HUNTING & COLLECTING
Sammy Baloji

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a research project with
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“It may be that the economy—every economy—with all its logical and technical aspects, ultimately boils down to just two activities: hunting and gathering, and that despite all appearances we have never really moved beyond these.”

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“While the cutting critical gesture of collage reveals the constructed, differentiating nature of all words and images, critique itself is paradoxically more powerful by including the very images and words it seeks to unmask.”

“Classified, labelled, conserved in showcases and collections, [statues] enter art history: a paradise of forms where the most mysterious relationships are established.”

“Monkeys and apes have a privileged relation to nature and culture for Western people: simians occupy the border zones between those potent mythic poles.”

From August 3rd to September 21st, 2014, the Mu.ZEE in Ostend showed *Hunting & Collecting*, an ambitious group exhibition that was conceived by Sammy Baloji, Phillip Van den Bossche (director of the Mu.ZEE) and curator Anouck Clissen, but included the collaboration of and a close exchange with many other contributors. *Hunting & Collecting* affirmed the power of critique as a foundation for an artistic approach, and proposed an archaeology of present-day exploitation. The exhibition was based on assemblages of heterogeneous visual materials, an approach inspired by Sammy Baloji’s own work, which frequently resorts to collage techniques. Collages and assemblages make possible the coexistence of discrepant realities in one space. On this basis, seemingly disconnected aspects of the globally intertwined, but fundamentally divergent living conditions of different populations become visible in their interrelations: Geographical distance and separation in time are both shaken by the suggestive juxtaposition of documents and artworks. They thus allow for a radical questioning of the destructive consequences of global capitalism, and unsettle the hierarchies established by the categorical, social and cultural divisions of modernity.

Transhistorical connections—At the heart of the exhibition stand the photographic album by Belgian serviceman Henry Pauwels and the photo-reportages that the Congolese photographer Chrispin Mvano conducted a hundred years later in the same places where the officer took his hunting pictures in the early 20th century. Defining the core of the exhibition round this *vis-à-vis*, Sammy Baloji gathers both groups of images in a double projection and superimposes them in the photomontage *The Album*. Both works operate as close intertwinements of the colonial past with the conflictive present of the Kivu-region in Northern Congo where protracted wars have been ravaging both population and environment, leading to several million people being killed and millions being displaced and living in extremely precarious situations.

This conception of history, where present and past are not imperviously distinct entities but dynamic and interacting, has been extensively reflected on in postcolonial theory. In his seminal text *Orientalism*, Edward Said states for instance that “imperialism [is so vast and detailed] as an experience with crucial cultural dimensions, that we must speak of overlapping territories, intertwined histories common to men and women, whites and non-whites, dwellers in the metropolis and on the peripheries, past as well as present and future.”

The sudden resurgence of the colonial past in the present, sometimes in such unexpected places as the Belgian coastal city of Ostend, is spelled out throughout the exhibition. The museum is transformed into a laboratory, into a site where silenced colonial histories can resurface in the suggestive, often highly speculative pairings of documents and artworks that used to be kept in separate categories. Research in the museum is not carried out here as an academic process, but as a sensitive interrogation of
heterogeneous archives: Fine art from Belgian artists included in the Mu.ZEE collection and historical documents from the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren; personal memories and official history; animal and human perspectives; colonial representations and contemporary conflicts; advertisements and recontextualised advertisements and historical documents. These assemblages render the telescoping of geographically and temporally distanced realities possible. Where no connection seemed to exist, the suggestive rapprochement of two images spontaneously shifts their meaning. This is the case for three postcards that are included in the windows, in which one can see blood spurting from a cell phone. The shocking images stem from an Indonesian advertisement warning against using telephones while driving. But in the Hunting & Collecting context, they refer to a pernicious raw material, coltan, which is included in cell phones and many other electronic devices. Coltan plays a crucial role in the financing of the war in the region (see pp. 140-141). A classic conflict mineral, it links the ongoing killings in northern Congo that remain relegated to the margins of international news agendas, to smooth global communication: Seemingly purely virtual proceedings appear here in their connectedness to warfare and exploitation.

