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Introduction

With *Elima – NoBody* (curated by Dr. Nadia Ismail), the transnational artist duo Christ Mukenge and Lydia Schellhammer present an exhibition that questions authorship*¹, corporeality, and collective existence. The works operate at the intersection of installation, performance*, and conceptual research, developing an artistic language that deliberately distances itself from the idea that a work can be clearly attributed to one individual. At the center of Mukenge/Schellhammer's practice is the DUO: an autonomous artistic entity* that represents neither Christ Mukenge nor Lydia Schellhammer alone, but speaks, acts, and makes artistic decisions as an independent instance.

Mukenge/Schellhammer's works emerge within the tensions of their experiences between Europe and Africa. The duo's collaboration developed out of the necessity to confront, both in the lived reality between continents and in artistic practice, the consequences of the colonial* past, economic inequality, and structural racism*. Out of this unavoidable problematic, the artistic fusion Mukenge/Schellhammer came into being. Their artistic practice is based on a precise, research-driven engagement with the colonial history of the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts, the still-operative orientation toward European art history, and the unequal power relations between Europe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Questions of visibility in the art world and of cultural attribution play a decisive role here. From this, the Congolese-German artist duo develops an artistic approach that understands painting as a site between different cultural systems, visual worlds, and bodies.

¹ Terms marked with an asterisk are further explained and defined in the glossary on page 29.

Changing Perspectives Kinshasa – Giessen



Photo: Mukenge/Schellhammer



Photo: Tour de l'Echangeur*

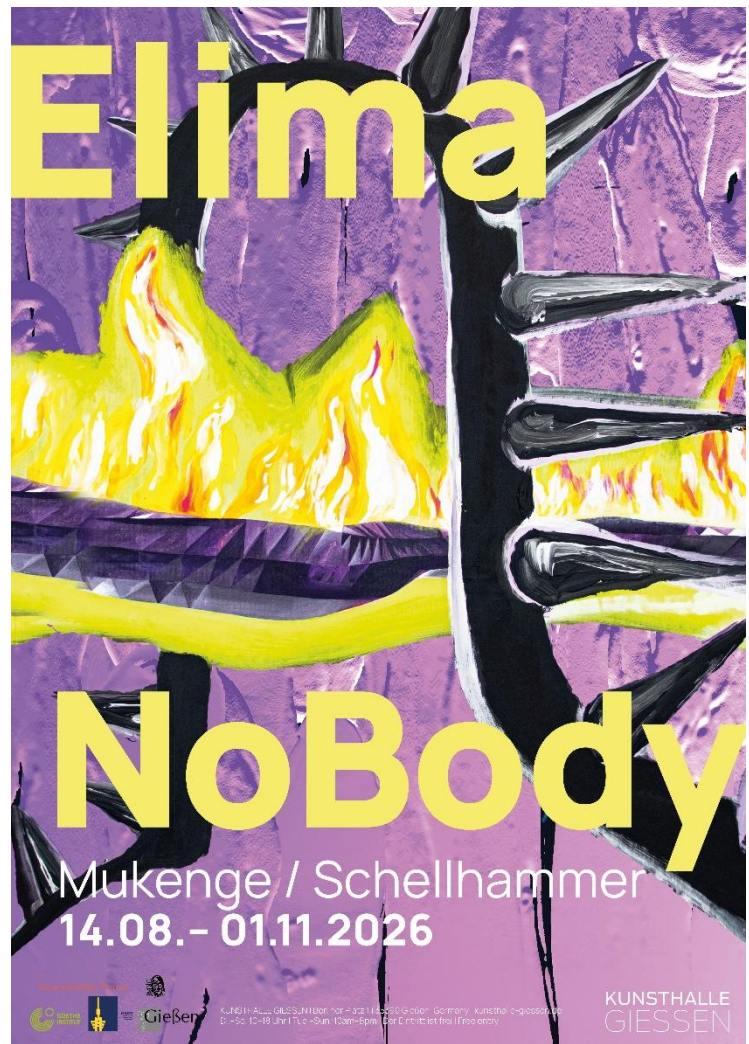
The exhibition *Elima – NoBody* is a cooperation with the Musée d'Art Contemporain et Multimédia, the Goethe-Institut Kinshasa, and the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Congo.

