015), Mpane specifically chose the ndop in the collection of the British Museum (Figure 84). As he explained, "if the Belgians had not colonized Congo, we would not have escaped it [being colonized]. It would have been the English, the Portuguese, the French, the Germans [to conquer and possess us]. So I decided to use a sculpture that comes from London, for example."

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camera – in contrast with the sculpture's frontal pose but with the head turned to the side, averting her gaze (Morris 2003, 39-41). That most of the sculptures in the Rotunda are in a classical academic style is notable, considering that in the first decades of the 20th century Belgium was home to important art nouveau and art deco artists and designers, many of whom were inspired by Congo (Guisset 2003, Silverman 2011, Silverman 2012, Silverman 2013.
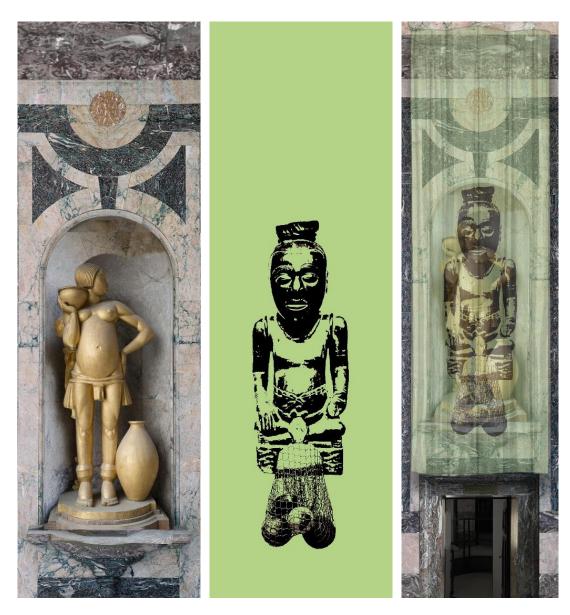
Figure 83 a, b and c: Jespers' "Negress with Amphora" and Mpane's "Bope Pelenge." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 84: Ndop figure: *Mbó Pelyeeng áNće*. Kuba peoples; western Kasai region, Democratic Republic of Congo, ca. 1765. Wood, H. 21 5/8 in (55cm). © The Trustees of the British Museum. Af1909,0513.1.

Figure 85: "La pèche contemporaine" by Aimé Mpane (2013). Image courtesy artist.

The sculpture Mpane chose is described by the British Museum as a "'portrait'" figure

identified with Mbó Pelyeeng áNće, the eighth ruler of the Kuba kingdom" (British Museum

n.d.) who ruled in the 18th century, and who is also referred to as "Bope Pelenge."[33] The

sculpture is one of four ndop examples in the collection of the British Museum. In the kingdom,

an ndop was made for each king to house his spirit after his demise (Torday and Joyce 1911, 27,

and Vansina 1964, 101). That the figure was collected by Emil Torday, a Hungarian who worked

for the British Museum but who published his findings with the Belgian Minister of Colonies,

underscores Mpane's point that had the Belgians not colonized Congo, others would have. Even

though the Belgians were nominally in charge of the colony after Leopold II was obliged to

divest himself of the Congo Free State in 1908, Torday's presence, along with other similar

ethnographic expeditions (such as those of the German Leo Frobenius or the British Herbert

Ward) demonstrates broad European interest in the arts of Congo.

A viewer can easily differentiate among the ndop sculptures of Kuba kings thanks to the

ibol symbols in the lowest front register of the sculpture with which the king is identified. Mbó

Pelyeeng áNće's ibol is said to be an anvil or other instrument used in smithing (Siroto [1978]

identifies it as an anvil stand), but Mpane has replaced it with an image of a bag of soccer balls.

Mpane has used this imagery before, as in his 2013 work "La pêche contemporaine"

(Contemporary fishing), for which he attached an actual net with balls to an otherwise flat mural

painting, juxtaposing common work in Congo (fishing) with dreams of foreign success on the

soccer field (Figure 85). For "Bope Pelenge," Mpane was intrigued by the idea that a sculpture

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[33] The name "Bope Pelenge" comes from Emil Torday, who lived at Nsheng, the capital of the Kuba Kingdom, from October to December 1908, and who collected the sculpture. He bought the sculpture, along with three other ndop figures, from Kot áPe, and recorded the names of the kings in his 1911 *Notes Ethnographiques sur les peoples communément appelés Bakuba, ainsi que sur les peuplades apparentées. Les Bushongo*, written with T.A. Joyce. On Torday, see Mack 1991. For more on this sculpture, see Rosenwald 1974, Adams 1988, and LaGamma 2012. On Kuba arts more generally, see Binkley and Darish 2010.

could represent a king to the point that the sculpture could serve as an "ambassador" at a meeting

if the king could not attend in person. "It's an authority, a dignity – he's respected even if he

isn't there." What Congolese person demands such respect now? For Mpane, the answer is clear:

soccer players. When they achieve striking success, they become the symbols of their countries,

such as Vincent Kompany and Romelu Lukaku, two of the best players on the Belgian national

soccer team, both of whom have Congolese parents.[34]

Discussing both "Negress with Amphora" and "Dry Season" (Figure 86), Müller points

out the contradiction of European colonial policy in regards to African women: "So you have to

unveil the northern Africans, but you have to cover the bodies of the Sub-Saharan Africans. […]

She's covered with so much fabric that she's become innocuous to the eyes of the missionary."

Dupagne's sculpture and its title raise several questions. As someone who had lived in the

Belgian Congo, Dupagne would know that no person would want to wear so many layers during

the hot and humid dry season. In addition, in the vast majority of his sculptures, Dupagne depicts

Africans with hardly any clothing at all (e.g. Figures 69, 70, 75, 77, 88, 90). One wonders what

inspired Dupagne to create such a sculpture and hopes further archival research can shed light on

his oeuvre. Like the veils in the Rotunda, the loose fabric of Dupagne's "Dry Season" sparks

curiosity, hinting at the politics of veiling and unveiling.

The correspondence between Arthur Dupagne's "Dry Season" and Müller's "Draped" is

almost purely aesthetic, however. Müller has chosen an image of a man who is a member of the

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[34] Vincent Kompany retired in 2020 and is now the manager of the RSC Anderlecht team in Belgium. Notably, his father, Pierre Kompany, was the first person of African descent elected as mayor in Belgium in 2018. Lukaku has movingly written about his identity as a Belgian-Congolese soccer player: "When things were going well, I was reading newspapers articles and they were calling me Romelu Lukaku, the Belgian striker. When things weren't going well, they were calling me Romelu Lukaku, the Belgian striker of Congolese descent" (Lukaku 2018).

Figure 86 a, b, and c: Dupagne's "Dry Season" and Müller's "Draped." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 87: Six members of the "Brothers of Charity" (Broeders van Liefde) prepare for the mission in Kasai. Source: https://broedersvanliefde.be/geschiedenis-van-de-sint-vincentiusregio

Catholic orders of Broeders van Liefde (Brothers of Charity) (Figure 87).[35] Like the woman in "Dry Season," the brother is clothed in layers of cloth, and one can still see the folding wrinkles on his cassock.[36] "Draped' is not Müller's first representation of the Broeders van Liefde, who have sparked his interest and he included them in his 2018 "The Long March (A Prelude)." He remarks that they were "Flemish men from humble backgrounds, who suddenly had a lot of power, who are on top of the colonial period. This is the story of Congo in general, people who are not much suddenly have a lot of power." He further links this to local Belgian politics of the time, noting that most Flemish felt they were underdogs and second-class citizens in Belgium.[37]

The central alcove on the south side, behind the "Lusinga's skull," includes two sculptures by Dupagne, "The Rower" (Figure 88a) and "Dancer with Tamtam" (Figure 90a). The former is paired with Mpane's "Lukasa memory board" (Figure 88b). For Mpane, "The Rower" is a representation of an African man as primitive, linked with his only form of transportation, a pirogue.[38] As discussed in Chapter Two, a lukasa is a Luba memory device, used to recount local histories and to share knowledge. Though Mpane had seen them in Congo, it was only after visiting Los Angeles and speaking with the late Mary Nooter Roberts that he gained a new

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[35] The Broeders van Liefde were founded in 1807 and still work in Belgium. According to their website, they were founded to provide mental health services to prisoners in Ghent, and continue to work in psychiatric hospitals in Belgium (https://broedersvanliefde.be/). They also continue to work in Congo, with a focus on education and mental health (https://brothersofcharity.org/d-r-congo/).

[36] Rectangular wrinkles are visible on the cassocks of all of the Broeders in Figure 87, but not in other photographs, leading to my assumption that they are not ironed purposefully in such a manner. Rather, they reminded both Müller and me of a new of sheets that had been on the store shelf too long.

[37] In an 1885 poster in support of the Flemish Movement, for example, Congolese are referred to as Flemings' "black brothers" and comparison is made between the experience of Congolese under colonialism with those of the Flemish under Walloon rule (Bragard and Planche 2009, 184). Recalling discussion of Lusinga in the previous chapter, one anti-Fleming was Emile Houzé, a Belgian anthropologist who "analyzed" Lusinga's skull but also the heads of Flemish and Walloon Belgians to "prove" that they were different races (A. Roberts 2013, 152-153; see also Tollebeek 2005).

[38] One might argue that pirogues are in fact sophisticated modes of transportation, as they continue to be one of the most reliable ways to get around Congo.

appreciation for them and began referencing them in his work. In Los Angeles, Mpane not only learned the story of Lusinga, but was introduced to the depths of lukasa knowledge-making while attending opening festivities for the 2013 exhibition *Shaping Power: Luba Masterworks from the Royal Museum for Central Africa*, curated by Mary Nooter Roberts. She placed a lukasa in a central location in LACMA's newly inaugurated African gallery, immediately in front of the doorway to Mpane's installation "Congo: Shadow of a Shadow." Discussing lukasas (Figure 89) with Mpane, as well as with her students and the public, Roberts frequently compared a lukasa to the home screen of an iPhone, with many layers of knowledge fitting into the palm of one's hand as each app button or lukasa bead activates another level of information. For Mpane, her comparison proved a revelation. Whereas, in his estimation, Europeans had represented Africans as uncultured peoples whose only means of transportation were large pirogues, here was an example of what Mpane terms "other technology, just as advanced," a connection to new knowledges and different worlds in the palm of one's hand.[39]

Mpane's veil does not only represent a lukasa-as-iPhone, however. The lukasa is held by a very large hand, which grows out of a figure of a kneeling man at the base of the drawing. The man has his back to the viewer, and the switch of figure-ground make him easy to miss upon first glance. Mpane continues his play on the formal similarities between lukasas and iPhones, as the bent-over position for reading and explaining a lukasa parallels the crouched position of reading one's phone. Further, Mpane says "telephones are like a god, it's like we pray to them, everything goes through the phone. It's the same with a lukasa, if you wanted to recover memory [retrouver la mémoire], if you wanted to learn something, you had to go find this object" (pers.

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[39] In an article discussing how contemporary Kinshasa-based artists merge digital and traditional forms in their art-making, anthropologist Katrien Pype connects lukasa-s to motherboards, comparing the functioning of a lukasa to digital coding (Pype forthcoming).

Figure 88 a, b, and c: Dupagne's "The Rower" with Mpane's "Lukasa memory board." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 89: The lukasa Mpane depicts on his veil. The photo was found online, from when this object was sold on ebay. Image source : https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/rare-genuine-old-luba-lukasa-memory-board

comm. June 3, 2020). The idea, Mpane says, is to counter the representation of the seemingly less technologically advanced Congolese man with his paddle and pirogue, with an example of "our own technology" of Einsteinian brilliance insofar as complex data sets can be managed through use of a lukasa. In a new variation on a theme, Mpane emphasizes the dignity of Congolese people independent of European association.

Müller has paired "Dancer with Tamtam" with his veil "Lyre player (Cléo)," setting a scene suggesting that one woman is dancing to music made by the other (Figure 90a). Unlike Dupagne's other sculpture of an African woman in the Rotunda ("Dry Season"), "Dancer with Tamtam" depicts a nearly naked African woman striding forward, head cocked and eyes seemingly slyly assessing the viewer. A bush and a small Kuba-like drum stand behind her, seemingly providing a premise for her seductive stance as a "dancer." For Müller, the sculpture clearly reads as an erotic enticement to attract men to the Congo, and so a kind of highly sexualized version of Wynants' "Fertile Africa." Müller therefore paired the sculpture with an image of a woman from the turn of the 20th century who had been similarly eroticized, Cléo de Mérode, depicted in his "Lyre player."

Though Müller's veil depicts what seems to be an innocent woman in flowing dress (Figure 90b), the model who posed for the original image was Cléo de Mérode, a sex symbol of her time. Mérode was a dancer in the *corps de ballet* at the Paris Opera when Leopold II first saw her in 1895. The two quickly became what today would be called a "tabloid item," and were dubbed "Cléopold." She was already well-known in Paris, and had her portrait drawn by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, was photographed by Nadar, and depicted in sculpture by Alexandre Falguière. In many depictions of her, Mérode is associated with the idea that dancers and other public entertainers are prostitutes or loose women, common at the time (Waller 2018, 161).

Art historian Susan Waller (2018) argues that the public's fixation on Mérode's body was part of an (ongoing) preoccupation with the threat of modern feminine sexuality. In press reviews of Falguière's sculpture of her, critics not only wondered if she had actually posed nude for the sculptor, but also considered the sculpture's body "deformed," possibly due to corset-wearing or bicycling. [40] At the turn of the 20th century bicycling had become a symbol of feminist liberation, and a photo of Mérode on her bicycle was sold on postcards. One writer, Raymond Bouyer, suggested that the sculpture should be put alongside the Venus Hottentot, tying together notions of hyper-sexualized African women with local prostitutes, frequently glossed as dancers (Waller 2018, 172, 176). Further, the association of Mérode with bicycling reminds us of the source of Leopold's wealth through rubber, and Müller's nearby veil in the Rotunda depicting the Michelin man.

The photo that Müller decided to draw on the veil shows Mérode holding a lyre, dressed up as Terpsichore, the Greek muse of dance (Figure 91). This choice continues Müller's fascination with Greek and Roman histories, evident on four of his eight veils in the Rotunda. Without the title, a viewer might simply see a dancer and musician, the erotic sculpture beneath sexualizing the veil in front. Knowledge of who Cléo de Mérode is, along with the place of dancers in turn-of-the-20th-century French society and the role of photography in early celebrity culture, complicates the interpretation. Mérode as Terpsichore is a photograph by Léopold-Émile Reutlinger, a famous photographer of the Bel Époque. Reutlinger took many photos of celebrities of the time, especially beautiful women, which were reproduced either in advertising

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[40] Falguière's sculpture of Cléo de Mérode had caused a stir at its unveiling, and rumors swirled as to whether he had made a plaster mold of her body to create the work. Visitors lined up to see the sculpture, though Mérode repeatedly denied that she had posed nude for Falguière, but a letter from Mérode to Falguière asking him to deny that she posed for the entire figure implies otherwise (Waller 2018, 163-164.)

Figure 90: Dupagne's "Dancer with Tamtam" and Müller's "Lyre player (Cleo)." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 91: Cléo de Mérode with a lyre, by Reutlinger, ca. 1895-1905. Bibliothèque nationale de France, 4-ICOPER-18114 (1-4) : https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84322392

or as postcards.[41] Müller describes Mérode as someone "famous for being famous," and having her photo taken and then shared across Europe through postcards and advertisements was an important aspect of her career. Attending elite soirées, dancing at the Moulin Rouge, and being photographed about town required deep pockets, and Müller cites Leopold II – and his vast profits from the Congo – as a likely source for such funds.