Imaging exploitation—From colonial times until today, the Congo is amply inscribed in the global economy mainly in the form of exploitation of its natural resources, whether through the use of a low-paid working force, through the hunting of wildlife, or through the extraction of minerals and fossils from the soil. While the local consequences of those economies are devastating for large sections of the population, the splendid production of precious noble metals, wood, or the abstract monetary outcome of mineral resources10–14 are presented proudly to admiring international spectators. Among the central elements of the image essays in this book are photographs and scientific drawings of precious stones from the Katanga soils. These pictures have been taken and distributed by Gécamines15, the huge state-owned Congolese mining company of colonial origin, which plays a key role in the extraction of metals and minerals from the country since the mid-1960s.16 The stones are of striking beauty. Presented on black cloth, spectacularly lit, or pictured as abstract geometrical drawings, accompanied by the corresponding chemical formula, they do not seem to have any connection to the rough realities of mining, the hard physical work and the exploitation of minerals, a practice engendering any benefit for its inhabitants. Their polished physical appearance neither reveals the hardship involved in their extraction, nor their inclusion in global value chains that draw profits out of the country. Capital, as an abstract social relation, dissolves the physical characteristics of a commodity. In Karl Marx's wording, "all that is solid melts into air."17 In a similar manner, the abstract scientific drawings of the minerals do not reveal any connection to the extraction from the soil. Therefore they can stand in a metaphorical manner for the work that the exhibition Hunting & Collecting conducts in order to connect seductive appearances of commodities and images in the frame of global capitalist consumption with the materiality of the often destructive social relations created by their production—in colonial times and in the present. Though they are classic mining products, precious stones share the invisibility of their extraction with the production processes of high-tech commodities such as mobile phones, laptop computers and tablets that are among the most iconic consumer goods of the globalised world.18 These items represent more than anything else a seemingly post-material economy that is characterised by digital information and wireless communication, but that fully depends on material conditions. In contemporary post-Cold-War capitalism, the imperial control of raw materials is distributed in hundreds of geographically distant steps. This process remains mainly invisible for the consumer, and makes it difficult to hold the companies accountable for labour and environmental abuses along the whole supply chain. Like many precious stones, the commodity can appear without wearing the traces of the hardship of its production. Collage and assemblage, which are the main strategies of Sammy Baloji's artistic practice and the guiding principle of the exhibition Hunting & Collecting, apply deal with this fragmentation in a critical way.19 By bringing together heterogeneous elements, the single parts of a story that is dispersed in time and space remain visible in their physical disruption and therefore constitute a composition without suggesting a holistic view. Sammy Baloji’s artistic strategy is not a singularity principle throughout the exhibition. In this way the harmful participation of the Congo in global capitalism is shown in two films: On the one hand, Renzo Martens' polemical artist documentary Episode III: Enjoy Poverty (2008) asks with a great deal of despair and cynicism why the population of the country does not benefit from Congolese resources. As the film shows, even the profitable business of selling the images of war and poverty is mainly reserved to Western and international journalists and NGOs. Their presence in the region is far from being a humanitarian, selfless engagement. Rather, non-governmental organisations and journalists participate in the aid economy that flows high sums of bi- and multilateral transfers into the country, benefiting mainly the crowd of international aid workers and not local people.20 In the exhibition this topic is addressed through the presence of a long list that show hundreds of NGO's working in the Kivu region (see pp. 20-21). Their impressive number stands in sharp contrast with the scandalously unaltered humanitarian situation.
As Renzo Martens’s work also shows, the exploitation of the region by international mining companies is often made possible by NGO-conducted humanitarian tasks and the United Nations’ assured containment of the armed conflicts. On the basis of his work, one can ask if the image exploitation intended to denounce poverty and war are not exploitative images themselves: they make a profit (in the economic sense, but also in a symbolic one, in the art-field and beyond) to the detriment of workers, refugees, and peasants in the region. And they repeat representations of misery and balefulness that show people as powerless victims, while the white European artist (with a great deal of self-criticism) is in the role of the (post-)colonial traveller (with nearly mesiastic features) is the main agent. It is precisely this uncomfortable situation that Martens creates in his work, when he purposefully re-enacts figures and relations of colonial and present day exploitation in order to confront spectators with the perversity of the situation.

