

WORKSHOP, Brussels May 3, 2018

**MEMORY /HISTORY: THE POWER OF DECOLONIZATION, ART AND INTERVENTIONS**

Where: Le Space, Rue de la Cle 26, Brussels 1000, Belgium

When: May 3, 2018, at 18.00

OPEN TO GENERAL PUBLIC

The workshop is organized within the project “Genealogie of amnesia” that unites research and art. It was initiated in Vienna, Austria and will last from 2018 to 2020. The project with a team of researchers builds an interdisciplinary platform for the study of the current politics of oblivion concerning three traumatic pasts’ events of the twentieth century in the European context. These traumatic pasts and its events take a fundamental role in the construction of national identities. These events are all connected with genocides. The project focuses on three case studies:

—The construction of a Belgian identity in the aftermath of its colonial past (1885–1960).

—The construction of a national identity in Austria after the *Anschluss*, “annexation” of Austria into Nazi Germany on 12 March 1938.

—The construction of a new national identity in Serbia and “Republika Srpska” (“Serb Republic”), along with the negation of war crimes after the dissolution of Yugoslavia (1990–present). It is important to state immediately that in contrast with Austria and Belgium, “Republika Srpska” is not a state, but a an ethnically homogeneous territorial entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, with aspirations for separation.

The goal of the research project is to display a new map of Europe or of the European Union that reconceptualizes a new postcolonial subjectivities that are closely connected to Western European (Occidental) colonialism and the migrant labour force that came to Occidental Europe in order to reconstruct its physiognomy after the Nazi past of Western Europe. Finally, the forming of new post-socialist identities in the former Yugoslavia is a direct result of the Balkan war in the 1990s. Last but not least, Austria’s own past and its endemic and durable anti-Semitism is a key for the critical understanding of Europe (European Union) of today.

*Genealogy of Amnesia: Rethinking the Past for a New Future of Conviviality* is the title of an interdisciplinary, arts and theory based research project. It is funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) through its Programme for Arts-based Research (PEEK); Project number AR 439. The research is developed at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, from 2018 to 2020.

Workshop with:

- **MONIQUE MBEKA PHOBA**
- **LAURA NSENGIYUMVA**
- **PITCHO WOMBA KONGA**

**Moderation: Matthias de Groof**

**With the participation of researchers Marina Grzinic and Sophie Uitz, and Muzaffer Hasaltay (video documentation).**

**PRESENTATION OF THE SPEAKERS**

**MONIQUE MBEKA PHOBA** will present an overview of her 17 masterclasses on the subject of the taboo of colonization in the Belgian cinema of the last 40 years. The masterclasses have been presented from 2015 to 2017 in a quite various places: festivals, training institutes as cultural or associative centers (Brussels African Film Festival / FIFAB, BOZAR, Pier 10, women's film festival, "They spin," BE-PAX, Point-Culture, Pianofabriek, Ghent Sint-Luca Art Institute, Mission Local of Molenbeek, ULB, Congolese associations etc.).

**CV OF MONIQUE MBEKA PHOBA**

Monique Mbeka Phoba is a filmmaker born in Brussels, the daughter of a DRC diplomat. She visited the DRC during her school holidays, but established herself in Belgium. She studied at the Saint-Louis High Business School, and obtained a degree in International Business in Brussels. Her graduating thesis was on "Cooperation between the European and African audiovisual industries." While being student, Monique Phoba gave talks on African culture on a student radio called Radio-Campus and wrote articles in various newspapers in Brussels and Geneva, as *Tam-Tam*, *Negrissimo* and *Regards Noirs*. She made several documentaries, her first fiction film is titled "Sister Oyo." This short film recounts the shaken vision of the world seen by a 10-year-old Congolese who attended a boarding school run by Belgian nuns in the 1950s during the colonial era.

**LAURA NSENGIYUMVA** will talk about her project PeopL. This work addresses the figure of Leopold II in the public space of Brussels. And more generally, she refers to his phantasmagorical presence in the Belgian consciousness: in official celebrations, in folklore, in language (he is seen as the king "Builder"). The figure of the King Leopold II becomes the instrument of a biased patriotism. The king becomes "Builder," despite the immense destruction of which he was the author. He is the figure of a cynical patriotism, which cannot function without a cruel but indispensable blindness. The project aims to the decolonization of the public space.

### **CV OF LAURA NSENGIYUMVA**

The Belgian-Rwandan artist Laura Nsengiyumva lives in Brussels. She won the first prize at the Kunstsalon Ghent in 2011, and the second prize at the Dakar Biennale in 2012. Nsengiyumva explores themes such as diasporic experience, multiple identity, North-South relations and empathy. She speaks about these topics through images and interventions on colonized spaces. Her transcultural view of history is based on human stories that invite us to find what brings us together.

**WOMBA KONGA** known by his artist name **PITCHO** will present 2 projects: a multidisciplinary festival “Congolisation” and his latest theater/performative play with the title “Kuzikiliza.” The term Congolisation is a contraction of the words “Congo” and “Colonisation.” The idea of the festival is to focus on the contribution of the Congolese diaspora in the Belgium cultural landscape. The theater/performance play “Kuzikiliza” that translates in Swahili as “to be heard”—is a plurilingual and interdisciplinary performance that makes communication and its mechanisms to vacillate. Pitcho Womba Konga in this play departs from Patrice Lumumba’s speech at the ceremony of the Proclamation of the Congo’s Independence on June 30, 1960. Pitcho exposes the actuality of Lumumba’s speech today and questions how to reconcile past and present, while the process of decolonization is still fully underway.

### **CV OF PITCHO WOMBA KONGA**

The Belgian-Congolese artist Pitcho Womba Konga is a prolific writer, videographer and filmmaker, rap-musician and actor, active in Belgium and elsewhere. He initiated the multimedia festival “Congolisation” in 2015. He developed in 2010 the project “Heritages” with The Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Congo’s independence. At the center of many of his works stays the Congolese diaspora who, according to him, is one of the most tangible symbols of the relationship between the history of the Congo and Belgium.



Monique Mbeka Phoba



Laura Nsengiyumva



Pitcho Womba Konga