As a dancer, Mérode is reputedly a loose woman; as a bicyclist, she is a modern, liberated, but still, a reputedly loose woman. While bicycling she also relies on pneumatic tires, which need rubber from Leopold's Congo. A 1902 article in the New Orleans Times-Picayune included the description "Cléo de Mérode, the dancing girl … is known in Brussels as the Queen of Congo" (cited in Garval 2012, 149). The elements of Leopold's life were not "siloed," and his mistresses did not exist independent from the horrors that his minions perpetrated in the Congo to his financial benefit.

Müller's image of Cléo de Mérode paired with Dupagne's "Dancer with Tamtam" signifies what Müller characterizes as Leopold II's "need to consume." In the Rotunda, the image of Cléo de Mérode also acts as a stand-in for all of the king's mistresses, and especially Caroline Lacroix. Citing Hochschild, Müller explains, "for me, this was the opportunity to talk about the very fine irony of thinking that he seriously considered offering bits of Congo to one of his lovers." Leopold married Caroline a few days before his death, and she inherited not only money and property but Congo securities – "bits of Congo" (Hochschild 1998, 266). Hochschild reports that despite the international scandal surrounding the Congo Free State in the final decade

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[41] In 1896 Léopold Reutlinger published *Le Panorama. Nos jolies actrices*, a photo album of celebrity beauties, including Cléo de Mérode and Sarah Bernhardt. Reutlinger is also considered one of the earliest photographers of erotica (Peres et al. 2014, 84). Of interest for this project, Reutlinger also photographed Sir Henry Morton Stanley in 1882 (in the collection of Britain's National Portrait Gallery, NPG x38840), which was reproduced on an advertisement for Ogden's "Guinea Gold" Cigarettes (see NPG x 136689). A different photograph of Cléo de Mérode playing a lyre (likely from the same studio session) was used for an advertisement of Pierre Wahl & Reining Cigarettes (BNF identifier: ark:/12148/btv1b84322392).

of his life, it was rather Leopold's womanizing that lost him the support of the Belgian public

(222-223). In addition to his many building projects, Leopold spent his Congo profits on his

mistresses, which everyday Belgians did not fail to notice.

The final alcove houses Frans Huygelen's "Belgian Expansion" and Paul Du Bois'

"Charity" (Figures 92a and 94a). Similarly to "Fertile Africa," "Belgian Expansion" (previously

called "Colony Waking up in Civilization") couples Belgian economic interests with an African

female body. The woman is naked, save for a piece of fabric she holds to her back but which

strategically folds to cover her. Her left leg steps forward, but she bends back and looks toward

the sky, her right arm raised above her head as if she had just awakened and is uncovering her

head from underneath the fabric. "Belgian Expansion" here seems to include conquering of

African women's bodies.

To hang in front of Frans Huygelen's "Belgian Expansion," Müller created "The Thrown

Hand" (La main lancée), whose right arm movement mirrors that of "Belgian Expansion"

(Figure 92). Müller depicts the well-known statue that sits atop the Brabo Fountain in Antwerp's

Grote Markt, the city's main square and largest tourist attraction that is lined by majestic 16th

century guild halls (Figure 93). Antwerp's statue was designed in the 1880s by Jef Lambeaux, a

19th century Belgian sculptor born in Antwerp who presented his plan for the fountain in 1883,

four years before its 1887 inauguration.[42] The sculpture in Antwerp depicts a naked man

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[42] Lambeaux is now best known for the monumental relief sculpture "The Human Passions" housed in a Victor Horta-designed pavilion in Brussels' Parc du Cinquantenaire. Victor Horta is perhaps Belgium's most well-known architect, and one of the founders of the Art Nouveau movement. "The Temple to Human Passions," designed by Lambeaux early in Horta's career, is neoclassical. The pavilion was designed for the 1897 Brussels International Exposition, as the same World's Fair for which the colonial museum in Tervuren was constructed. The official opening of Horta's pavilion was not until 1899, however, due to a disagreement between Lambeaux and Horta about whether the pavilion should be walled-in or open air (Aubry and Harshav 2002, Dulière 1979). Jef Lambeaux also designed the two sculptures "East Flanders" and "West Flanders" still on display as part of the Cinquantenaire arch, itself designed by Charles Girault, architect of the AfricaMuseum (Gédéon 2010).

Figure 92 a, b and c: Huygelen's "Belgian Expansion » and Muller's "The thrown hand." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 93: Antwerp's Brabo Fountain. Photo by Frank K., Creative Commons. Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brabo_Fountain_and_Grote_Markt,_main_square_of_Antwerp.JPG

throwing a severed hand, in reference to the city's founding myth. According to legend, a giant

named Druon Antigoon once lived along the Scheldt River, which widens at Antwerp before

emptying into the North Sea through what is now The Netherlands. The giant would demand

payment to navigate the river and cut off the hands of anyone who refused to pay, flinging them

into the water. One day, a Roman soldier named Silvius Brabo challenged the giant

to a duel. He killed the ogre, cut off his hand, and threw it into the river just as the giant had done

to so many others.[43] Furthermore, many claim that the etymology of the city's name,

"Antwerpen" comes from the Dutch words "ant" for "hand" and "werpen," the verb "to throw."

Antwerp is so identified with the story of the severed hand that one can find "Antwerpse

handjes" (little Antwerp hands) at chocolate shops around the city.[44]

Walking past windows of dark and milk chocolate hands in the city where Edmund Morel

saw near-empty ships leave for Congo but return full of rubber and ivory, many visitors' minds

turn to Congo (see Morel 1904 and 1906). In the early 20th century, the Congo Reform

Association used photographs of Congolese people whose hands had been hacked away or of

Congolese people holding others' severed hands, to rouse opposition against Leopold's violent

rule over Congo.[45] Severed hands have since become one of the most well-known symbols of

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[43] The symbolism of this story would not be lost on scholars of Belgian and Low Country histories, since cities' relative power relied in part on the control of river passage. Antwerp's 16th century golden age followed the ca. 1500 silting up of Bruges' river Zwin, and Amsterdam's 17th century power grew even greater after Antwerp's Scheldt river was closed to navigation by the 1648 Treaty of Münster. The Scheldt was only opened up in 1863, twenty years before Lambeaux designed the Brabo Fountain (Silverman 2013, 26-27).

[44] American artist Hank Willis Thomas created an artwork titled "Antwerpse Handjes" out of replicas of the dark, milk, and white chocolate versions of the hands. He arranged them in a pattern mimicking Kuba textiles, visually tying the chocolate hands to Congo. He also made a sculpture "Antwerp (Brabo Fountain punctum)" (2019) which depicts what is presumably Brabo's arm (from the shoulder) through a giant hand. Taken out of its Antwerp context and severed from Brabo's body, the imagery becomes more gruesome. For images, see https://maruanimercier.com/exhibitions/2019/donnez-votre-main

[45] There are several reasons why peoples' hands were amputated. In some instances, amputation may have been a punishment. A frequent explanation is that members of the Force Publique had to account for every bullet fired by

Belgian atrocities in the Congo, though they stem from the period prior to the Belgian *government's* involvement. The photos of Congolese people whose hands had been cut off were shown around the world, in magic lantern lectures across the Europe and the US, first by protestant missionaries and later by members of the Congo Reform Association itself.[46] The photos were further spread through print, in E. D. Morel's *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (1904) and *Red Rubber* (1906), and in Mark Twain's *King Leopold's Soliloquy* ([1905] 1961). The latter satire featured the now-famous line ascribed to those who would hide these evils: "The kodak has been a sore calamity to us. The most powerful enemy that has confronted us, indeed" (Twain 1905, 39). For Twain's King Leopold, the "incorruptible kodak" is "the only witness I have encountered in my long experience that I couldn't bribe" (40). Such photos were key to the campaign to expose the atrocities in the Congo Free State, and to rally the emotions of viewers (Sliwinski 2006). The images were also included in Hochschild's very popular book of 1999, so a new generation of readers is now familiar with severed hands as the horrific symbol of the Congo Free State.

In an interview, Müller spoke about Antwerp and the hands, as well as his veil "Le viol" (as discussed above):

> I love this one because of a true story that happened to me. I went with my daughters to Antwerp and we were in the Grand Place, the Grote Markt in Antwerp, and there's this wonderful sculpture that I love very much. This artist Jef Lambeaux is a major sculptor for me, he's a very good artist. We were playing around it and suddenly it comes to me: I look at it and I see the hand. It came to me as a lightning bolt on my head! And then I looked at the dates when it was made and I think it was 1886 or 1885, which makes it even more significant. It was made right at the start of the horror, when Antwerp was playing such a vital role as a transit port. Unconsciously of course, Jef Lambeaux did not know what

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collecting the hand of the person they had killed. Sometimes bullets missed, but had to be accounted for, so hands were taken from people still living (Sliwinski 2006, 338).

[46] A fair amount of scholarship has been published about these "atrocity photographs," see Sliwinski 2006, Hunt 2008, Peffer 2008, Graham 2014, and Hasian 2015.

would happen. But once you see it you only see *that*. Before that, it's part of the things you know: it's a symbol of Antwerp, you tell the children the story of Brabo, you tell the story of why there is a hand… But once you see that, you can only see Congo, the hand of Congo. Before you don't realize and you can go and buy them in chocolate and suddenly it becomes horrible, while before that it was the etymology of the city. It was wonderful, like David and Goliath. It was one of the things that you know by heart. And so this is important for me because I lived it. It happened to me.

The interesting thing is that the dates do coincide, so it makes it even more cruel. The dates of the building of that statue are during the reign of Leopold, the beginning of Congo. And the other irony that I discovered while doing the bloody project is that I used a Renaissance sculpture by Giambologna, the one in Firenze (referring to "The Rape of the Sabine Women" in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence, which Müller chose for another veil). […] The irony that I totally ignored when I chose that work: like everyone, I thought Giambologna was pure Italian, but it turns out the guy is from Antwerp! It's a little magic, a magical moment. So three centuries later Jef Lambeaux visited Italy and discovered his work and that was *his* epiphany, because Jef Lambeaux was tremendously influenced by Giambologna, who was his favorite sculptor. And I ignored that when I chose all these things. It's a moment of magic. When you have these moments as an artist you feel you are possessed, you feel you're on a mission. When you reach these moments, and when you superimpose these things and this thing happens, you just say there is something about art. There is something about art that captures a lot of what is going on, even subconsciously. Mystical.

Mpane invited Müller to join the RE/STORE project to emphasize that colonization did not only involve Congo, but also Belgium. Through his artistic research, Müller pulls threads from across European art history and ties them together again within a colonial context.

With its depiction of a severed hand, Müller's "The Thrown Hand" is the bloodiest depiction of violence in the Rotunda. The artist's response to the Brabo Fountain echoes art historian Debora Silverman's discussions of Lambeaux's design as part of a broader 19th century Belgian visual culture of violence (2013). Silverman places Antwerp's symbol of a severed hand within a 19th century Belgian context of creating a Belgian national identity through mythologizing past military battles and highlights the "grisly physicality" of the fountain, whose streams of water gush from the giant's severed hand and arm in place of blood (28). Unlike the other veils in the Rotunda, in "The Thrown Hand" Müller places Brabo to the side of Huygelen's

waking female figure, so that she is clearly seen through the veil. Only her raised arm is obscured by the severed hand. Read together, the nude waking woman and throwing man provoke disturbing interpretations. Could the hand in Brabo's grasp be her hand? Does their nudity imply that they have just been together? Beyond the benign golden figure once titled "Colony Waking up in Civilization" lies a gory history of rape and dismemberment.

Opposite Huygelen's sculpture stands Paul Du Bois' "Charity" (La Charité), now paired with Mpane's veil "Charity (Begins at Home)" (Figure 94). Du Bois depicts a woman holding a small, naked child who is reaching for her exposed breast. The sculpture follows standard allegorical representations of charity (also called by its Latin name, Caritas), one of the seven virtues in opposition to the now more well-known seven deadly sins. As with other representations of European women in the Rotunda, the sculpture conveys the message that Belgium's role in Congo is one of benevolent savior (Morris 2003, 64). Like Matton's "Belgium Bringing Well-Being to the Congo," "Charity" depicts a maternal figure, serving as a reminder of the colonial narrative presenting Belgium as a parent to Congolese "children" (Young 1965, 59-72, Cohen 1970, Stanard 2017, 130).

Reflecting on the role of charity as a virtue emphasized in Catholic teachings (we are reminded that the man depicted in Müller's veil "Draped" is a member of the Brothers of Charity), Mpane chose to depict an image of a priest in what he describes as a tipoy (but which has a wheel and is thus a kind of cart), carried by two young men (Figure 95). A tipoy (sometimes called a sedan or "bath" chair), was a hammock or chair carried by porters, and was a common mode of transportation in the European colonization of sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world. In depictions produced for popular consumption through explorers' accounts and the like, Europeans were often depicted lying in hammocks or sitting up straight in "bath

Figure 94 a, b and c: Du Bois' "Charity" and Mpane's "Charity." Photos © Maria-Krisztina Nagy, veil design courtesy artist.

Figure 95: The source image for Mpane's "Charity." Jean-Pierre Müller found the image through an internet search and shared it with Mpane, though it depicts missionaries in the French Congo.

chairs" as Africans carried them for miles along trails they did not wish – or deign – to tread themselves (see Strother 2016, 155-164). Tipoys and palanquins were also used to carry important persons in some parts of Africa, including among Tetela in Congo (de Rezende 2012, 59). Europeans carried in tipoys are clear representations of imperialist – and imperious – condescension, oppression, and violence, as both the physical and intellectual labor of navigating landscapes are affected by African porters while "their" Europeans are carried, perhaps to sleep blissfully along the way.[47] Though the image Mpane uses has a bicycle wheel under the seat, the priests still rely on at least two Africans to carry them. Mpane uses the tipoy to indicate the hypocrisy of missionaries in the Belgian Congo. In the text accompanying the installation, he writes about the priest, that "all he needed to carry the Word of God far and wide was to let himself be carried."

Mpane has purposefully concealed the race of the man at the center of the image, whose silhouette clearly identifies him as a priest. Though elsewhere Mpane has associated the arrival of Christianity with Europeans, he is also concerned with what he considers manipulation of Congolese by present-day Catholic and Protestant churches.[48] Considering De Bois' sculpture of "Charity," which Mpane also refers to as "amour" (love), he points out that a European woman in classical attire suckling her baby is not necessarily an image that needs to be decolonized. Yet its presence in the Rotunda of the AfricaMuseum leads one to read it as a symbol of the Belgian

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[47] In her discussion of tipoys, art historian Zoë Strother quotes a 1931 letter by Pierre Ryckmans, future governor general of the Belgian Congo: "I am carried by four big Pende devils, who sing while gesturing, who walk with an elastic step and who appear satisfied to have me make use of their services. […] The apparatus is so comfortable that I fall asleep. I scarcely notice that we have left the road to follow a path in the forest" (Strother 2016, 163). Strother contrasts this with an 1891 statement by a Congolese man named Koubedika, who describes the job as "interminable, wearing, hallucination-making" (ibid.). See also Annie Hore's 1886 *To Lake Tanganyika in a Bath Chair* for a 19th century account of travelling by bath chair from the point of view of a British woman.
[48] For discussions of evangelical churches in the DRC, see De Boeck and Plissart 2004, Matangila 2006, Ballet et al 2009, and Pype 2012, among others. On Congolese evangelical churches in both DRC and in European Congolese diaspora communities, see Demart 2017.

view of caring for Africans like a mother for her child – and all the maternal/paternalism so

implied. Similarly, Mpane argues that Christianity has corrupted the image of "charity":

> Christianity is based on love, but this love is frequently abused, like the Catholic
> priest in the image who took advantage of that love, or the priests in the revival
> churches who take advantage of the poor who have nothing. I wanted to pursue
> this ambiguity of love. I'll take this postcard where Africans are carrying a priest
> in a tipoy – but when you look at it closely you realize it could be a black priest
> today, wearing the same clothes.