On the other hand, the documentary Snare Dance (2012) by Belgian filmmaker Manu Riche and scriptwriter Patrick Marrnam follows the making of the atomic bomb, from the moment when the uranium is extracted to the bomb’s explosion, by way of the places where it was made. The extraction happened in the Congo; the manufacture took place in New Mexico, in a region that appears only as “empty land” after the eviction and extermination of the native population; and the bomb exploded in Japan in 1945. As the film shows, the geographical scope is a global one, and no link in the chain can be excluded exploitation intended.

It is not by chance that the filmmakers structure their narrative around art historian Aby Warburg. The writer was not only strongly interested in the cultural practices by which the Hopi, first nation inhabitants of the New Mexico region, are trying to channel forces of nature. He is also the thinker of the afterlives of images, of mnemonic techniques that compose visual relations in the form of an atlas’s plates. Parallels to this dynamic working table that allows for new connections, for a resurgence of silenced memories, can be found in the approach of Hunting & Collecting.

The show relies on the semantic shifts that the cross-disciplinary gathering of artworks and documents from separate collections can bring about. Images here become vectors of hidden memory, connecting distant moments of interrelated processes.

From natural resources to agents—The abundant use of colonial hunting images, and their constant visual questioning in Hunting & Collecting unchains a critical interrogation of the colonial order and its contemporary afterlives. As the images in Henry Pauwels’s album clearly show, colonisation as an integral part of modernity divides the world into civilised and uncivilised, culture and nature, the West and the rest. In this binary system African populations are aligned with nature, belonging to a land that is characterised as unspoiled by Human hand. The colonial project aims to dominate, subject, control and transform this “original wildness” but also keeps a fascination with this othered space, its inhabitants and its promised transgressions. Colonial hunting and its present-day counterpart (in the form of the big game safari with shooting permission enact both, the seduction and lust of danger that the fantasy of uncontrollable nature and wildlife engenders, and the triumphalist male gesture of bravery and supremacy that the portraits of the hunters with their slain prey stages as much as the trophies brought to European living-rooms. Women, the colonised and apes find themselves classified and pictured on the side of nature, intuition and sensitivity, while the white male hunter—here impersonated by Pauwels—incarnates the controlled rationality of the promise of Western modernity.

Feminist critics and postcolonial cultural theorists and artists have played a key role in rethinking the categories of modernity and their classification systems in order to shift the hierarchies that they include. Published in 1989, Donna Haraway’s Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science has opened the path for a fundamental shift in primatology. The US-American science theorist links the history of primatology to “the production and reproduction of differences along the power axes of race, class and gender”. Apes that had formerly served as the natural “Other” to humans, simultaneously close and far, and that had throughout the racist assumptions of evolutionist theories in the nineteenth century been approximated to Africans, become in this approach allies in the struggle, coexisting lines of gendered, racialised and species classifications.

One can think for instance of the inter-species solidarity that German filmmaker Helke Sanders creates by introducing in her film Muttertier: Muttermensch (Animal-mother, Human-mother) a female chimpanzee on a TV-Screen that conducts interviews with half a dozen women, deconstructing naturalised conceptions of motherhood. In opposition to the male-centred cultural theories of dominant primatology, the female ape here retells a herstory of evolution that places the mother-child relation at the origin of communication, language and therefore culture. Another example could be Rosemarie Trockel’s statement that every animal is a female artist, by which she points to the sustained reversion of the art sphere for male artists only, just as much as the border that separates animals from humans. In the art magazine Slight Discomfort (1985) which she edited, you can find an excerpt taken from the German weekly magazine Der Spiegel which, under the title “Congo’s art,” tells the story of a chimpanzee named Congo, who supposedly painted as virtuously as Jackson Pollock. More recently New York-based artist Coco Fusco has employed the figure of chimpanzee psychologist Dr. Zira from the novel and films Planet of the Ape in her performance lecture Observations of Predation in Humans: A Lecture by Dr. Zira, Animal Psychologist (2013). The artist incarnates Dr. Zira from Ape City, who conducted experiments on human subjects and dissected their brains. As an expert in human behaviour she works for her society to avoid the human forms of aggression that lead to harm and balefulness. Her studies on humans were key to discerning between those hominids who would destroy each other and those who would not. In Dr. Zira’s eyes, humans and their aggressive behaviour represent the danger that has to be brought under control, if a life in peace shall be possible.