The first part of the exhibition *Elima – NoBody* took place from 13 March to 1 May 2026 at the Musée d'Art Contemporain et Multimédia in Kinshasa (DRC). Its focus was on the artistic formation and art-historical positioning of Mukenge/Schellhammer's overall body of work. For the first time, the artists' Congolese art-historical frame of reference was made publicly visible, offering a broader audience insight into the recent art history of Kinshasa.

The second part of the exhibition at KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN focuses on the artists' biographical formation, which is crucial to the conceptual approach and visual language of Lydia Schellhammer and Christ Mukenge.

A central motif of the exhibition is the engagement with traces of different belief systems in art. The artists' biographical background, situated between nature- and ancestor-related spiritual worldviews and Christianity, flows into the works through striking painterly motifs and is further reinforced by the titles. In this way, the works point to social

imprints that continue to have an effect across generations. In doing so, the exhibition connects to the first part of Elima – NoBody. The discourse initiated there on the interpretive authority of art-historical terminology and on the social conditions under which authorship emerges is continued in Giessen. With a deliberate reference to Congolese art history, which developed the expression *Partagisme*², the exhibition investigates how identity is formed when the subject dissolves and artistic production is conceived as a polyphonic practice.



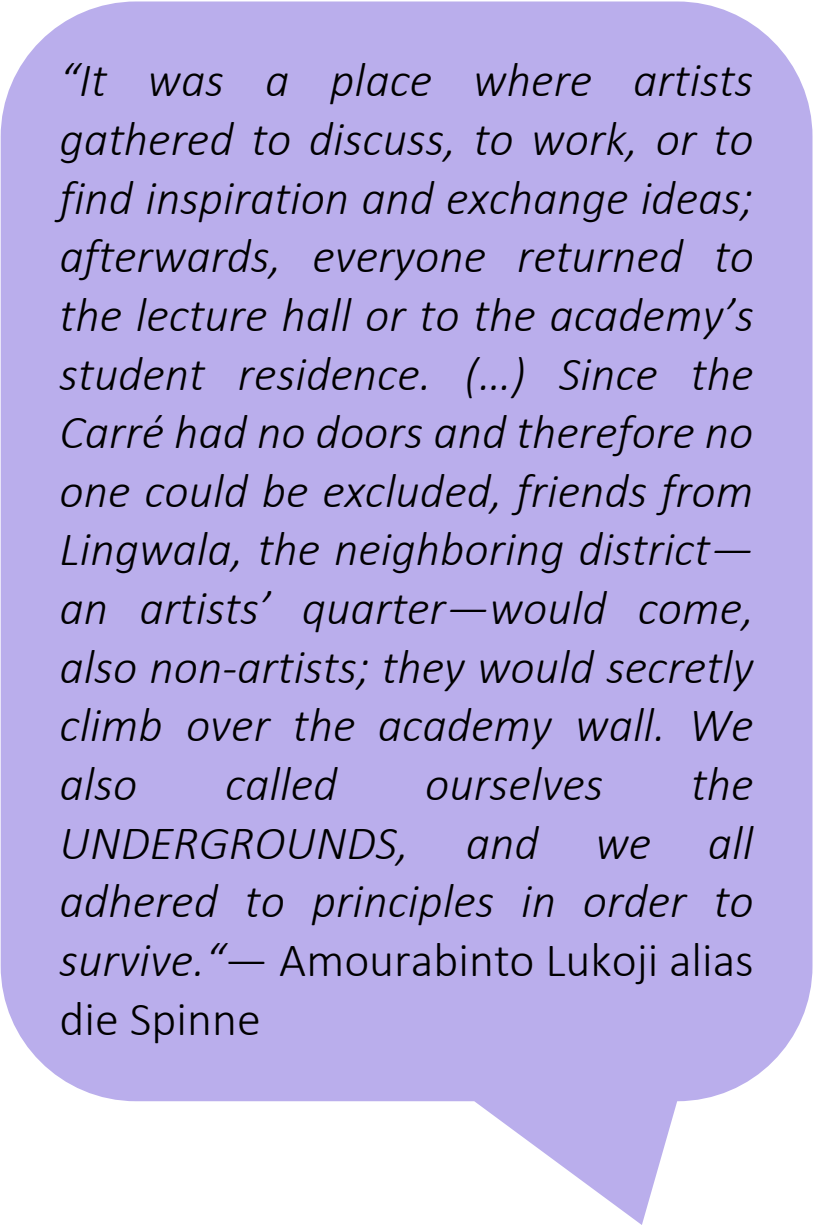
² This term will be explained on p. 12.