Through this veil, Mpane elects to confront the hypocrisy that often hides behind the concept of

Christian charity, which can work as another tool of (neo-)colonial exploitation, even after the

nominal Independence.

Resurrecting Histories

Through their juxtapositions of pictures conveyed through veils with monumental

colonial sculptures, Mpane and Müller add layers to the mystic writing pad and traces to the

museal palimpsest. The Rotunda and its RE/STORE installations offer entanglements of

seemingly unrelated images whose ties can be understood with a little historical digging and

interpretive speculation. The artists have created fertile ground for a confrontation between the

memories of colonizers and those colonized, as well as among their descendants. Monstrous

bodies, dismembered hands, and rubber-tire men speak to grotesque themes (Bakhtin 1984).

Representations of clergy indicate the important role of the Catholic church in the DR Congo

past and present. The play of gazes and sexuality across sculptures and implicating viewers is

ripe for Lacanian analysis (Lacan 1981). Veils, skulls, and spirits continue the spectrality running

throughout the AfricaMuseum. Reconceptualization of the museum's signature room by

collaborating Congolese and Belgian artists sheds light upon many shadowy ghosts of the

colonial enterprise and creates a ground on which citizens of the DRC and Belgium can begin to

address unpleasant truths together. Reconciliation can only happen "little by little," so it is necessarily too early to know what will result from these changes to the AfricaMuseum. Nevertheless, it is important not to underestimate the importance and elegance of this first step in the creation of a shared culture that honestly acknowledges and engages entanglements arising from the colonial endeavor as well as ongoing ramifications.

Unknowingly echoing Freddy Tsimba's views of the museum discussed in Chapter One, Mpane told me, "for me, this rotunda, this museum is a tomb, and there needs to be a place (endroit) for resurrection" (pers. comm. Oct. 17, 2019). Returning to the discussion of Thomas De Quincey's essay on the palimpsest which opened this chapter, Thomas De Quincey believed that the palimpsest provides a place for resurrection, since "impressions made on it 'are not dead but sleeping'" (Dillon 2005, 246, quoting De Quincey).[49] By constantly referring to his deceased sister Elizabeth, De Quincey played out his fantasy of her resurrection, making it impossible to forget her. Paradoxically, by adding veils that cover colonial-era sculptures, Mpane and Müller are making visible histories that have remained invisible in the Rotunda. To make resurrection possible for his sister, De Quincey must continue to write about her; to make resurrection possible in the Rotunda, artists, visitors, scholars and staff must continue the work of researching the shared Belgian-Congolese histories of colonialism. This location of resurrection, for Mpane, is a place of potential decolonization.

Having understood the Rotunda as a palimpsest, we are left to make meaning of its disparate parts. Over the course of our conversations, Mpane repeatedly used the verb "creuser," "to excavate," while describing his artistic process. He echoes Foucault's "archaeology of

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[49] In his essay, De Quincey constantly refers to his deceased sister Elizabeth, and in playing out a fantasy of her resurrection he makes it impossible to forget her. Writing about this essay, Sarah Dillon (2005) emphasizes that fantasy comes from the Greek *phantasia*, meaning "a making visible" (246), which harkens back to my discussion of specters in Chapter One.

knowledge" and later "genealogy of knowledge" (Foucault 1972, Foucault 1977). Sarah Dillon considers Foucault's archaeological approach as a palimpsest, but with a twist. Whereas studies of parchment palimpsests focused on uncovering that which was hinted by the traces, Foucault's genealogy emphasizes finding the "strategic connections" which make up the very fabric of the palimpsest (Foucault 1977; Dillon 2005, 253-254). Rather than brushing aside the upper layers, all is taken into consideration while making meaning. Further, genealogical research finds that "at the beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origins; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity" (Foucault 1977, 142 quoted in Roach 1996, 25). The beginning of the museum, the beginning of the Rotunda sculptures: these are stories of discord and inequality. Mpane and Müller present the findings of their archaeological excavations into Belgian and Congolese colonial histories as a palimpsest, revealing that the neatly constructed environment is built over histories of dispute and conflict. In this chapter, it has been my job to then translate these findings into words.

Resurrecting these histories is but one step in a long process toward decolonizing a museum. Reflecting their discordant creation, dissension has already risen in Belgium regarding the Rotunda installations. On May 28th 2020, the *bourgemestre* of the commune of Ixelles (like a borough president in New York City) announced that they would be removing the bust of Émile Storms (whose mercenaries decapitated Tabwa chief Lusinga in 1884) currently located in Meûss Square and would give it to the AfricaMuseum, where it could be better "contextualized." For his part, the director of the museum was not as enthusiastic: "Yes, there is an agreement with the commune of Ixelles to store the sculpture with us. Concerning the statue's place in the museum, we do not have the space. We already discuss Storms in two different locations. […] The bust is much too large and does not really bring added value" (BRUZZ 2020; Gryseels does

not elaborate on what he means by "added value"). A few days later, Mpane emailed me, celebrating that "the concept RE-Store, it's working and bearing fruit […] Ever since I enlarged Lusinga's skull in the Rotunda, they've really worried themselves about the Storms sculpture" (pers. comm. June 1, 2020). Two weeks later on June 14th, during the heights of BLM protests in Brussels, his bust was splattered in red paint (Figure 96).

A month later, on July 16th 2020, an open letter from seven associations representing para-commando veterans took issue with Müller's veil "Security RE/STOREd" (see La Libre 2020). The label text for the veil begins "A Belgian para-commando at Stanleyville in 1965, during the crushing [l'écrasement] of Simba rebels." The veterans disagreed with this framing, calling it "particularly tendentious and offensive," since they view their involvement as part of a humanitarian operation to free hostages. They concluded their letter by asking that the museum remove "the current text and image of the statue 'Belgium bringing security to Congo,'" seemingly failing to differentiate between the veil "Security RE/STOREd" and Matton's sculpture.[50] To the museum's credit, it responded by refusing to take down Müller's veil, pointing out that the situation was much more complex than that laid out in the letter. Furthermore, both the museum and Müller have invited the para-commandos to have a discussion. Slowly but surely, the museum is taking on the role of displaying hard truths and having difficult discussions about colonial and postcolonial pasts.

The slow movement toward decolonizing the AfricaMuseum illustrates Mpane's repetition of "petit à petit" across interviews over the course of months. This refrain underscores his willingness to work with a large, slow-moving institution as well as his own stubbornness.

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[50] The demand reads in French: "C'est pour ces raisons, dont la vérité historique ne peut être mise en doute, que nous vous demandons de supprimer texte et image actuels de la statue 'La Belgique apportant la sécurité au Congo.'"

Mpane's patience should not be confused with appeasement, however, for he uses his artworks to demand that dignity be restored to Africans. Mpane and Müller are investigating Belgo-Congolese pasts, but they also demand that viewers engage in their own work with their installations. Unable to remove the statues, Mpane and Müller have added layers to the museum's palimpsest of Belgian and Congolese histories, underscoring the importance of both Belgian and Congolese involvement in the decolonizing project.

Figure 96. Bust of Emile Storms in Meûss Square splattered in red paint. Photo taken July 5, 2020, by Wikipedia user EmDee (Creative Commons). Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Belgique_-_Bruxelles_-_Monument_au_g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral_Storms_-_06.jpg

Chapter Four:

Personal and Collective Memories at the AfricaMuseum

Memories in the In-Between

In a 1989 photograph a Luba *Mbudye* member, identifiable by his *nkaka* headdress, necklaces, and white chalk covering his face and arms, holds a *lukasa* out in front of him, and points to a large, white bead (Figure 97). As discussed earlier, lukasas are mnemonic devices employed by Mbudye association members to recount local histories. While they are used to convey communal memories, lukasas also depend on individuals; their interpretation varies based on the Mbudye member conveying its meaning and on the audience receiving the performed history (Reefe 1977, Roberts and Roberts 1996). Some narratives, such as those recounting the Luba founding epic, might be shared across communities; others, such as a chief's genealogy, might be specific to the individual Mbudye associations (Roberts and Roberts 1996 139-144). Further, we are reminded that one translation for "lukasa" is "long hand" (Reefe 1977), and one can imagine that the board might feel like an extension of one's own hand when using it to recount histories. The 1989 photograph highlights the coexistence of communal and individual aspects of memory. The audience's understanding of their collective memory as members of a specific village or as part of a broader Luba community is mediated through the individual Mbudye member, whose own charisma would frame the recounting of history.

Writing about Luba arts of memory in southeastern Congo, Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts (1996) explain "memory always lies on the border between the self and other" (41). While Freud (1961) theorized the mystic writing pad in order to understand how memory works in an individual's mind, and Maurice Halbwachs (1992) argued for a socially-constructed
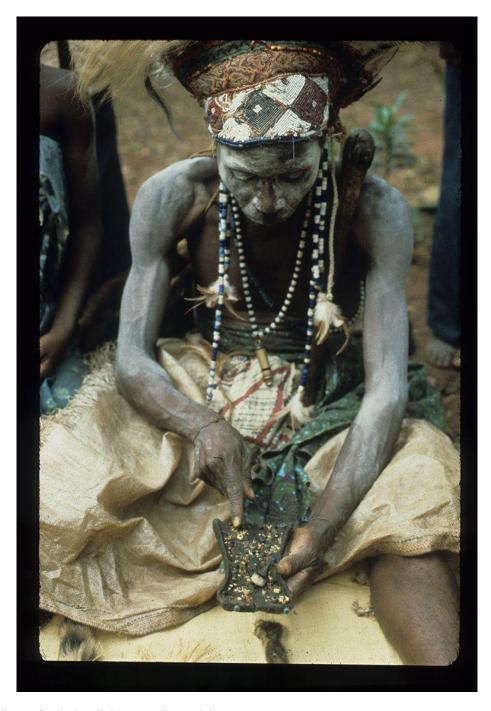
Figure 97: Photo of Mbudye diviner "reading" a lukasa. Photo: Mary Nooter Roberts 1989.

idea of memory, Edward Casey (1987) understood memory as phenomenological, located in specific places and not only within an individual's mind but also in their bodies. This last interpretation of memory informs Roberts and Roberts' study of Luba arts, which emphasizes place, body, and performance. In this final chapter, I will consider three works of contemporary art in the AfricaMuseum inspired by artists' memories, but which also evoke shared experiences. As such, the artworks, like memory, exist "on the border between the self and the other" (Roberts and Roberts 1996, 41).

The artists whose work I consider in this chapter, Michèle Magema, Aimé Ntakiyica, and Freddy Tsimba, not only create artwork that exists "on the border," but artwork that reflects their life stories crossing borders and living in between borders. Such experiences have been theorized at length in cultural anthropology under terms like "inbetweenness" (Basu 2017), "in the boundary" or "hybridity" (Bhabha 1994), "double consciousness" (Gilroy 1993 and Du Bois [1903] 1994), "halfie" (Abu-Lughod 1991), and "liminal" (Turner 1967). In African art history, discussions on the topic have focused on "diaspora" (Farrell and Byvanck 2003, Nelson 2006) and more recently "Afropolitan" (Mbembe 2007, Hassan 2020). In this chapter I share the artists' stories and artistic musings as recounted to me and portrayed in their artistic creations. These illustrate and challenge various aspects described by the above phrases, as will be discussed below.

While the AfricaMuseum was closed for renovation, its website declared that its "big challenge was to present a contemporary and decolonized vision of Africa" (AfricaMuseum n.d.c). Later, as we have seen, museum staff placed contemporary art at the center of its "decolonized vision." Unlike the commissions by Freddy Tsimba, Aimé Mpane, and Jean-Pierre Müller discussed previously, the artworks I explore in this chapter were all acquired by the

museum after their initial creation. That their common trait is the revealing of personal experiences suggests the important role such storytelling can play in decolonizing a museum. The artworks humanize legacies of colonization and create connections across borders and with museum visitors.

<u>Aimé Ntakiyica's Tree of Memories</u>

In the square Afropea gallery, just east of the memorial hallway in which Freddy Tsimba's "Shadows" is displayed, visitors can learn about the African diaspora in Belgium. A large circular table takes up most of the floor space, and visitors can sit, read some of the provided books, or browse interviews on interactive screens. Heirloom vitrines line the walls and are now filled with photographs illustrating a timeline of African presence in Belgium. One case is filled with approximately 120 glass jars, evocative of the museum's earlier displays of animal specimens. They are filled to different heights with neon-colored yarn, each labeled with a person's name. This installation is "Histoire de famille. Arbre généalogique n°1" (Family History, Family Tree No. 1) by Aimé Ntakiyica, an artist born in Burundi who has been living in Belgium since 1974 (Figure 98).

The elements and concepts of "Family History, Family Tree No. 1" speak to Ntakiyica's identity as an artist and an expatriate Burundian. The jars, yarn, and labels grew out of his early experience as a painter at Belgium's Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels and his later transition to installation art. Most labels on the jars feature names that are obviously from Rwanda or Burundi, which were under Belgian control from 1922-1962.[1] Some are also

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[1] After the German defeat in World War I, the League of Nations placed what had been the German East African territory of Ruanda-Urundi under Belgian Mandate. After World War II it became a UN Trust Territory, still under Belgian control (Lemarchand 1970).
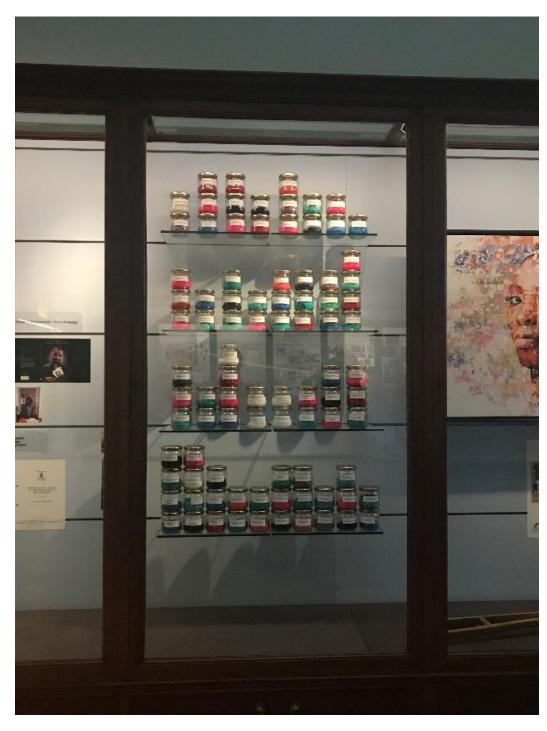
Figure 98. "Histoire de famille. Arbre généalogique nº1" (Family History. Family Tree #1). 2016. Glass and wool. Installation in the *Afropea* gallery. Collection RMCA, inv. no. 2017.6.1.

European, indicating the intertwining of cultures and identities that Ntakiyica experiences in his life. The artist has added a personal artwork to the museum's collection that also speaks to transnational political histories and legacies of Belgian colonialism.

Ntakiyica's choice of materials alludes to his training as a painter and to a specific art-supply store in Brussels. In its windows along Rue de Laeken in central Brussels, La Droguerie le Lion presents rows of paints, brushes, and pigments (Figure 99). Ntakiyica explains that generations of Brussels artists have bought supplies and sought advice here, as he started doing as a young art student.[2] As Ntakiyica described it,

> This window is fantastic because it's everything, all these glass jars with pigments. And I've known this window for 40 years, it has always been a reference for me. When I am working with pigments, I am referencing this window. The pigment is enclosed and at the same time it's a work of art. It's fabulous.