In all three examples, apes take the role of active agents, who mirror and critically question the human social order. They refuse the role of the natural ‘other’ to human civilisation, and contribute to calling into question the legitimacy of this opposition. Though not all of the cross-disciplinary artworks is present in the exhibition, the critical impulse that they give is nevertheless clearly identifiable in the curatorial approach. In the exhibition Hunting & Collecting the violent representations of the triumph of the hunter over his prey contained in Henry Pauwels’s album and in the archive images from RMCA Tervuren, are unsettled by image assemblages that include paintings from the collection of the Mu.ZEE and historical photographs: the counter-narratives arise in the juxtapositions of images. Rather than to perpetuate a voyeuristic “poverty porn,” which includes the staring gaze on the slain game, the sometimes drastic oppositions in the assemblages require an active analytical work of association and re-composition. Across temporal and spatial separations animals and humans become connected beyond the present day, after its aftermaths, almost as much as the border that separates animals from humans. One example can be Joseph Stevens, a Belgian animal painter from the 19th century, who imagines an Ape as a Gravedigger (see p. 6). The landscape in the painting is wintry, the ape’s undressed feet leave traces in the snow and the lantern’s light does not shine far in the depressing brown colours of the graveyard. An ape’s presence in the European winter is surprising, and points to the availability of representations of species that live in the colony. The imperial imagination does not stop at the borders of the metropolitan territory. The sad animal figure is depicted as the keeper of the division between the dead and the living. It appears as a figure that belongs as much to the human world (it is clothed, and appalled with human attributes) as to nature. Among the ambiguities of the painting is the fact that King Leopold II, responsible for crimes in the colonised Congo that caused the death of several million people, was one of Stevens’s clients. What could appear as a painting without any connection to the colonial history quickly turns out to be interwoven into the dense colonial entanglements.
Likewise, beings at the border of human and animal are the main agents on Frits van den Bergh’s painting Het rijk der natuur (The Realm of Nature, 1928-1929). Here, two women are persecuted by figures with faces resembling cows and horses while a seductive red flower holds them back from escaping. A postcard of the diorama in which the stuffed group of gorillas was on display in the Congo museum in Tervuren (today: Royal Museum for Central Africa) since the second decade of the twenty-first century is juxtaposed to the painting. Stuffing is probably among the most literal techniques for the preservation of a henceforth inoffensive wildlife, prepared for the presentation in a museum’s diorama. In the confrontation with van den Bergh’s painting, the painted animal-like figures seem to chase the human figures from the canvas directly into the diorama, and to make them part of this staged arrangement that proudly presents human and animal agency, insects are deployed in army formations and go to war in hilly wax landscape conceived and modelled in the installation Battlefield (1998) by Jan Fabre (see p. 22).

Here again colonial taxonomies are challenged: Historically, bugs have been among the first animal species that colonial collectors brought from Africa, because they were easy to hunt and did not demand much space during transport. Entomological collections were among the first in the newly opened Congo Museum in Tervuren, which gathered over the years gigantic stocks of preserved, stuffed or dried animals in their subterranean storerooms. In Fabre’s installation the bugs and cockroaches seem to take their revenge, and run out of control in a postcolonial power-shift that one can read as the territorial conflict of colonial divisions. These still resonate in the armed confrontations in the area of the Great Lakes, devastating entire regions in power struggles along division lines created in colonial times, and nourished by present day economic interests.

