



Press Release

Presents colonial art

*Colours of Congo: Patterns, Symbols and Narratives in 20th-Century Congolese Paintings*

February 23, 2021

The University Museum and Art Gallery (UMAG) of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) will present *Colours of Congo: Patterns, Symbols and Narratives in 20th-Century Congolese Paintings* from February 23, 2021 to June 20, 2021, displaying a selection of Congolese work created from the 1920s to 1960.

Thanks to unprecedented access to extensive archives and art collections, the exhibition's narrative presents a generous overview of paintings that were instigated when a single artist from Belgium began a painting workshop so as to collaborate with the indigenous population of Elisabethville (modern-day Lubumbashi). This first studio was followed by other workshops that assisted in developing a hybrid artform that remains a celebrated phenomenon.

The European influence of painting first began with Georges Thiry, who worked for Belgium's colonial administration starting in 1926. In Elisabethville, Thiry had noticed a series of painted murals of crocodiles and birds. He inquired about the artist and was introduced to Albert Lubaki. Thiry was fascinated by the artist Lubaki, his wife, and the other community members who continued to document their connection to the natural world through wall paintings.

The exhibition and accompanying volume of essays primarily examines this group of paintings as artworks worth considering on their own merits—describing their techniques and inherent beauty, while acknowledging that their iconographic contents reflect daily life within village communities. The juxtaposition of European artists and artistic materials brought to Africa, and the display of African paintings in European art metropolises, initiated decades of intense collaboration and cultural exchange.

**Temporary assistant professor in the African Studies Program of the University of Hong Kong Dr Estela Ibáñez-García**, "The exhibition displays a selection of Congolese paintings and provides diverse perspectives to assist audiences in understanding the complexity of Congolese realities during colonial times. These perspectives reveal that reality is a construct based on how individuals make sense of their own experiences. Experience is always subjective, as it refers to how events are received by consciousness. Yet, as the essays in this catalogue illustrate, we can transcend this narrow sphere of subjectivity through the arts. A close reading of the paintings reveals how Congolese artists articulated and represented their own experiences during colonial times; a critical reading of how Europeans used and interpreted these creations also indicates their own worldview."

For more images and captions of the exhibits, please click [here](#).





### Details of the Exhibition

**Period:** February 23, 2021 (Tuesday) to June 20, 2021 (Sunday)

**Opening Hours:**

9:30 am – 6:00 pm (Tuesday to Saturday)

1:00 pm – 6:00 pm (Sunday)

Closed on Mondays, University and Public Holidays

**Venue:** 1/F T.T. Tsui Building, UMAG, HKU, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam, Hong Kong

**Tel/Email:** (852) 2241 5500 (General Enquiry) / [museum@hku.hk](mailto:museum@hku.hk)

**Admission:** Free

**Website:** <http://www.umag.hku.hk/en/>

### In the Interest of Public Health, UMAG will Adopt the Following Measures

- All museum visitors are required to register their name, contact number and the date and time of the visit or scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code before entering UMAG via the G/F Fung Ping Shan Building entrance.
- A temperature check will be conducted upon entry.
- Visitors are required to properly wear their face mask at all times. They are advised to wash their hands and use the hand sanitizer and sink available at the entrance.
- Crowd control measures will be in place; UMAG reserves the right to limit the number of visitors.
- Children under 12 can only enter the museum when accompanied by an adult.
- Disability access is available upon request. Please contact the museum at (852) 2241 5500 three working days prior to your visit.

UMAG will continue to assess the situation and adjust the relevant preventive measures as necessary.

### Connect with UMAG on Social Media:

**Facebook:** [http://bit.ly/umag\\_facebook](http://bit.ly/umag_facebook)

**Instagram:** @umag\_hku, #UMAG, #CongolessePainting, #ColonialArt

**Weibo:** @香港大學美術博物館 UMAG

**YouTube:** [http://bit.ly/umag\\_youtube](http://bit.ly/umag_youtube)

**LinkedIn:** [http://bit.ly/umag\\_linkedin](http://bit.ly/umag_linkedin)

### About University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong (UMAG)

UMAG was founded in 1953 as the Fung Ping Shan Museum. It was originally established as the Fung Ping Shan Library in 1932 in honour of its benefactor. For more information on UMAG, please [click here](#).

### Interview Request

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