After entering the Royal Academy of Fine Arts to study drawing and become a cartoon artist, Ntakiyica took a class on painting in which the students had to spend one week working from a single model. Approaching the task as a draftsman, he sketched for a few hours and completed the image in half a day; then, he started to add paint. His professor told him, "this is good, but you have to learn to paint and stop drawing. What you're doing now is coloring, not painting. To be painting, the color must be allowed to speak."

The professor's insight changed Ntakiyica's relationship to painting and to materials. He switched his major to painting, but he began to feel frustrated and confined to the wall, since painting exists primarily in two dimensions. Unmixed pigment, however, could be freed from the wall and the canvas. First, he explored placing the colorful, chalk-like substance directly on a canvas without mixing it into paint. This meant, however, that his canvas would "shed" pigment

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[2] Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Aimé Ntakiyica are from my December 10, 2018 interview with him.

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wherever it was hung. Ntakiyica says,

> I always work from this principle: If you want to stay, you stay, if you cannot stay, you leave. I am not forcing you. This goes for pigments as well. The people at the museums were horrified by my work, the pigment falling everywhere. The janitorial staff would want to clean it up – with water, imagine! – but I told them no, don't touch it, I like that it stays. So little by little I started to understand space. Pigment allowed me to leave the wall.

Pigment's physical characteristics prompted Ntakiyica to unbind his approach to art from canvas and move into three-dimensional space.[3] His training as a painter, however, still informs his work.

When he proposed to create his own family tree as an artwork, Ntakiyica returned to his relationship with color. He explained, "I don't need to use a paintbrush or ink, because colors are everywhere." Ntakiyica had one problem with pigment, however: when its jar is shaken, a residue is left on the glass. Because Ntakiyica wanted the jars to remain completely clear, he instead used small pieces of colorful yarn. Separated by color and placed in jars, they evoke the windows at the Droguerie le Lion. Visiting Ntakiyica at his home, I quickly realized why yarn was an obvious choice: A workbench is in one corner of the living room, covered with balls of yarn and knitting projects in the exact same colors used in "Family History, Family Tree No. 1," (Figure 100). His wife, Anneke van Essche, knits and makes pompoms, the production of which creates many small scraps. Following his principle that colors are everywhere, Ntakiyica saved these, at first not sure what he would use them for. Once he had decided on his idea of jars and colors for "Family History, Family Tree No. 1" the yarn found its purpose.

Ntakiyica is not only interested in the final result of his work, however, but also in the process of its creation and display. Though every pot is identical, its contents are not; the colors

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[3] Ntakiyica has been working with pigment as its own material since his 1990 work "L'Arbre à palabre" shown in the 1995 exhibition "Otro Pais" curated by Simon Njami in Las Palmas (Gran Canaria) and Barcelona (Njami 1994).

Figure 99 a and b. View of window of La Droguerie Le Lion from outside and inside. Photo: Marie Vanesse, from
http://www.marievanesse.com/droguerie-le-lion-bruxelles/

Figure 100: Anneke van Essche's knitting projects and materials.

and quantities of yarn are different. As for an underlying logic to the colors, amount, and names,

Ntakiyica responded,

> The logic is pictorial, which means it's not even logical. It's a pictorial accident.
> Do be honest, I would take a jar, I took some yarn, and I closed it. I like working
> like an assembly line, without thinking. It's repetition. You don't have to think
> because the advantage of repetition is that you are beyond the work, because even
> when I am doing this I'm not necessarily thinking about the work, I'm thinking
> about other things. And that interests me. You are beyond, you are in the gestural,
> in reflection, and your thoughts can travel.

Ntakiyica is interested in the repetitive, gestural process of artistic creation, in this case dividing

up yarn pieces into jars.

While "Family History, Family Tree No. 1" is rooted in Ntakiyica's memories and

family, he implicates others in its creation. When the work has been displayed in Tervuren and

earlier in Dakar and Hasselt (Belgium), Ntakiyica has compelled museum staff to play an active

role in the realization of his work. Each jar has a label bearing the name of someone in

Ntakiyica's family. Rather than create a traditional family tree with the placement of the jars,

Ntakiyica refuses to tell curators how the jars should be organized.

> I like that the museum, that the place where I'll show, is also an active participant
> in my work. So I put the jars in a box and I mail it, and I tell them, 'I don't want
> to know how you install it. Don't call me. You do it, and I'll come. I'll discover it.
> You have to decide, which is more important, the name or the color? That doesn't
> interest me.'

By not giving directions on how to install the jars, Ntakiyica is forcing staff of the institution

hosting his work to become active participants. The approach reflects his own thoughts on

identity, which he describes as "multiple – because I have my identity, but you also put an

identity on me. So I have as many identities as people who are looking at me, because you create

an identity for the other." Ntakiyica presents his identity as derived from his family tree, but he

also understands identity as situational, so that "Family History, Family Tree no. 1" is a

collaboration between himself and others.[4]

Ntakiyica's demand that museums and galleries participate in the creation of his artwork

illustrates his conception of how identity is created:

> Identity, for me, it is not defined geographically. I am Belgian because I live in
> Belgium, Burundian because I am of Burundian origin. But identity doesn't
> depend on me. It depends on "le regard de l'autre." Why? Because I am
> Burundian. I don't have a Belgian passport. I've lived here a long time. When I
> return to Burundi, they tell me I'm not totally Burundian. But when I'm in
> Belgium, they tell me I'm not totally Belgian. In Burundi, I was there for
> vacations, but I've never lived there for entire years you see. What do I need to do
> to label myself? But I cannot label myself, I am myself and I am where I am. If I
> have to label myself on a legal level, at borders, yes, I'm Burundian. But I know
> more about Belgium than I do about Burundi.

For Ntakiyica, identity is produced by a person and an interlocutor together, and he does not

have the final say on his own identity. Similarly, his artworks are co-created by himself and the

institutions where they are displayed.

Labels on Ntakiyica's yarn-filled jars also comment on constructed identities. For many

visitors to the museum, last names like "Ntakiyica," "Ntidendereza," or "Rucamuvyuma" will

read as "foreign," while "Brughmans," "Danziger," and "Van Essche" (also in the family tree)

will read as local (Figure 101). That the names are all in one family is a clear illustration of

global movements across boundaries. How one reacts to the names also reveals aspects of

viewers' identities. For some, "Mwami Mwambutsa IV Bangiricence" (Figure 101b) reads as

any other foreign name. For visitors from the Great Lakes region of Africa and those familiar

with the region's history, this name and others in the family tree indicate that the artist is of the

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[4] Anthropologists of Central Africa have written at length on situational identity in the region (e.g. A. Roberts 1986, 5-10, A. Roberts 2013, 9, 106, A. Roberts 1996a, MacGaffey 1997 and MacGaffey 1998b).

Figure 101 a (top) and b (bottom). Details of the installation of in the Afropea gallery at the AfricaMuseum.

Burundian royal family, since "Mwami" is a title that can be translated as "chief" or "king." They further point to Ntakiyica's personal relationship with Burundian political history. Mwami Mwambutsa IV was king of Burundi from 1915-166 and father of Crown Prince Rwagasore (Deslaurier 2010, 68). Learning about Ntakiyica's family history one also learns about the history of Burundi. In 1961, Burundi held elections in preparation for independence from Belgium. The party opposed to Belgian administration, UPRONA (Unité et progrès national), won a surprise victory, and its leader, Crown Prince Louis Rwagasore, became Prime Minister. Sixteen days later, he was assassinated. Six suspects were accused and sentenced to death, several of whom had significant roles in the Burundi Christian Democrat party (PDC); this second political party was supported by Belgium, whose own Christian Democrats were in power at the time (Poppe 2015, 158). Of the six executed suspects, two were Greek citizens named Jean Kageorgis and Michel Iatrou, and four were from Burundi: Joseph Biroli, Antoine Nahimana, Jean-Baptiste Ntidenedereza and Jean-Baptiste Ntakiyica, the artist's father.[5]

Responding to the names "Ntidendereza," "Ntakiyica" and "Mwambutsa" on the jars, I delicately asked Ntakiyica to provide more information on his family tree. He laid it out thus, using "uncle" to also designate his parents' cousins:

> Mwami Mwanbutsa was my mother's great-uncle. The Mwami and Nyenama, my mother's father, were first cousins. Ntidendereza and Biroli are two brothers, sons of (Pierre) Baranyanka and are my father's cousins. Biroli, Ntidendereza and Nahimana were all my paternal uncles, and Rwagasore was my maternal uncle. Ntidendereza and Biroli founded the Christian Democrat political party. After the 1960 elections, Ntidendereza was named Minister of the Interior, my father Minister of the Civil Service (secrétaire d'Etat à la fonction publique). […]
>
> The affair around the assassination of Rwagasore bothers me a lot, because my father and Rwagasore were best friends; after the death of a chief the Mwami had

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[5] On Burundian politics surrounding independence and Ntakiyica's extended family, see Deslaurier 2005, Poppe 2015 and Russell 2019. Ntakiyica has shared that Ludo de Witte, author of *The Assassination of Lumumba*, is working on a new book about the assassination of Rwagasore that will document how the Belgian government was implicated in the assassination.

split up that chief's large chiefdom between the two of them, making Northern Buyenzi and Southern Buyenzi, one for Rwagasore and one for my father. My father and his cousins were tried for a first time and were given prison sentences. After independence in 1962, the first decree of the new government (the Prime Minister of which was another one of my uncles) was to re-try my uncles. They were all hanged at the Gitega Stadium in front of thousands of students on January 15th, 1963 (all of the schools were ordered to attend the execution)." (Pers. comm. August 11, 2020.)

Ntakiyica explained that his family was obliged to leave Burundi for these terrifying political reasons.

Ntakiyica and his family fled Burundi for Belgium, where he now lives in a Flemish suburb of Brussels with his wife, Anneke van Essche, in the house where they raised their daughters. When I asked the artist why he chose to use yarn, he immediately responded, "For my wife." Not only had he included names of his family members in his artwork, he included parts of his wife's creative practice in his museum project. Furthermore, Ntakiyica explains that "there are elements of myself inside of" his installation. How could Ntakiyica feel comfortable placing something so personal in the AfricaMuseum?

It was my own choice, because in that museum, there's already some elements of my own family. There are headdresses that belonged to my uncles. They're there, and I've seen them there since I was young – I didn't even realize until my cousin told me our uncle was there.

Later he explained, "well if my uncle is already there [in the museum], why not put in the whole the family!" Though joking, Ntakiyica's word choice is notable. "Family History, Family Tree no. 1" is not simply something he crafted, and it is not just his family's names that are in the museum; he describes the work as made up of actual parts of himself and his family.[6]

Sitting at Ntakiyica's kitchen table, I spy a round sign in his backyard which reads *Le monde est ma maison*, "the world is my house." This is another work of his, part of a project that

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[6] Ntakiyica's uncle, Jean-Baptiste Ntidendereza, donated a headdress to the museum in the 1950s. Further information from the museum is not immediately available.

grew out of conversations around globalization in the 2000s.

> At some point I was invited to a biennial. It was the 2000s and everyone was talking about globalization. People were talking about nomadic artists, but a nomadic artist, what's that? It's someone on the move, who moves all the time, who goes there and there and there… But I'm not a nomadic artist. Here I'm at home, but there I'm at home too. I made this work because for me, home is above all in exhibitions. This is the relationship I have with museums, and it's a response to globalization. It means that the world is my house. But my house, it's also the museum in which I am exhibiting. So for example, in Sidney, I had a fantastic time when I exhibited there. So I decided that the work I made in Sidney is part of my house. I showed in New York, and that didn't go so well, and I decided it wouldn't be a part of my house. I showed in Las Palmas (Gran Canaria), and it went super well, and so that became a part of my house. It's arbitrary, I decide and no one else does. So I have a practice (*un travail*) where I say that the world is my house because my patio is in Las Palmas, my hallway is in Sidney, another part is in Holland. So my house, you could put it on a map, but it's really in my head, and it's important that beyond the place, it's the relationship the artist has with the exhibition. So I made this work which was "the world is my house," which is an imaginary work, and I concretized it with this disc. I yelled out loud that yes, the world is my house.

Speaking of the AfricaMuseum, Ntakiyica describes his relationship with the institution as "clear" and "open" (echoing Tsimba's hopes for the museum in Chapter One), finding work with the museum to be worthwhile. While his artwork extends out from the Afropea gallery to Burundi, to an art store in Brussels, and to wherever his extended family resides, Ntakiyica himself reaches across the world in the places within "his house," now including the AfricaMuseum.

Ntakiyica's "house" of exhibitions recalls Matteo Ricci's Renaissance "memory palace" or Luba lukasas (M. N. Roberts 1996, 117). Using an architectonic model of memory, memory palaces and lukasas rely on physical locations (or even the thought of one, in one's mind) to organize information (ibid.) Further, Ntakiyica's "Family History, Family Tree no. 1" uses a Luba Mbudye logic by relying on exhibition staff to organize the jars. Each reinstallation allows for a new opportunity of meaning-making, as curators or visitors make their own connections

between jars. Studying the installation without any knowledge of Burundian history, for example, a viewer might happily notice recurring names across different shelves, or develop their own theory of connections based on the color of the yarn. Like the beads on a lukasa, the jars can be interpreted based on their relationships to one another, and each interpretation depends on the person "reading" the lukasa or the "Family Tree."

Ntakiyica refuses to be contained by walls, borders, or individual constructions of the self. He took his painting off of walls, places himself in museums and brings museums into himself. Rather than an "in between" that suggests distinct and self-contained boundaries (Hassan 2020, 16), Ntakiyica states "I am myself and I am where I am. […] Here I'm at home, but there I'm at home too." Homi Bhabha (1994) writes that "'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovating sites of collaboration, and contestation" (2). Following this understanding of "in-between," Ntakiyica embraces communal selfhood and collaboration. Put differently, Ntakiyica does not split himself between places, but multiplies himself across borders. Alfred Gell, writing about anthropologist Roy Wagner, describes persons as "'multiple' in the sense of being precipitate of a multitude of genealogical relationships, each of which is instantiated in his/her person."[7] Ntakiyica's "arbre *généalogique*" illustrates his multiple personhood: his material choices refer to Brussels and to Burundi; he is the artist, but others create the installation; his family story is also Burundian political history; he is in his body, and part of his "self" is in the artwork; he is at home in the museum, and the museum is in his home.

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[7] Gell 1998, 140, as cited by M. N. Roberts 2013b, 70 and A. Roberts 2013, 215, and discussed in Allen Roberts' "Theories of Culture" graduate seminar.

Michèle Magema's "Hévéa" Memories

Like Ntakiyica, Michèle Magema shares a part of her family tree with museum visitors. Unlike Ntakiyica, she embraces duality, and when we discuss her artistic practice she repeatedly returns to the idea of "double," identifying as French and Congolese, feminine and masculine. Her artwork shares personal and collective histories, frequently using using two different media or 2-channel video. The title of her installation in the museum, "Mémoires Hévéa, entre Histoire et histoires individuelles" translates to "Hévéa Memories, between History and individual histories." [8] Magema embraces "inbetweeness," which Basu (2017) defines as "a double-consciousness born from 'histories of borrowing, displacement, transformation, and continual reinscription'" (2, citing Gilroy 1993, 102) and "a lived tension […] of living here and remembering/desiring another place" (Basu 2017, 2, citing Clifford 1997, 266). In the following section I will present Magema's "Hévéa Memories," sharing her memories of artistic formation and family histories which are intimately entwined with national Congolese histories.

Magema's "Mémoires Hévéa, entre Histoire et histoires individuelles" hangs in an oft-overlooked hallway next to the interior courtyard. The artwork is made up of thirty-seven parts (Figure 102): three large photographic portraits are surrounded by thirty-four smaller drawings. The portraits portray three women dressed in a common Congolese manner, wearing a wrapped skirt of print fabric (*pagne*), a blouse (*libaya*), an apron of differing patterns, a head wrap, and flip-flops on their feet (Figure 103).[9] The thirty-four smaller works are pen-and-ink drawings

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[8] Magema translates the title into English as "Hévéa Memories, from History to herstories," though a direct translation of the French title better illustrates the topic of this chapter: "Hévéa Memories, between History and individual histories."