Disquiet in the museum—Contemporary critics have highlighted that museums as institutions in general, and their collections in particular, have been participating-consciously or not—in imperial history, and still carry the traces of this involvement. Under the influence of postcolonial critique and lately sometimes encouraged by funding possibilities, art museums are starting to reflect on their colonial histories. They follow a minority of ethnographic and natural history museums that work is done to critically reconsider their collections. These museums frequently have recourse to artists in order to shed new light on the objects, often stemming from collecting contexts that are inseparable from colonial history.

Hunting & Collecting inverts this proceeding by bringing documents and photographs from the colonial period to an art museum that has no obvious links to colonial history. The selected artworks from the collection are brought into resonance with historical documents and works by invited contemporary artists. As Sammy Baloji states, “since we were in a museum of modern and contemporary art, we looked for links between the works and documents that we had brought. It was a matter of questioning their secret links.”

One example for this proceeding can be the inclusion of a historic postcard of the ship that the British explorer Henry Morton Stanley used during his trips to the Congo. The postcard points to the traces of colonial history of the coastal Belgian city of Ostend, where it had been shown (probably at the end of the nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth century) in a wooden outdoor construction (see p. 100). The image faces Constant Permeke’s drawing De roeier (The Oarsman, n.d.). A Belgian expressionist, Permeke spent the major part of his life in Ostend and had been concentrating on drawing and painting local fishermen until the mid-fifties. He preferred subjects strongly tied to local Belgian realities, and Stanley’s trips to the Congo had certainly not been on his artistic agenda. Nonetheless, the juxtaposition of both images allows for a polysemic opening of the drawing, and makes the history of the imperial conquest of the Congo resonate in colonial fisheries.

Though from a similar period, the painting Idoles, Spoken (Idols, Ghosts; 1928-1929) of Belgian artist Frits van den Bergh is much more clearly marked by a primitivist influence. The size and contours of the bodies of the figures on the canvas vary widely, and range from abstract to anthropomorphic designs, while their faces have the shape and the eye-holes of masks. Placed on an irregular white background, the figures stand autonomously in the painting (see p. 106).

The work is shown in a dynamic triangulation with spearheads belonging to attendant Patrick Colaert and stills from Chris Marker and Alain Resnais’ famous film Statues Also Die (1953). The latter interrogates the epistemological order that reserves a museum like the Louvre for European artists while African creations—classical art and objects of use alike—are relegated to the Museum of Men (Musée de l’Homme). The filmmakers state that the isolation of African objects in museum display cases corresponds to a conception of culture that only respects its own paradigms. They demonstrate how the imposition of social models from European society in the frame of colonisation goes along with the economic exploitation of the African continent, and the transformation of pre-colonial cultural practices into commodities that lose their meaning in the process—they die.

Though the opposition of a “tradition” threatened by “Western modernity” that runs through the film remains a very pertinent reflection on the Western relation to African art in the colonial context, and an aesthetic masterpiece. Interestingly enough, it includes a hunting scene that shows the death of an orang-utan. The animal falls behind after having received a lethal cut in the stomach, while the voice-over comments: “Here is the death of an animate being”.

The filmmakers state that the colouring of the exhibition space: As institutional critics of museum display, we looked for links between the works and documents that we had brought. It was a matter of questioning their secret links.”

Hunting & Collecting calls for further crossovers of the categorical divisions that separate the canon of European art from works by African artists. Modes of display are among the key tools that can consolidate or disrupt these categories. Using display codes improperly thus became an interesting option. For instance, Jan van de Kerckhove’s Carde Royale (1967), a sculpture that clearly wears the marks of primitivist formal renewals, is shown as an archival image (see p. 24). By keeping the inventory number and reconstituting the coloured background of the archival photograph, the sculpture becomes a historical document. At the same time, the intense colour also resonates with the organisation of space: As institutional critics of museum displays have extensively demonstrated, in modern contexts the colouring of the exhibition
space frequently corresponds to geographical divisions. Cultural objects from non-Western authors are then attributed to these coloured reproductive objects of the desiring gaze. The photographic part of the work focuses on postcolonial female migrants in the former colonial metropolises in order to show the prolongation of exploitation in the present. The artist portrays sex workers in Brussels in front of the colonial monuments in the city centre. In a somewhat similar way to Renzo Martens’ film, Les Demoiselles de Bruxelles opts for picturing their bodies and for entering the economic chain of exploitation that the work denounces. Both works will engage with representations of their own involvement in asymmetrical post-colonial power-relations becomes obvious. As Augustijnen’s work pertinently underlines, the question of representation remains pressing, in the museum and beyond. The series comprises a photograph picturing a colonial monument on one of Brussels’ most prestigious streets, Avenue Louise. It represents the forced recapture of a runaway slave by bloodhounds and thus echoes the practice of colonial hunting (see p. 110). The image shows the monument at night, in striking whiteness, lit by strong spots. At a time when museums like the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam substitute racist historical titles of paintings and sculptures, the city of Brussels does not see a need to revise the presence of symbolic affirmations of enslavement and violent submission of African people in the public space.