[9] While a fair amount of scholarship exists about African fashion generally (e.g. Allman 2004, Gott and Loughran 2010, Rovine 2015, and Gott et al. 2017), there is a severe dearth of scholarship on fashion from the DRC beyond discussions of *la sape*, an almost entirely male phenomenon (Gondola 1999, Thomas 2003, Gondola 2010).

depicting historical figures above and below, with columns of names and dates, also drawn in pen and ink, on either side of the photographs (see Appendix).

The portraits depict three generations of Magema's matrilineal line. Central is Anne Kilonga, Magema's maternal grandmother, with a photo of Magema's mother to the viewer's right and Magema herself on the left. Magema discovered her grandmother's 1974 studio portrait among family heirlooms and decided to then pose herself and her mother in a similar manner in her house in France.[10] Magema and her mother wear similar clothes for portraits printed in sepia tones, again echoing the photograph of Anne Kilonga. All three women are seated, tilting slightly forward, with their hands on their thighs. The women look straight at the camera with mouths closed, and Anne's face carries a smile. Framed by the drawings of historical figures like Léopold II or Patrice Lumumba, Congo's first prime minister, Magema intertwines her personal memories with Congolese national histories, threading generations of women together through the execution and arrangement of her drawings.

The installation's title, "Hévéa Memories," is a reference to rubber and to connections across time and place. While Congo is much better known for its indigenous rubber vines *Landolphia owariensis*, the tree *Hevea brasiliensis*, first identified as a South American rubber source by Europeans in the 19th century, has historically been the most important source of rubber and is still cultivated on plantations in tropical countries (Priyadarshan 2017). Prior to its renovation, the AfricaMuseum's room on Congolese products included cases labeled "HEVEA –

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[10] As with fashion, a significant amount has been written about studio photography in Africa (especially in West Africa), but scholarship on the topic in the DRC is lacking. For portrait photography in Africa generally, see the foundational book accompanying the exhibition "In/Sight: African Photographers 1940 to the Present (Bell et al. 1996) among many others: e.g. Lamunière 2001, Ouédraogo 2002, Behrend 2013, Peffer and Cameron 2013. On photography in Congo prior to independence, see Geary 2002 (portrait photography, 110-121). Sandrine Colard (2018) has written about press photography in late colonial and postcolonial Congo and on family photographic archives in Congo (Colard 2016). Some studio portraits from 1950's-1970's Kinshasa by Jean Dépara and Ambroise Ngaimoko are published in Magnin 2015, 292-323.

Figure 102: "Mémoires Hévéa, entre Histoire et histoires individuelles" (Hévéa Memories, from History to herstories), 2015. Installation of 3 portraits printed on baryta paper and 34 drawings. Installation in the gallery that surrounds the main courtyard (former cafeteria). Coll. RMCA. Inv. 2016.44.1 Photo from the Instagram account of the AfricaMuseum, africamuseumbe: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv_IZEsgYe3/

Figure 103. Three photographic portraits depicting from left to right : Michèle Magema, her grandmother Anne Kilonga, and her mother Marie-Josée. Michèle Magema, "*Mémoires Hévéa, entre Histoire et histoires individuelles*" 2015. Installation with portraits and drawings. Collection RMCA, inv.no. 2016.44.1 © Michèle Magema

Rubber - Le caoutchouc" (see Silverman 2011, 636). For Magema, "hévéa" is synonymous with raw rubber latex, and she illustrates its elastic qualities with her hands while she explains how it connects her to history: "We are all on the same strand, the strand of history. And I decide to pull this thread of history, and in this pulling, this stretching, there's a notion of: stretching—elastic; elastic—rubber; rubber—hévéa; hévéa—history, the painful history of Congo. From the three dates [1921, 1952, 1977, the years the three women were born] I pull out rubber threads, and on these threads there are important moments personally and historically." [11] Like Congo, Magema has had to change names, and her family's histories reflect the country's history. Her grandmother was a devout Kimbanguist, for example, and her father was an influential member of the ABAKO opposition party.[12] To learn about Magema's family is to become a student of Congolese history, as the accompanying wall text at the AfricaMuseum makes clear (see Appendix).

Before discussing "Hévéa Memories" in depth, Magema suggests one examine her video installation "Oyé Oyé," a blueprint for her later work. Magema made "Oyé Oyé" while still a student at the École nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris-Cergy, and it was presented at the 2004 Dak'Art Biennial of Contemporary African Art, where it won the President's Prize that launched her career. The work juxtaposes two videos: on the left, footage of former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko overseeing a parade that includes many girls and women marching or performing; on the right, a static shot of a woman's body from knees to neck alternates between scenes of marching and stillness. When displayed, Mobutu's Zaïrian flag is hanging between the screens, while Axel

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[11] All quotations from Michèle Magema are from my December 13, 2018 interview with her.

[12] The Kimbanguist Church is formally titled Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by His Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu. In the 20th century, Belgian authorities viewed the church as a challenge to their authority (Martin 1975, Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, 47-51). Today it has 1-3 million members, mostly in Central Africa. ABAKO, "Alliance des BaKongo," was a political party in Congo which played an important role in the struggle for independence (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, 81-88). Their leader, Kasa Vubu, became the first president of independent Congo.

Mbouze's reggae-inflected paean in Lingala, "Papa Mobutu," plays in the background. The title

"Oyé Oyé" is a phrase that was nearly ubiquitous in the Mobutu era, frequently heard as

"Mobutu Oyé," meaning "long live Mobutu." "Oyé Oyé" prefigures core elements in "Hévéa

Memories" including stressing the importance of the female body – and Magema's in particular

– in her art practice, exploration of Congolese political histories, and a recurring motif of double

identities.

"Oyé Oyé" is a commentary on gender and power in general, and on the dictatorship of

Mobutu in particular. Born Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, he seized power of the recently independent

Congolese government in 1965 and remained Congo's authoritarian dictator for the next thirty-

two years. His rule was remarkable for its corruption and violence, done with the support of

various Western governments, especially that of the United States (Nozongola-Ntalaja 1986,

Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002). Mobutu nationalized much of the country's industry, which led to

enrichment of his family and friends; his political opponents risked execution, and protests could

turn into massacres (ibid.). His rule is remembered for its two policies of authenticity and

kleptocracy. In 1971, Mobutu declared an official policy of "recours à l'authenticité," also

referred to as "Zaïrization," which called for an embrace of Congolese traditions as the country

moved into the future. By the end of the 1970s, authenticité had been replaced by Mobutism, a

cult of personality in which political leader and national government were seen as one and the

same.[13] Mobutu's regime was toppled by Laurent-Désiré Kabila in 1997, and he was exiled to

Morocco, where he died.

On the right screen of the 2-channel video, Magema films her own body marching in

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[13]Mussia Kakama (1983) provides an extensive description and analysis of "authenticité" with a focus on linguistics. For thickly described examples of rural life during the Mobutism period, see A. Roberts 1986 and A. Roberts 1994; on Mobutism and the urban music scene, see White 2008.

place. She wears a sleeveless, blue, knee-length dress which has a white stripe from her left

shoulder to her right knee (Figure 104). For Congolese of a certain age, this is easily identifiable

as a school uniform, and Magema has designed the dress based on her own former uniform from

when she was a child in Zaïre. The uniforms, Magema points out, were worn to facilitate the

identification of children in the public space:

> The dress is in blue and white, which are in fact the colors imposed by Mobutu. The order was "the schoolchildren – their colors will be blue and white so we can recognize them in public space." And so already there's a control, I am an individual but already organized and included into a whole.

Magema interprets this uniform as an example of the state exerting control over her body at a

young age, since her dress merges her individuality into a collective.

On the left screen, Magema has borrowed the footage of women and children dancing

from Thierry Michel's 1999 film, *Mobutu, Roi du Zaïre*, and used the same song, Axel Mbouze's

"Papa Mobutu," as that used in the opening scenes of Michel's film. Women and children march,

dance, and sing for Mobutu, and in so doing they also perform the Zaïrian state of Mobutu.[14] In

our conversation, Magema cited as an influence Joseph Tonda, author of *Le souverain moderne:*

le corps du pouvoir en Afrique centrale, Congo et Gabon (2005), and his emphasis upon ties

between violence and the physical body in creation and maintenance of power in Central Africa.

She also mentioned Elias Canetti, most famous for his 1960 book *Crowds and Power*, which

questions why crowds willingly follow rulers (Canetti 1984). Contrasting footage of masses

marching and performing for Mobutu with the video of her truncated body marching in place,

Magema highlights the absurdity and the social control of the performance. Filmed alone in a

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[14] Such performances for Mobutu were known as "animation culturelle et politique" (political and cultural animation) and were common occurrences in Mobutu's Zaïre (Kapalanga 1989, Covington-Ward 2016, Braun 2020). For an in-depth discussion of performance and gender under Mobutu, see Covington-Ward 2016. Lesley Nicole Braun (2020) also discusses Magema's marching in "Oyé Oyé" and "Hévéa Memories," focusing on the "fragmentation" of her body across her oeuvre.

Figure 104: Still from Magema's "Oyé Oyé," showing images from the left screen (top), depicting an "animation politique" and the right screen (bottom), displaying Magema's truncated figure standing and marching in place. Image from Braun 2020.

room, showing a body without a face, we cannot know why the body on the right screen is marching. As viewers, we know that Magema's video was made after Mobutu died in Moroccan exile, independent of the other screen. But as viewers we are encouraged to suspend disbelief and create sense out of the experience. Is marching for a dictator as empty a gesture as marching for a camera in an empty room? Can a dictator's power control governed bodies long after he is gone, demanding they march in a void?

In creating "Oyé Oyé" Magema became aware of the double roles she plays as a Zaïre-born French woman, and also as an artist speaking as an individual but reaching a collective. Talking about her experience in art school in France, she says,

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I felt this necessity to talk about my Congolese part, to research and understand. And there was this duality, this double positioning, double point of view, even double screens. […] I became aware that I grew up in a dictatorship, and that as an aspiring "artist" I could share this story that I lived, that's not well known, in the country where you have one of the worst dictators of Africa. […] I was invited to Austria, and the Austrians loved the video. They talked about how they saw parallels with German history, saying that this is just what Hitler did, using similar mechanisms with women and children.

Magema has her own experience of migration and dictatorship, of being both French and Congolese, but it is also a shared experience of millions of people around the world and even of many just in France. Further, her story is both distinctly Congolese and shared by many living under dictatorial regimes worldwide.

"Oyé, Oyé" offers a starting point to understand the motivation behind Magema's artistic development and her awakening as a female artist living as a Congolese and French person. In "Hévéa Memories" Magema has continued to center her own body and investigate embodied artistic practice. Returning to drawing for the first time since she was a young girl, she has understood the medium as a representational as well as a performative art and corporeal practice. Each of her meticulous, precise lines, is a repetitive action like her marching in place in "Oyé Oyé." A "rhythm" is created that "becomes a repetition, a ritual."

I will move around with my pen, with my finger, with a repetition: lines, lines, lines. And I will identify zones, and in those zones I will reproduce lines, lines, lines. And I am not able to say what the final result will be. So it's a surprise each time, it's a new drawing each time, it's a new performance each time.

Whether performing for a video camera, posing for a portrait, or executing her drawings, Magema makes art with her body.

Clothing also plays an important role in "Hévéa Memories." Magema laughed when describing herself in the photo: "I was unrecognizable. I got dressed and I became a *maman,* I was dispossessed of myself, I was unrecognizable." Magema clarifies that she and her mother do

not usually dress like "mamans," a term used in Congo to describe matronly, maternal women who spend all waking hours of the day cooking, cleaning, and caring for their families. But her grandmother, Anne, a modest, devout woman, did dress in this manner. Magema points out that even when Anne had a professional portrait taken she wore "kisobasoba," a "patchwork" pattern describing pagnes made up of a couturier's leftover cuttings and usually worn about the house. She also wears a scarf around her hair, which Magema notes is a practice of women in the Kimbanguist Church, of which Anne was a member. Magema honored her grandmother by dressing and posing in her image.

Placing the portraits was an intimate act of care. First, Magema paid careful attention to her grandmother's portrait, noting her choices of self-presentation. Keeping in mind that the photographs would not be in color, Magema went through her mother's closet (in France) in search of patterns that would resonate with Anne's clothes. She described preparing her mother for her portrait: "I look, I search, I choose, I take, and I carefully dress her. I choose her jewelry, a scarf from among her collection. From there, she has already entered into connection (lien) with Anne." Looking closely at the portraits, one will also see that Magema and her mother wore some of the same fabric but in different combinations, and shared the same pair of flip-flops. Going through a mother's closet and jewelry box as a daughter can be a very intimate experience. Magema described this as being "in a repetition, in perpetuation of a ritual," even speaking of it in a slow, rhythmic manner. Wearing her mother's clothes and posing as her grandmother, she embodied the "fil" she created – the thread she sewed, the line she drew – across generations.

During our meeting, Magema posed a rhetorical question: "To imbricate oneself, to link one's personal history with collective history, what is the result?" In her "Hévéa Memories"

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installation, she framed the portrait photographs with drawings of dates, words, names and

images of historical symbols and people linked to her family:

> We arrive at points like Anne is Kimbanguiste. And she is BaKongo, she speaks
> Kikongo. And Bas Congo is a special region, the first president of Congo was
> BaKongo, they created the ABAKO political party – and growing up I heard lots
> of talk about ABAKO because my grandfather was a member, he was close to
> General Kasavubu [President of the Republic of Congo, 1960-1965], who would
> come visit the house.[15] And Kimbanguism I dislike, but it's still a subversive
> religious movement, of resistance and opposition to power.

Thus, Magema has included portraits of Simon Kimbangu and Joseph Kasavubu in her drawings,

as well as the words "Kimbanguiste," "ABAKO," and "Kikongo." Like the double screens in

"Oyé Oyé," one showing just Magema and the other archival footage, "Hévéa Memories"

encompasses the individual and the collective.

Congolese political history is also personal for Magema because it is the reason that her

family moved to France. As a member of the opposition party ABAKO and of a family close to

the eminent military officer and politician, Joseph Kasavubu, her father sought asylum in Europe

in 1983:

> My father came to France because he had political aspirations. He wanted to be in
> opposition against the regime. When he arrived in Brussels – because [the flight
> from Kinshasa] was Air Zaïre, it was direct to Brussels – he went to the border
> [immigration desk] and made a deposition; he asked for asylum. He explained "I
> am Congolese. I am in a dictatorial regime and I am in the opposition, and I need
> political asylum." There was first this dream but then the reality of migration
> caught up with him, with questions of survival, of housing. But he studied politics
> at Paris VIII and got his degree. Then a year later my mother fell ill, she
> developed a facial paralysis overnight, and you know, in Congo, immediately
> she's accused of being an *ndoki* [witch]. Once my father hears that, he decides to

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[15] "BaKongo" is the name of an ethnic group and "Bas Congo" is the name of a region; they are homonyms, and
many BaKongo live in Bas Congo. (In the Kikongo language someone who is part of the BaKongo ethnic group
would be "MuKongo," the singular form of "BaKongo.") The region was called Bas-Congo under Belgian rule, was
renamed Bas-Zaïre under Mobutu, then reverted back to Bas-Congo. After the 2015 reorganization of the provinces,
the name was changed to Kongo Central, but it is still frequently referred to as "Bas-Congo." General Kasavubu was
the leader of the ABAKO political party (ABAKO stood for "Alliance of BaKongo") and the first president of the
independent Congo (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, 82-87; see also Covington-Ward 2012).

bring her to France for treatment and so we all arrived in '84. We landed at
Zaventem but went to France because my mother's brother was there.

Magema's family story is a political one, and impossible to understand without a historical

framework.

The doubling that Magema had discuses vis-à-vis "Oyé Oyé" ("this double positioning,

double point of view, even double screens") is found in the drawing that reads "MICHA

MALONGO = MICHELE MAGEMA," referring to Magema's double identities as a Congolese

Frenchwoman and as a *Mwasi-Mobali*.[16] Magema's given name is Micha Malongo, which she

changed to Michèle Magema at age 15 when she became a naturalized French citizen.

Explaining her name, she says:

> It's quite astonishing actually. "Malongo" contextualizes the period in which I
> was born, because it was the period of the "3 Z's", the period of *authenticité*,
> when Mobutu made everyone have a Bantu first name and did not allow Christian
> first names. [17]

Magema was born in 1977, during the early phases of Mobutu's *authenticité* program, also called

Zairianisation. From the late 1960s to early 1970s, Mobutu sought to move away from Belgian

cultural influence by embracing (or seeking recourse from) a precolonial past which would

paradoxically become the foundation of Congolese modernity. The most obvious result was the

renaming of cities and of the country, which became Zaïre. People had to adopt "Bantu" names

instead of Christian ones, and Joseph-Desiré Mobutu became Mubutu Sese Seko Nkuku

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[16] "Mwasi-Mobali" literally translated to "woman-man," and is used to refer to a women with masculine character
traits or who take on responsibilities usually assumed to be male (Lushombo 2017, 9; Magema, discussed below).
"Mobali mwasi" (man woman) means cross-dresser (Pype 2009, 104).

[17] The "3 Z's" Magema refers to is a Congolese shorthand for Zaïreanization, when Mobutu named the country, the
river, and the national currency Zaïre, calling them "Les Trois Z – Notre Pays, Notre Fleuve, Notre Monnaie" (The
Three Z's – Our Country, Our River, Our Money) (White 2008, 71). "Zaïre" is likely a Portuguese misunderstanding
of the Kikongo word "nzadi," meaning "river" (Van Reybrouck 2014, 331-332). Sarah Van Beurden discusses
authenticy regarding Congo's national museum in her *Authentically African: Arts and Transnational Politics of
Congolese Culture* (2015) and provides a useful reference list for writing on the subject (299n32).

Ngbendu wa Za Banga. Many families continued to use Christian names and combine them with Bantu names, which is how Magema was named Micha Malongo, combining the Slavic Christian name for Michael with her paternal grandfather's name.

Magema arrived in France in 1984 and her whole family became naturalized citizens in 1993, which prompted her family to change names. She explains,

> The administration – or an agent of the administration, in any case – told my father that our first names were not French, and that it would be best to have a first name on the calendar.[18] So we had to choose our first names, and I become like an actress, at fifteen I got to choose my identity, and I made a fairly consistent choice, I chose Michèle because obviously Micha was already Michel [the French name for Michael].

Her full name, "Michèle Magema," is a fabricated identity, her "nom d'artiste." In her professional life she is "Michèle Magema," but if a friend calls her Michèle she is taken aback. In addition to these dualities, Magema also holds another, that of masculine/feminine.

When she was born, Magema was a girl given a boy's name. Magema explains that before she was born, her grandfather told her parents that "boy or girl, the name will be Malongo," and she feels that he not only gave her a name, he gave her a charge: "He was someone with a type of authority, and I feel it, in my relationship with my work, in my relationship to institutions." Further, she identifies very strongly with her masculine side, to the point that her family calls her a "Mwasi-Mobali," a Kikongo term that translates to "woman-man." Magema explains it thus:

> Mwasi-mobali are carried by a force that is not from this world. And I feel this. I allow myself to say things, as if I were an elder, in a very direct manner, very clear and I think it's good, but sometimes I say to myself "Michèle what is going on with you? You are crazy."

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[18] In France, to have a "name from the calendar" means to have a Christian name, as historically children were named for a saint from the Catholic calendar of Saint's days. Notably, the French law which dictated what French parents could name their children ended in 1993 (Blume 1995).

I also have a great-great-grandmother on my maternal side who was a mwasi-mobali. She went on the hunt, she married her children, she participated in palavers – *she was a chief.* So I say ok, good, I understand better now.

While Magema feels her grandfather's masculine force in her name, she also strongly identifies

with legacies of feminine power:

> I come from a matriarchal system, where the women have an unbelievable power in their life choices, in their way of advancing and resisting, even if they have to make compromises, like in their personal lives with Congolese husbands. They are captains, they must be on every front at any given moment, it can be exhausting. And I grew up with these figures – not even role models, these almost tutelary figures. This is also a driving force.

> Indeed, this is what burns within me, in my opinion. I used to say that I was making a claim, that I was demonstrating – but it's not that. It's there, in the posture – this notion of posture, where I pose objects, how I pose bodies, how I work in spaces. The spaces are feminine. And so, I draw bodies, and the bodies are also feminine, there's really this feminine posture that is there. And finally, those who are around me define me more and more as someone *sacrément* feminist. In opposition.

Magema wrestles with the complex inheritance of Congolese femininity. In 2007 she did not

identify as a feminist "in the militant-minded sense of the term" (quoted in Crenn 2013), but our

2018 conversation shows she might now be more comfortable with the more oppositional aspects

of feminism that seem to have been important to her all along.

"Hévéa Memories" is a personal, intimate artwork. To display it in any public museum is

to share a part of oneself, but to display it in the AfricaMuseum is particularly remarkable due to

the institution's history and collections. I asked Magema what she thought of the museum and its

renovation. Though she first moved to Europe in 1984, she only visited the AfricaMuseum for

the first time 2010, on the occasion of their exhibition "Independence: Congolese stories about

50 years of Independence." To describe her first impressions, Magema offered a performance of

gesture, breath, and speech, barely possible to capture in text:

> It was a violence, quite frankly. It was a VI.O.*LENCE*! – a violence! – because there were all these rooms, with all these cases, all these displays with stuffed

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animals and all these specimens of flora and fauna. And I was there. Really. I was *there*.

<GASPS, looks around, as if in the museum>

But he **stole** the Congo!

<GASPS>

Can you believe the violence!

<GASPS>

It's a laboratory!

<GASPS>

It was horrrrrible. And I arrived, there's this immense pirogue that took up all of the space and it was suffocating and I had the impression that even if there were lights, it was dark.

And that magnificent park. But you think –

<GASPS>

Terrrrrible when you know the history.

It was really, really, really, very, very, very difficult, very difficult.

[A few minutes pass]

What I find bizarre about Tervuren, it's this notion of personal property. It's all about *one* individual, who caused so much harm to *one* population. And after all the pain, he brings back *his* Congo, *his* fantasy to a specific place that is *his* specific property.

And it's there, at a moment it gives you – CCCHH [an expletive sound] – you know?

So, maybe it's that, the instability that I can feel.

And yet Magema was willing to give the museum a chance with her "Hévéa Memories."

Magema understood what the museum would be trying to achieve through its renovation and that here was an opportunity to confront her own Congolese past. In her opinion, it was a historic moment, in which a museum would question itself (se remette en question) and "open" itself up to the public. As she explained, "I've never seen an ethnographic museum do that. Have you? And it's exhausting for them, they're taking hits from all sides. But they continue with the program, they talk about restitution, about their collection. I've never seen that." Though a number of ethnographic museums have indeed taken this approach, it is understandable that

Magema, a Franco-Congolese woman who was also invited to the opening ceremonies for the quai Branly Museum in Paris – with all the controversies generated by that institution (see Price 2007) – would view the AfricaMuseum's renovation this way.

In explaining why she considers the renovation "historic," Magema emphasized the gravitas of the institution, stressing that its research mission gives it "legitimacy" key to Magema's view of the museum's power of representation.

> I was going to enter into history. As an artist, the museum is the tool that allows you to enter into history, along with the responsibility that that presents. And on top of that, it's not just any history, but that of Congo and that of Congo in Belgium and that of Belgium in Congo.
>
> So, how to take my place – or rather, how to accede to the place that we are given and raise awareness of it as legitimate?

It took Magema two years to complete the work, feeling almost paralyzed by its significance. Looking back, she realized that it was "two years of gestation because the responsibility was enormous." Magema has placed her own history in the museum, and to do so took time. She has put into practice Homi Bhabha's (1994) assertion that "the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (5). Magema's hybrid personal history, defined by moments of political transformation in Congo and as a Franco-Congolese woman, is on display in a legitimacy-granting, authorizing, and so ultimately deeply patriarchal institution. In countering such pretense and presumptuousness, Magema has challenged but has ultimately legitimized the museum which would have no "contemporary vision of Africa" (as the museum's renovation website declared) without her artwork and those of others discussed in these pages.

Freddy Tsimba's Memories in the Boundary

Moving outside of the museum, eight metal figures lean against the outer wall on the west side of the main building (Figure 105). In two groups of four, these headless figures have their feet spread apart and their arms up against the wall. Each group seems to have three adults and a child, and there is a total of three pregnant women, all larger than life. The figures are not easy to reach, and to view them a visitor must walk about 100 meters past the all-glass entrance pavilion to the corner of the main building, toward the main road. Looking more closely, one sees that the figures are made up of thousands of spoons soldered together, and two of the female figures have underwear suggested by copper wirework, pulled down to their knees as testament to gross indignities that can include sexual abuse (Figure 106). These figures constitute Freddy Tsimba's "Centres fermés, rêves ouverts" (Closed Centers, Open Dreams), his second artwork on display in Tervuren.

The story behind "Closed Centers, Open Dreams" is also one of transnational movement, hardship, and artistic identity. In 2011, Tsimba had an artist's residence in Strasbourg, France. He arrived in France in August of that year, but in October he had to return to Kinshasa. When returning to Europe from the DRC, he landed at the Brussels airport in Zaventem. There, he was detained and held for several days, in what in Belgium are called *centres fermés* – "closed centers" (Figure 107). Immigration authorities would not believe he was who he said he was, that is, an artist on his way to an invited residency at Horizome art center in Strasbourg (Horizome n.d.). When finally released, he was deported to Kinshasa where his passport was seized, even though he had been told it would not be. Not allowed to travel for a full year, he felt confined yet again, and began work on "Closed centers, Open dreams." The figures now on view at the

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Figure 105: "Centres Fermés, Rêves Ouverts" (Closed Centers, Open Dreams) by Freddy Tsimba (2017).

Figure 106. Details of "Centres Fermés, Rêves Ouverts » showing spoons soldered together and copper-wire underwear.

museum in Tervuren are only one part of what will be a much larger creation, for Tsimba plans to make ninety-nine figures in all.[19] Dozens are already filling the yard of his house in Kinshasa (Figure 108). All are made of spoons found in the city, which Tsimba uses in part because they are easy and inexpensive to obtain, but also because of their symbolism as implements for nourishing people (De Raedt 2015).

Tsimba's figures stand sprawled against a wall in the manner of people being searched by authorities. Describing his experience at Zaventem to Thérèse de Raedt, Tsimba depicts a terrible scene, with people falling ill, horrible smells, and watching planes come and go at liberty while he remained imprisoned. He said "even the guards saw that I was different. They told me to ask for asylum. But I told them I don't need that" (De Raedt 2015, 13). Tsimba is happily Congolese and proudly Kinois (Kinshasan); in interviews with me he emphasized this difference between himself and other artists. Tsimba is also an artist, "different" from most other Congolese travellers, and therefore a member of an elite class of frequent flyers. When he was detained, he was already well-known in Belgium, and within days an open letter demanding his release and better treatment for his fellow detainees gained hundreds of signatures (Monaville et al 2011).

Detained in the Zaventem airport's centre fermé, Tsimba was physically on Belgian soil but legally nowhere, neither in his home country of the DR Congo or in the EU. Homi Bhabha (1994) might describe Tsimba's detention location as "in the boundary." Explaining that at the "limits" of European "ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices," Bhabha posits that the boundary itself "becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing*" (6-7, italics original). For "Centres

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[19] In an interview with Thérèse De Raedt, Tsimba explained that the number nine was an important number to him, because itis "a woman's number," because there are nine months of pregnancy (De Raedt 2015).

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Figure 107. The "centre fermé" at Zaventem. Image from https://www.gettingthevoiceout.org/

Figure 108: More sculptures for "Closed Centers, Open Dreams" at Tsimba's house in Kinshasa, October 2019.

artwork. All the artists discussed in this chapter have experienced being "in the boundary" to various degrees, from seeking asylum to transiting through airports on the way to artist residencies. [20]

Afropolitan Artists

Experiences of the artists introduced in these pages illustrate the recent term "Afropolitanism," with reference to moving back and forth between Africa and Europe. The artists are constantly in motion, literally on planes, metaphorically in their work and everyday lives, and virtually through social media. They transit from Kinshasa to Brussels to Paris to Dakar and many other cities the world around for residencies, openings, and family visits. Taiye Selasi, an author widely credited with coining the term "Afropolitan" in her 2005 blog post "Bye-Bye Babar," describes it as "London meets Lagos meets Durban meets Dakar. […] We are Afropolitans, not citizens, but Africans of the world."[21] Xenophobic rhetoric denouncing cosmopolitan elites is age-old, and there was nothing new when British Prime Minister Theresa May declared "If you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere" (May 2016). The very word Afropolitan emphasizes rootedness in the African continent, and Selasi's definition includes the requirement that an Afropolitan have at least one place on the Continent where s/he can ground a sense of self.

Of the living African artists discussed in this dissertation, Tsimba lives full-time in Kinshasa, Mpane splits his time almost equally between Kinshasa and Brussels, and Magema

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[20] Airports constitute their own sub-field of mobility studies, and have been the focus of numerous publications. See for example Eriksen and Døving 1992, Chalfin 2008, Abranches 2012, Trakilović 2019.

[21] Selasi is referencing Diogenes' quote "I am a citizen of the world," picked up by Kwame Anthony Appiah in his book *Cosmopolitanism* (2006). On the early uses of the term, see Balakrishnan (2017).

and Ntakiyica live full-time in Europe. All have participated in Dak'Art, the preeminent biennial of contemporary African art, and Magema and Mpane have received significant prizes there.[22] While Tsimba identifies as proudly Kinois, I first met him in Brussels and then Paris, and when in Kinshasa I had to wait for his return from a sculpture biennial in Ouagadougou. Mpane has been a Belgian citizen for over two decades, but keeps a house and car in Kinshasa and regularly teaches as the Académie des Beaux-Arts there. As we have seen, Magema and Ntakiyica are more grounded in Europe, where they have married and raised children, though as successful artists they, too, travel frequently.

Freddy Tsimba's detainment also encapsulates some of the criticisms of the label "Afropolitan." Even as he travels the world as an artist, he is also viewed as a possible African "migrant." In telling of his detainment, Tsimba mentions that the prison staff could tell that he was "different" from the other detainees. He was special; would hundreds sign an open letter for the other, unnamed people held with him? African Studies scholar Susanne Gerhmann divides up the criticism of the term "Afropolitan" into three camps: those who find it elitist, those who consider it apolitical, and those who view it as overly commodified (Gerhmann 2016; see also Bosch Santana 2013 and Dabiri 2016). The term has a strong defender in Achille Mbembe, however, who is credited with bringing it into scholarly discourse through his essay "Afropolitanism" in the book accompanying the world-traveling contemporary art exhibition "Africa Remix," which featured works by Michèle Magema and Aimé Ntakiyica. For Mbembe, "it is a way of being in the world, refusing any form of victim identity – which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustices and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the

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[22] Michèle Magema won the President's Prize in 2004 and Aimé Mpane received the Fondation Jean-Paul Blachère prize in 2006.

law of the world" (Mbembe 2007 28-29). This last description is evident in Tsimba's artwork, which regularly addresses war and women's rights abuses in Congo and the broader world without taking on a victim identity.