Through its predilection for intriguing objects, contradictory juxtapositions, and speculative convergences, the exhibition reserves a lot of space for the complexities of the interwovenness of colonialism and art history. Two particularly remarkable documents are the historic photographs that show Patrice Lumumba’s visit to Picasso’s 1956 exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (see p. 96). In one of the photos taken by René Stalin for Lumumba’s own violent death less than five years later, in January 1961. His murder opened the way for Joseph-Désiré Mobutu’s accession to power and the subsequent decades-long authoritarian rule. Lumumba’s assassination can be considered just as much a moment of historical closure with fatal consequences for the population for decades, as the victory of general Franco’s troops over the Republican front in 1939 Spain.

An alternative reading could start from German-Swedish writer Peter Weiss’s monumental philosophical novel The Aesthetics of Resistance. Throughout the densely woven story, three young artists from the Mu.ZEE collection, who appear in several of the paintings in the exhibition, bring the war home—As argued before, Hunting & Collecting’s montage technique establishes transhistorical links. The same approach allows for postcolonial connections of geographically remote spaces. The exhibition shows young works of artists from the Mu.ZEE collection which is mainly focused on nineteenth and twentieth century Belgian art, alongside the works of artists who refer to the Congolese present. Seemingly parallel realities appear in their interrelatedness. Privacy, interiors, and shelter are themes that appear in several of the paintings in the exhibition. In discreet colours Constant Permeke shows a family drinking tea in their living room with friendly light illuminating the space from above and behind, giving a warm aspect to the earthen-darkish colours (see p. 23). On a second canvas the artist again portrays a family
in their interiors. The massive and frontally posed bodies look coy, with attributes like smoking a pipe in the armchair with the cat on one’s legs (see p. 104). Remaining within the register of privacy, Jef Geys series Klear- boek voor volwassenen (Colouring Book for Adults) was published in seven large format paintings, start from autobiographical observations, in order to explore the social norms conditioning our everyday life (see p. 105). Belle jeunesse (Beautiful Youth, 1998) portrayed by Marie-Jo Lafontaine in front of a monochrom background seems to grow up with a slightly bored facial expression, in security and serenity (see p. 53).

Hunting & Collecting confronts these quiet images of privacy with disconceertting and disturbing realities, mostly in the Congolese context. The montage of the works in the exhibition recalls famous collage works such as Martha Rosler’s Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful series (1967-1972) which inscribed the Vietnam war in slick advertisement pictures of US-American living rooms. In a similar approach, the relative serenity of many of the Collages can be interrogated through the presence of their Congolese pairs. Among them is the work Kadogu (2014) by the Congolese photographer Georges Senga. The artist portrays children in a Northern Congolese holiday camp near Goma. These teenagers are so soaked with the imaginary of war that they dress up and play war in their spare time–so convincingly so that it becomes clear that they can become real soldiers (see pp. 133, 148-149). The writer who comes from Goma describes the army brigade which was given by the Kabila government the task of getting rid of bodies, the ostensible traces of the killings of the war (see p. 135). The novel describes the daily round, through the eyes of one of the brigade’s members, and with very rough details narrated in a thoroughly cold and sometimes even witty way. In this war environment, a story is woven between a white picture background who is part of this brigade and a woman from the region.90 The exhibition creates a powerful environment to re-signify existing artworks: Placed in the context of the Congolese war, Jan Fabre’s installation Battlefield (1998) for instance begins to resonate with the war in the region of the Great Lakes. The spectator is reminded of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, where calling the persecuted “cockroaches” preceded the extermination of more than one million people.91 Similarly, Les larmes d’acier (The Tears of Steel, 1987) by Marie-Jo Lafontaine, a monumental work referring to male body-building culture even broadens the ambitions of its subject. On 27 screens, the huge installation interconnects bodybuilding as a contradictory form of Western culture. The celebrated bodies are scattered and multiplied on the screens, while Maria Callas sings Bellini. The physical effort distorts the faces of the muscular men that seem simultaneously tortured by, and united with the training machines. Still, their martyrdom is self-chosen and, in spite of the martial title of the work, death as the counter-player in this culture of vanity remains a rather metaphysical threat, common to all living beings (see p. 50). The juxtaposition to James Ensor’s De dood achtervolgt de Mensenkudde (Death Chasing the Flock of Mortals, 1896) and the proximity of the forced martyred ones in Laloux-Bard’s, Senga’s and Amisi’s work however reminds us that warfare is closely connected to the celebration of sacrifice and masculinity. In the visual narrations that run through the images, protected social spaces systematically appear as threatened. This is obviously the case in James Ensor’s corrosive social critique of Belgian society at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries (see p. 108). But recklessness also appears as treacherous in the assembling of the images. For instance, Marie-Jo Lafontaine’s Beautiful Youth slips on an ambiguous ground when it is confronted to the sculptured animal skulls (2002) by Guido Geelen, and juxtaposed to an historic photograph showing a dressed-up child amidst colonial hunting trophies, in front of a painted landscape (see p. 52). The view through Mu.ZEE’s exhibition rooms seem to echo this illusory depth of the black and white picture background who is part of this brigade and a woman from the region.92 The exhibition creates a powerful environment to re-signify existing artworks: Placed in the context of the Congolese war, Jan Fabre’s installation Battlefield (1998) for instance begins to resonate with the war in the region of the Great Lakes. The spectator is reminded of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, where calling the persecuted “cockroaches” preceded the extermination of more than one million people.91 Similarly, Les larmes d’acier (The Tears of Steel, 1987) by Marie-Jo Lafontaine, a monumental work referring to male body-building culture even broadens the ambitions of its subject. On 27 screens, the huge installation interconnects bodybuilding as a contradictory form of Western culture. The celebrated bodies are scattered and multiplied on the screens, while Maria Callas sings Bellini. 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4. See the contribution of Patricia Van Schuylenbergh to this volume.
5. See the contribution by Sandrine Costal in this volume.
6. See also Sammy Baloji’s introduction and the excerpts from the dialogue of Chrispin Mvano and Sammy Baloji visiting together the pages of Henry Pauwel’s album, pp. 18-19.
8. See conversation between Patrick Colaert and curator Anouck Clissen in this volume, pp. 125-132.
10. See Louis Henderson’s film All that is solid, France, 2014, HD, 15 min.
11. Gécamines, ou Société générale des carrières et des mines, is a State-managed company based in Lubumbashi, in the Katanga province. It is one of the largest mining companies in Africa, and the biggest in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Founded in 1966 as a successor to the Union minière du Haut Katanga, Gécamines is engaged in the exploration, research, exploitation and production of mineral deposits including copper, cobalt, tin, gold, zinc, among others.
12. See the film Code Minier by Bodil Furu, Norway, 2013, 45 min.
14. One could think at the work Technofossil (2015) by Belgian artist Maarten Vanden Eynde, who sculpts mobile phones in raw Malachite, and evokes through this form a future in which these communication devices will belong to the past.
15. See also Banash, op. cit., p. 26.
Ape Culture
Haraway’s History of Primatological Knowledge”, in: Exit to this Field. On the Continued Relevance of Donna

26. Jürgen Renn and Bernd Scherer:

25. The term was coined by Colombian filmmakers Carlos

23. Based on Pierre Boulle’s novel

19. Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky: “Where the Hell lies the