<u>Decolonial Décalage</u>

Recounting her first visit to the AfricaMuseum, Magema describes a feeling of "décalage," which I translate as "instability." The original word, however, is illustrative of the role the contemporary artworks can play in the museum. To dé-cale means to take away the "cale," that is, a wedge or other such object that had previously been placed in order to stabilize a larger item, like a table or armoire. "Décaler" is used to describe a shift in a physical object, but it also describes a shift in time, as in "decalage horaire," the French term for jet lag.[23] To continue with Bhabha (1994), he writes of a "time lag" that "produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority … by suggesting that agency requires a grounding" (265). Bringing together meanings of "décalage," it indicates a action of destabilization, the opposite of "grounded." The artists discussed here hold the AfricaMuseum responsible for representing them and sharing their stories. Magema phrases this as "legitimacy" which she gains from the museum but which she also grants to the museum. Ntakiyica "places" his family in the museum while also incorporating the institution into his exhibition "house." The artists have created a different kind of legitimacy than that which has frequently been the foundational principle of museums' curatorial authority. If Magema's reaction to the AfricaMuseum was first one of "décalage," hers and other contemporary artworks are part of the "cale" that has been placed to stabilize the institution.

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[23] In a different manner, Brent Hayes Edwards uses the concept of "décalage" (borrowed from Senghor) to theorize the relationship between Africa and the African diasporas (Edwards 2009, see especially pages 13-15).

A table with a wedge under one leg is not sturdy, and including contemporary art in the AfricaMuseum cannot be the only instrument moving the museum toward decolonial futures. "Closed" and "open" are not just terms used by Tsimba for the title of his artwork, but also how he describes the AfricaMuseum, a "closed place" that is now "opening up" by including contemporary art in its displays (pers. comm. Dec. 20, 2018). In agreement with the museum's re-opening weekend press release, Tsimba predicts its decolonial future is only possible through work with contemporary artists. While working with artists on commissions and in artists' residencies is an important and laudable part of the museum's purpose, acquiring and displaying artwork is also critical in the museum's journey toward decolonization. In this aspect, museum staff must play an active role in building the museum, like Ntakiyica demands of them with the installation of his glass jars. Returning to the lukasa that opened the chapter, museum curators must also act as creators and interpreters of memory, placing objects in relation to one another and mediating between the artists' "selves" and the audience as "other."

However, the opening weekend press packet definitively stated "The AfricaMuseum has no intention of becoming a contemporary art museum" (AfricaMuseum 2018, 32). Indeed, the museum is presented like a mid-century natural history museum, with galleries dedicated to animals and minerals of Central Africa alongside one dedicated to "Rituals and Ceremonies" of peoples from the region. While my dissertation has focused on artworks purposefully displayed as art, a significant amount of "art" on display in the museum – including by living artists who identify as such – is presented in an ethnographic mode, illustrating larger points about a belief, ritual, or even urbanization and deforestation, as in the "Resource Paradox" gallery. When analyzing the role of contemporary arts in the renovated AfricaMuseum, one must keep in mind that the museum still categorizes the masterpieces on display in its temporary exhibition

"Unrivalled Art" as "ethnographic objects." Further, when the temporary exhibition closes, there will likely be no *art* museum in Belgium where one can see historic African arts on permanent display.[24] To display contemporary artworks in the AfricaMuseum without a plan of continued acquisition and revision risks segregating contemporary African artists in a manner similar to their forebears. Curators, artists and scholars must be vigilant in advocating for the talents of earlier and present-day African artists while challenging the ongoing cultural hierarchy that values "art" over "artifact."

Finally, the deeply personal connections Magema, Ntakiyica, and Tsimba have with their artistic practices expands outward from their work. Through engagement with their artworks, visitors not only absorb histories of Congo or Burundi, but they also learn about families, love, and loss. Whereas the museum has dehumanized Africans more often than not over its history, personal aspects of the contemporary works discussed here present their creators as individuals and fundamentally human. If inclusion of such arts is meant to move the museum toward decolonialization, the initiative will succeed if bridges are built between people of the sort that Aimé Mpane and Jean-Pierre Müller posit through the veils they have suspended before sculptures egregiously glorifying colonial pretenses.

Displays may move the museum away from its colonial past, haba na haba, petit à petit, little by little. Yet the museum's explicitly colonial purposes may thwart any such initiatives, and its present identity as a natural history museum cannot convey the importance of contemporary works by Congolese and others within global art histories.

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[24] Masterful works of African art can be seen in museums across Belgium, most of which are considered ethnographic, historic, or missionary museums. A number of university museums have collections of African arts and present the objects as such, but their missions are broader than those of art museums. Contemporary African art can be seen in the permanent displays at the Mu.Zee in Oostend.

Concluding Questions

Today, there is still another Tervuren, an invisible one.
There is an après-Tervuren which is an invisible Tervuren. There is a new museum emerging, slowly, very slowly. […]
That kind of plundering just goes on.
And our works are still taken – the work of modern and contemporary artists
It is all organized under the cloak of projects, of workshops, of symposia […]
It is a simple reclamation
But you do not want us to reclaim
I do not fight, it is just an observation… confrontation…
That is why I speak of an invisible museum
How not to participate when I am already in there?
I am talking about the invisible museum but we are there
How not to participate when we are already there?
We are inside of it
I am there
I am there in the invisible museum
-Francis Mampuya, "Le Tervuren Invisible"[1]

Résumé

At the beginning of this dissertation, I posed the question "what *work* is the contemporary art on view in the renovated AfricaMuseum being asked to do?" After assessing that the art was meant to help decolonize the AfricaMuseum, I asked how and to what extent it could do so. Through my experiences with the artworks and my interviews with artists, I also considered what work the art and artists were doing on their own, regardless of what they were being asked to do. I began by noting that while the goal of decolonizing a museum is a good one, it is also unachievable, like sailing toward a horizon (Richter and Kolb 2017). The changes made while on that path, however, are worthwhile and can be important actions in a continued effort to make museums more just institutions and to provide better representations of different communities and individuals. Césaire (2000) and Fanon (2004) both write that decolonization must create

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[1] "Le Tervuren Invisible" is a short interview with Congolese artist Francis Mampuya by Belgian filmmaker Matthias de Groof. https://vimeo.com/77976588

something new;[2] not only did the AfricaMuseum decide to renovate its colonial building, it also maintained the organizational structure ultimately inherited from its founding as a colonial museum. Still, African artists were invited to create something new, and also to carry the burden of decolonizing the museum.

Freddy Tsimba and Aimé Mpane, the latter working with Jean-Pierre Müller, created installations specifically for the museum that both address the colonial past and also bring attention to the work still to be done in addressing colonial pasts in Belgium. Both Tsimba and Mpane conceive of their works as acting within the museum, housing or evoking spirits to help with the decolonial project. The works by Michèle Magema, Aimé Ntakiyica, and (a second) by Freddy Tsimba are very personal, referencing the artists' own histories. Their works emphasize the human connections to be found in museums and in artworks and the ongoing human consequences of the colonial project.

Decolonial Critique?

The AfricaMuseum's decision to invite artists to create installations engaging with and criticizing the colonial past of both Belgium and the museum itself carries hints of institutional critique.[3] Mal Ramsden coined the term "Institutional critique" in 1975 to refer to the milieu of the New York art world in which he found himself searching for authenticity amid the "late-capitalism" of "seventies modernism" (Ramsden 1975, 68-69). Today the term is generally used to refer to arts practices of the 1960s and 70s by such artists as Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, and Marcel Broodthaers, but the term can also describe current work such as that by Andrea Fraser.

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[2] Césaire (2000) urged reader to create a "new society" (52), and Fanon argued that that decolonization must be a complete change, an "agenda for total disorder" (2).

[3] I write "hints" because none of the artists I spoke with identified their work with the "institutional critique" label, though Mpane frequently describes his work as very "conceptual."

These artists have created art "critiquing" the institutions in which their works were displayed, sometimes bringing attention to the artificiality of display spaces (Daniel Buren), the politics of finance in museums (Hans Haacke and Andrea Fraser) or to the underlying concepts and power of museums as artistic framing devices (Marcel Broodthaers and Andrea Fraser). These artists and others bring attention to how museums work in guiding public reception of art and how museums work within a larger capitalist society (see Alberro and Stimson 2009).

A next generation of artists inherited a critical relationship with art institutions and brought new perspectives to the critiques, especially in focusing on race and gender. Many of these artists created site-specific installation art, works meant to change the space of display, frequently through visitor interactivity.[4] Most famously, American artist Fred Wilson's 1992 project "Mining the Museum" at the Maryland Historical Society highlighted a "different" history of Maryland, exposing how the museum had ignored histories of communities of color. In but one example of his work there, he created "Metalwork 1793-1880," a display case of mostly 19th century silver vessels in Baltimore repoussé style but with 19th century slave shackles placed front and center (Corrin 1994, English 2007, González 2008, Copeland 2013). Like Tsimba's addition of the names of Congolese dead to the memorial hallway in his "Shadows," Wilson's juxtaposition emphasizes the stories *not* being told in the museum.[5]

The AfricaMuseum's trumpeting of contemporary art ahead of its reopening prompted skepticism. Much has changed since Wilson's work in Maryland almost thirty years ago, and I

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[4] See Reiss 1999 or Bishop 2005; Miwon Kwon emphasizes the difference between installation art and site-specific art in her 1997 article "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," expanded upon in her 2002 book *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*.

[5] Saloni Mathur (2015) analyzes Vivan Sundaram's 1998 temporary "History Project" as institutional critique in relation to the Victoria Memorial Museum with similar lines of inquiry to what I present here. The parallels suggest the intersection of institutional critique and colonial museums is fertile ground of artistic and scholarly explorations. The divergence – Sundaram's installation was in a museum *in India* – inspires optimism for future projects in African museums, possibly investigating colonial inheritances in national museums on the continent.

wondered if this was the museum's attempt to have a "Mining the Museum" moment. My cynicism was also influenced by what can be called the institutionalization of institutional critique. In Andrea Fraser's 2005 essay "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique" she writes "it is artists—as much as museums or the market—who, in their very efforts to escape the institution of art, have driven to its expansion" (104). In drawing attention to ("critiquing") the structures in museums and galleries that frame how viewers interact with and interpret art, artists expanded definitions of art. But in so doing, they also expanded the reach of art institutions without upending the power dynamics they were critiquing. This is because institutions are not a faceless "them" but made up of artists, public, and staff; Fraser declares "It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution" (105). It seems as if there is no escape, but Fraser continues, "the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals." Therefore to challenge institutions is to challenge ourselves.

Fraser's statement harkens back to the personal artworks by Michèle Magema and Aimé Ntakiyica. Though they were not made specifically for the museum, they demand attention from the institution and both artists acknowledge their art has a role in modifying and creating the institution. "I am putting my family in the museum" Ntakiyica said to describe his work. At an afterparty in Brussels I asked Magema if she worried she was being tokenized by the museum, revealing my suspicion that the contemporary artists were being used to make the museum look good. [6] She was not concerned. Her art, including her performance within her art in which she uses her body to create art, *does the work* of challenging the institution regardless of the institution's intentions.

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[6] Writing specifically about institutional critique in ethnographic museums, Haidy Geismar (2015) cautions that "institutional critique may be appropriated by institutions as a legitimating tactic" (193).

In a different but not unrelated vein, Miwon Kwon (1997) warned against a kind of nomadic institutional critic traveling from institution to institution, born out of the privileging of the artist over the specificity of physical sites. The AfricaMuseum avoids this, in part because the artists they invited are not known for previous installation or institutional critique works (other than Ntakiyica, who did not create a site-specific installation for this museum). Further, the artists are members of the community directly affected by the site where their works are installed, because, as Magema pointed out in her interview, the AfricaMuseum is the museum where one goes to learn about the history of Belgium and Congo. Congolese (and Burundian and Rwandan) heritage is held in the museum, which is thus a place for Central African diaspora communities to engage with their cultural heritage.

In 2018 the MTL Collective published the article "From Institutional Critique to Institutional Liberation? A Decolonial Perspective on the Crises of Contemporary Art," highlighting the art activism that had targeted large art institutions in recent years.[7] MTL Collective placed the protest art within the tradition of institutional critique, outlining a narrative intertwining the work of Hans Haacke and Andrea Fraser with the protest actions of the Art Workers Coalition and ACT UP. The narrative culminated with their protest actions at the Brooklyn Museum, proclaiming that "we are at a moment when the principles of institutional critique are being pushed to a breaking point and opening onto something radically new and radically old at the same time" (227). The artistic protest actions discussed in the article, however, were not sanctioned by the institutions they were targeting, but were rather organized independent of the institutions and actively confronted them. The authors seemed to take as a

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[7] Projects discussed included the Gulf Labor Campaign targeting Guggenheim Abu Dhabi over labor exploitation and Liberate Tate targeting the Tate over its sponsorship with British Petroleum and the latter's role in climate change.

given that only art actions organized outside of institutions and meant to confront institutions would succeed in creating decolonial futures.

In the case of the AfricaMuseum and the Belgian activist community, artists and curators working within and without the museum are pushing the museum toward decolonization. I suspect much of the work done in the museum to address colonial histories and the experiences of Afro-Belgians was made possible by the years of protest outside of the museum. MTP Collective's implicit argument that only outside actions could be decolonial pushes my argument that a colonial museum cannot be decolonized one step further: any artwork made working with the colonial museum cannot decolonize because when the institution subsumes the critique, the criticism itself, however well intentioned, remains subject to the institution's power.

Museum as Process?

If the museum's invitation to contemporary artists to create installations hints at institutional critique, Mpane's repetition of "petit à petit" suggests anthropological processual analysis. Such an approach emphasizes how ideas, rituals, and institutions change over time, rather than studying unchanging structures. Following examples set by Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, processual analysis stresses case studies and continuous movement of cultures, in which different people and institutions have shifting relationships with one another.[8] Notably, processual analysis is oft compared to structural analysis, which relies on fixed categories of interpretation, much like museum departments and classifications. Therefore a processual

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[8] Victor Turner is considered the founder of processual analysis, and introduced it in his essay "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage"* (published in *The Forest of Symbols* [1967]) building on his research for his 1957 monograph *Schism and Continuity in an African Society,* which had an unusual-for-its-time focus on case studies of rituals and also led to Turner's conceptualization of "social drama." Renato Rosaldo provides a useful explanation of Geertz and Turner's processual approach (1993, 91-108), and Allen Roberts (1994) addresses the limits of Turner's approach while explaining how scholars can still build on his ideas.

museum goes against a museum's nature to order everything (Bennett 1995). In the recent essay collection *Museum as Process* (2015), Raymond Silverman specifically addresses museum collaborations with communities:

> The notion of museum as process suggests that museum work, especially collaborative work with communities, is fundamentally processual in nature. It also draws attention to the potential of museums as spaces in which diverse intellectual, professional, and cultural communities meet and engage in work that yields new ways of thinking, new ways of living (2).

A processual approach understands museums as a set of interactions between people and things and not as a static structure. Such a conception allowed Mpane to predict that his "New Breath or Burgeoning Congo" would only be a first step in a long process of changing the museum.

One aspect of the ongoing processes changing ethnographic museums that I have not discussed in this dissertation is the issue of repatriation. The AfricaMuseum opened a few weeks after the release of the French Sarr-Savoy report on restitution (2018), and questions about possible return of some of the thousands of objects in the museum's collections were unavoidable during the opening festivities. Guido Gryseels, Director of the museum, would answer questions about repatriation saying that he was open to the idea, but he and other representatives seemed much more eager to show off the new contemporary artworks found throughout the building, public symbols of the museum's desire to include African voices in its renovation. In a short article titled "Is Repatriation Inevitable?" Allen Roberts (2019b) asks if working with contemporary Congolese artists both within the museum and in Congo can bring new perspectives and voices into museum discussions, writing, "seeking voices and artistic expression from 'the other side' of the colonial dichotomy is—to some degree, anyway—a repatriation of *agency*" (4). Inviting artists to reflect on collections or acquiring their artwork

cannot stand in for the return of stolen objects and should not distract from the issue. Doing so can support artists' careers, however, and may be one step in a long process of change.

Conducting interviews with artists in November and December of 2018, I could not help but notice that while it seemed everyone around us was talking about restitution and emptying museums of stolen goods, the artists I was speaking with were willingly putting their works inside the museum. In a public discussion with artist Vincent Meessen at the Centrale contemporary art center in Brussels, AfricaMuseum curator Bambi Ceuppens wondered aloud if the current collecting patterns in the contemporary African art continued, would we be having a conversation about restitution of today's art 50 years from now?[9] This question was echoed by Mark Elliott, curator at the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA), who visited India hoping to commission contemporary works for the 2017 exhibition "Another India: Explorations and Expressions of Indigenous South Asia." In so doing, he found himself "retracing the footsteps of curators, collectors, anthropologists and others who had shaped the collections of MAA" (2019, 634). Elliott's experience exemplifies Mampuya's invisible museum of the epigraph or Fraser's internalized institution, repeating the museum's past practices and expanding again into a now former colony.

However, the opening weekend press packet definitively stated "The AfricaMuseum has no intention of becoming a contemporary art museum." As discussed in Chapter 4, this choice affects the reception of the contemporary artworks currently in the collection. Museum exhibitions and modes of display not only reflect institutional categorization and classification, but "are themselves epistemological authorities that constitute systems of value and

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[9] The discussion was part of the "Second RITCS Arts & Politics Symposium: One Struggle?" held November 28-30, 2018. Program available: https://www.centrale.brussels/en/events/second-ritcs-arts-politics-symposium-one-struggle/

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classification" (Geismar 2015, 186). This is to say that a visitor walking through ethnographic galleries might not recognize a work of contemporary art as such, but rather as another ethnographic artifact, a kind of reverse of the joke that anything in a white cube gallery can be art. In so doing, however, the museum or visitor may be taking a step toward breaking down disciplinary divides. But even when artists are invited to work with ethnographic collections, this can be a continuation of the processes of extraction and display of indigenous or non-Western knowledges that have long characterized ethnographic museums (ibid. 200; Ceuppens 2014, 95). In a similar manner, relying on contemporary African arts to do much of the work in decolonizing a museum continues the same model. The above series of contradictions underlines the innumerable challenges facing any ethnographic museum, not just the AfricaMuseum. But work continues and adjustments are made; making the museum is a process.

Envoi

Most of this dissertation was drafted in 2020, during which the entire world drastically changed. My own trips to Belgium and Congo were canceled and museums and galleries closed. My last chapter ended with a consideration of Afropolitanism and the in-between or back-and-forth lives of the artists discussed in this dissertation. They, too, are stuck in place. What do the people of the in-between do when flights are grounded? Exhibitions are still in preparation; art is still being made.[10] Many of my zoom calls with artists end with them telling me I just have to be at the opening for one exhibition or another in Europe, seemingly ignoring my explanations that I

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[10] Belgium's leading francophone newspaper *Le Soir* interviewed Mpane about how he was spending his time in "confinement" when most of Belgium locked down. He temporary moved to the Walloon countryside near Nivelles, and went on daily bike rides to sketch, describing his time as "un temps de recueillement," a time for meditation (Wynants 2020).

am literally not allowed to visit Europe for the near future because the United States has so mismanaged COVID-19.

While millions were home afraid of the global pandemic, diligently washing hands and making masks, state violence against Black people in the United States continued. On May 25th, 2020, Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck for over seven minutes, killing him. Over the course of June and July, protests spread across the United States and across the world. In the United States, protestors tore down monuments to confederate soldiers and generals. In Bristol, England, crowds toppled a statue of slave trader Edward Colston. Five thousand miles away, I anxiously watched my twitter feed to keep up with protests in Brussels. Activists have long demanded the removal of monuments to Leopold II and protests in Belgium gathered around civic monuments to him.[11] In the first week of June, graffiti covered pedestals beneath statues of Leopold in Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent. On June 3rd, protestors covered the head of a bust of Leopold II in Zuidpark, Ghent, with a bag and poured red paint over it. That night, protestors set fire to a statue of Leopold II in Antwerp; on June 9th, the city removed it, and a spokesman for the mayor explained that it would be "temporarily housed in the sculpture collection of the Middelheim Museum, where it will be restored" (Chini 2020). On June 30th, the city of Ghent removed the bust of Leopold II from Zuidpark. The large monument to Leopold II outside of the Royal Palace in Brussels, however, remains.

Outside the AfricaMuseum in the large Tervuren Park, a bust of Leopold II can be found as part of a fountain and sculpture installation by Tom Frantzen, installed in 1998.[12] This, too,

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[11] In 2004 A hand was cut off of a figure of a Congolese person who was part of a large sculptural monument to Leopold II; in 2018 the bust of Leopold II at Parc Duden in Brussels was removed, and replaced with a mud-and-birdseed bust; in 2008 artist Théophile de Giraud poured red paint over the Leopold II monument in central Brussels (Silverman 2015, 630; Roberts 2019b, 4; Stanard 2011b).

[12] This large sculptural installation, titled, "The Congo I Presume" was not meant to celebrate Leopold II, but rather draw attention to his terrorizing failures. The artist made subtle references to the human zoo at Tervuren, the

was doused in red paint (Figure 106). With the dozens of interlocking L's found on the façade and inside of the AfricaMuseum, the institution has frequently been referred to as a monument to Leopold II. More generally, it has been a monument to Belgian colonialism, of which Leopold II was the founder. For much of its history the AfricaMuseum presented Africans not as people, but as men of superhuman strength to be civilized and put to work, or fertile women to be covered up and "saved." Africans were not people to learn from, but objects to be put on display. The deaths of millions of Congolese people caused by Belgian colonialism went unacknowledged. The museum has denounced colonialism and has certainly changed. What will be its next steps? The renovation cannot be the end point, but the start of continued change and reevaluation.

Petit à petit.

Figure 109: Tom Frantzen's "The Congo I Presume" (1998) in June 2020. Photograph: François Walschaerts/AFP/Getty Images.

dismemberment of Congolese people during the rubber trade, had an elephant and lion turn their backs to the king, and compared him to a vainglorious peacock (Frantzen n.d.). These gestures were too subtle, however, and the fountain confounds most viewers.

Chapter 4 Appendix

<u>Label for "Mémoires Hévéa, entre Histoire et histoires individuelles" (Hévéa Memories, from History to herstories) :</u>

At the center of this installation are the frontal portraits of three women from as many generations: the artist, her mother Marie-Josée Mbaki Ngudi Mpassi (°1952) and her grandmother Anne Kilonga (°1921). All three were born in Congo; Michèle emigrated to Europe. Their history is intertwined with the history of Congo itself, illustrated here with drawings: a colony that became an independent state, changing its name along the way more than once.

1921-1951

1921: Anne Kilonga is born in Yuba, Kongo-Central province. // in 1921, Kasa-Vubu, who will become the first president of Congo, is 10 years old. // in 1912, Albert I is king of the Belgians (1909-1934). // 6 April 1921: Simon Kimbangu starts preaching in Nkamba, Kongo-Central. // Anne Kilonga is a follower of Kimbangu. // 1937: Anne marries Simon Mbaki.

Anne speaks Kikongo.

1952-1976

15 July 1952: Marie-Josée Mbaki Ngudi Mpassi is born in Muala Kisendé, Kongo-Central province. // 1952: in Leopoldville the King Baudouin stadium, now the Tata Raphaël stadium, is built. With 60,000 seats, it is the largest stadium in Africa at that time. // in 1952 Baudouin I is king of the Belgians (1950-1993). // 1950: the founding of ABAKO (Association des Bakongo pour l'unification, la conservation et l'expansion de la langue Kikongo). // 20 February 1960: end of the political round table conference about the independence of Congo. // 17 January 1961: Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba is murdered. // 1971: the Democratic Republic of Congo is henceforth called Zaïre. President Mobutu Sese Seko introduces a policy of 'authenticity.' // 4 August 1976: Marie-Josée marries Dieudonné Isaac Magema in Kinshasa.

Marie-Josée and Dieudonné Isaac speak Kikongo.

1977 – 2018

12 March 1977: Micha Malongo Magema is born in Kinshasa. // 1977-78: wars in Shaba (the current provinces of Tanganyika, Haut-Lomami, Lualaba, and Haut-Katanga). // 1982: the political party UDPS (Union pour la démocratie et le progress social) is founded // 1983: Dieudonné Isaac Magema moves to France. // 1984: Micha Malongo Magema arrives in France, together with her mother, sister, and brother. // 1993: Micha Malongo Magema becomes a naturalized French citizen and henceforth is called Michèle Magema. // 1997: Laurent Désiré Kabila becomes president of Congo. // 1997: Zaïre changes its name again to the Democratic Republic of Congo. // 2006: Joseph Kabila becomes president of Congo.

Description of drawings framing the three portraits:

		Text reads:	
A		ANNE KILONGA + SIMON MBAKI	Anne Kilonga and Simon Mbaki are Michèle's maternal grandparents.
B		KIMGANGUISTE	Anne is a "Kimbanguiste," this is, a follower of the prophet Simon Kimbangu.
C		KIKONGO	Kikongo is Michèle's maternal tongue, and it is the language both her mother and grandmother speak.
D		MARIE-JOSEE M'BONGO M'BAKI + DIEUDONNE LUSAKWENO MAGEMA	Marie-Josée M'Bongo M'Baki, née Marie-Josée Mbaki Ngudi Mpassi, and Dieudonné Lusakweno Magema are Michèle's mother and father.
E		1983-1984-1993	1983: Dieudonnée moves to France 1984: Michèle moves to France 1993: Michèle becomes a naturalized French citizen
F		MICHA MALONGO = MICHELE MAGEMA	When Michèle becomes a French citizen she must choose a new name. Her given name is Micha Malongo Magema, and her new name is Michèle Magema.
G		18 – 11 – 1908	The Colonial Charter on the Belgian Annexation of the Congo Free State was approved on November 18, 1908.
H		HEVEA	"Hévéa" is another word for rubber[1]

[1] "Hévéa" comes from the Quechua word "hyeve," and refers to the South American rubber plant, *Hevea brasiliensis* (there was an earlier rubber boom in South America in the 19th century). The rubber vine native to

I	ABAKO	ABAKO, the "Alliance of Bakongo," was a political party opposed to Belgian colonial rule in the Congo. Michèle's father was a member.
J	INDEPENDENCE	The Democratic Republic of the Congo became independent of Belgium in 1964.
K	SHABA	"Shaba" was the name of the Katanga province under Mobutu's policy of *authenticité*. In 1977 and 1978, armed Congolese refugees from the former Katanga invaded Shaba from Angola to challenge Mobutu's authority over the region, and were defeated both times. These events are referred to as Shaba I and Shaba II. (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2003, 1-184).
L	ZAÏRE	In 1971 Mobutu changed the name of the country to Zaire as part of his authenticity campaign. The name was changed back to Congo in 1997.
	Drawing Depicts:	
1	Coat of arms of Leopold II	The Coat of Arms of Leopold II consists of a central lion shield, held by two supporting lions and a golden helmet topped with a royal crown.
2	Map of Congo with Bas-Congo indicated in black	A map of Congo divided into regions prior to the 2015 creation of new provinces, with the region of Congo-Central/Bas-Congo filled in with black ink.
3	A rubber tree being tapped	Rubber was a commercial export of the Congo produced and harvested with forced labor from 1885-1908, which resulted in millions of deaths
4	A chicotte whip	The chicotte whip was a heavy leather whip used to coerce Congolese who refused to supply labor to the rubber extraction.
5	A 1921 stamp from Congo	1921: The year Anne was born, and the year Simon Kimbangu founded the Kimbanguist Church
6	A view of Kinshasa	The tall towers represent the skyline of Kinshasa
7	A view of Lubumbashi	The Lubumbashi slag heap and chimney, the most recognizable symbol of the city. Magema's father attended university in Lubumbashi, and it was the first place she returned to in Congo after leaving in 1984.
8	Map of railroad from Matadi to Kinshasa	The Matadi-Kinshasa railway connects Kinshasa, the capital city of the DRC with Matadi, the country's Atlantic port, a distance of approximately 227 miles. The construction of the railway and its modifications cost thousands of lives.
9	Current flag of the DRC	The current flag of the DRC was adopted in 2006. The flag contains a gold star on a blue field. A diagonal red bar with a gold border goes from the lower left to the upper right.

Congo is *Landolphia owariensis*, a different species, but *Hevea brasiliensis* is also cultivated there (Priyadarshan 2017).

10	Flag of Zaire	The flag of Zaire was used from 1971 to 1997, It consists of a green field containing a gold circle in which an arm is holding a torch with a red flame.
11	First flag of DRC	This is the first flag of the DRC. It consists of a gold star on a dark blue filed with a band of six gold stars along the left side of the flag.
12	Leopold II	Leopold II was the King of the Belgians from 1865 to 1909 and the owner and absolute ruler of the Congo from 1885 to 1908. He used forced labor to harvest and process rubber and enforced his regime with violent measures that led to millions of deaths.
13	King Baudouin	King Baudouin was King of the Belgians from 1951 to 1993. He was the last Belgian to be sovereign of the Congo.
14	Belgian Missionary	Magema described this drawing as that of a Belgian Missionary, representing the Catholic Church.
15	Drawing of Mola Ekilite and Yoka photo	This photograph of two boys with hands cut off was included in Roger Casement's report on Congo atrocities. (See Sliwinski 2006, 239-240.)
16	"Whipped Peter" or "The Scourged Back"	A drawing of the famous American photograph referred to as "Whipped Peter" or "The Scourged Back" showing the shocking whipping scars on back of a man who had escaped slavery.[2]
17	Simon Kimbangu	Simon Kimbangu was a Congolese religious leader who led a movement called the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by His special envoy Simon Kimbangu, an African Christian church also known as the Kimbanuist Church, which has over 20 million members and is based in the DRC.
18	Kasavubu	Joseph Kasavubu was the first president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, serving from 1960 to 1965. He was a member of ABAKO.
19	Patrice Lumumba	Patrice Lumumba was the first prime minister of the DRC, serving from June to September 1960. He was assassinated in 1960 with support of a coalition of European, American, and Congolese actors.
20	Mobutu	As the result of a military coup in 1965, Mobutu Sese Seko became "president for life" of Congo, which he renamed Zaire. His reign ended in 1997 when his government was overthrown.
21	Laurent-Désiré Kabila	Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu was a Congolese revolutionary who overthrew Mobutu. He became the third president of the DRC in 1997, and was assassinated in 2001.
22	Joseph Kabila	Joseph Kabila, the son of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, became president of the Congo following his father's assassination and held the position to 2019.

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[2] This photograph, along with others, was used in antislavery campaigns in a similar manner to the Congolese "atrocity photographs." See Collins 1985, Trodd 2013, and Silkenat 2014, as well as my discussion in Chapter 3.

Taking photographs of Magema's work is very difficult due to the width of the hallway and the large windows. While I could not take good photos of all of the drawings, I include some below to give an idea of Magema's drawing style:

Leopold II

Drawing of Mola Ekilite and Yoka photo

Kasavubu

Mobutu

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