18. See the contribution by Sandrine Colard to this volume.

17. One can consider Aby Warburg’s

16. See the contribution by Sandrine Colard to this volume.

15. The film adaptation under the title

14. Slight Discomforture

13. Slight Discomforture

12. Slight Discomforture

11. Slight Discomforture

10. Slight Discomforture

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3. Slight Discomforture

2. Slight Discomforture

1. Slight Discomforture

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Belinda Kazeem, Charlotte Martine-Tiurek, Nora Stemfeld (eds.): Das Unbehagen im Museum. Postkoloniales Mu-

secondes, Munich, Wilhelm Fink (2014).

One example are the research fellowships founded by the German Federal Foundation for Culture in 2016.

Critical interrogations of the Museum started much earlier in the US context, often carried out by minorities that pointed to striking discriminations. See Jennifer Gonzales: Subject to Display. Reframing Race in Contem-


On behalf of two of Sammy Balooji’s works elaborated in such a context, see Lotte Arndt: “Sammy Balooji’s Works on Skulls in European Museum Collections,” in: Darkmatter. In the Ruins of Imperial Culture, 2013, online: http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/11/11/18/


Sammy Balooji, in: Mathieu K. Abonnenc, Lotte Arndt, Catalina Lozano (eds.): Cruising Doubles. Colonial Col-

lecting and Affect, Paris, B42, 2016, p. 158.

Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904) was a key figure for the conquest of the Congo by Belgian king Leopold II who defined the Free State as his private property until 1908. From 1878 to 1886 Stanley worked as representa-

tive of the Belgian king in the Congo, and progressively extended his territorial claims. He took part in the Berlin Africa Conference (1884-1885) which fixed the rules and procedures of colonisation among Western powers—

French, British, German, and Italian—outside of the conference. See for instance the photographs by British surrealist


For a contestations of these symbols, see the activi-

ties of initiatives like “Une place Lumumba à Bruxelles, pourquoi pas ?” or #dcoconelbeurzg. A brilliant pre-

sentation of artist’s and activist’s initiatives countering the colonial monuments in Belgium is to be found in Gia Abbassat and Ben Yacoub: “La chauss e aux spectres monumentaux dans la Belgique congolaise,” Africultures, forthcoming. Building on ideas by Ashlie Mbembe, they propose to transform the 207 hectares of the park of the Tervuren museum into a graveyard for Belgian colonial monuments.

Patrice Lumumba (1925-1960) was the first Prime

Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo from

September 1960. As a central figure for the strug-

gle for independence, Lumumba became after his mur-

der in January 1961, a globally known symbol for the repression of the hopes for emancipation in the formerly

colonised countries.

Office de l’Information et des Relations Publiques pour le Congo Belge et le Ruanda-Urundi. Infomanga was a service within the Colonial Ministry in Brussels. It had two regional branches, one as part of the General Government in Léopoldville (today Kinshasa) and the other in Uvumbura (today Bujumbura).

Without the support from Western powers Mobutu wouldn’t have come to power. In the frame of the Cold War he guaranteed a shield against socialism for the West, and collaborated closely on raw material exploitation. Between November 1965 and May 1997, for more than 31 years, he was the head of government, leading an oppressive dictatorship over the Congolese population.

Diapason of Human rights was rampant, and corrup-
tion levels so high that it has been referred to as a clop-
tactic regime.

Peter Weiss: The Aesthetics of Resistance, vol. 1. Trans-


In Édouard Glissant’s conception of detour, displace-

ment and the passage through the former colonial centres becomes the condition for overcoming and reinvention. See Édouard Glissant: Le dien, dien antilat, Paris, Galli-


This connection reminds me of Jean-Luc Godard and

Ann-Marie Méville’s interrogations in their film Honeymoon in Mexico (1976). The filmmakers inquire critically about the conditions of image production in the Euro-

pean metropolis while the pictured Palestinian libera-

tion fighters on the footage of their film are confronted with existential threats. Most of them die before the film is completed.


In the exhibition, the novel was presented in the form of an audio piece and some pages were exhibited in a showcase.