Carré Magique

The CARRÉ MAGIQUE (“Magic Square”) was a workspace, meeting place, and squat—an occupied site maintained by its members—at the Kinshasa Academy* of Fine Arts between 2000 and 2016. The place was originally called NOYAUX, meaning “seeds,” referring to a point of departure for new revolutionary artistic movements. It was a free space that stood in contrast to the strict rules of the art academy. This freedom made experimental work possible, encouraged critical thinking, and fostered awareness of the Democratic

Republic of the Congo’s own (art) historiography. Subsequently, the term Kontempo functioned within the scene as a synonym for innovative cross-media artistic movements.

At first, the Noyaux was located behind the student residence (the Shangai building). When the Noyaux was moved behind an electrical substation, the generations that followed renamed the site Carré Magique. The name referred both to the square shape of the substation and to external labels such as poorly brought up, mad, or demonically possessed, with which the artists found themselves confronted. In



“It was a place where artists gathered to discuss, to work, or to find inspiration and exchange ideas; afterwards, everyone returned to the lecture hall or to the academy’s student residence. (...) Since the Carré had no doors and therefore no one could be excluded, friends from Lingwala, the neighboring district—an artists’ quarter—would come, also non-artists; they would secretly climb over the academy wall. We also called ourselves the UNDERGROUNDS, and we all adhered to principles in order to survive.”— Amourabinto Lukoji alias die Spinne

contrast stood the members' self-image: they described themselves as disciplined, uncompromising, radical, and boundary-crossing.



Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer

In contrast to the conservative program of the art academy, the artists of the Carré Magique were interested in experimental practices, precolonial art forms, and contemporary international artistic movements. They saw themselves as artistic rebels and did not want to adhere to the academy's norms and rules. At the same time, it was also a meeting place for artists whose families could not afford tuition fees or who worked as autodidacts.



Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer



Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer

The art academy, founded by the Belgian missionary Mark Wallenda, was at that time still teaching according to the European model specifically developed for the colonies. This included, for example, the “Copie du Maître” (copying European masters such as Gauguin, Delacroix, Michelangelo, and Matisse) and orientation toward the “Canon grec” (the proportional system of ancient Greek art). As a relic of the past, the classical European training model that remains in force to this day still bears traces of colonial thinking.

The radical and at times shocking working methods of the artists of the Noyaux—which incorporated violence, nudity, spontaneity, spirituality, political content, and social critique—were therefore not accepted by everyone. The Carré Magique was especially important for artistic movements such as the urban performance movement, Kontempo, and Partagisme.

„In the NOYAUX, we were able to work even when we had nothing—it was a school of life. When my family could no longer pay the tuition fees for the art academy, I continued learning in the NOYAUX. Imagine going a whole year without the academy, without formal studies, but in the Noyaux you learn everything: tattooing, graffiti, performance, sewing, screen printing, lettering, photography, etc. You learn things that are not even part of your profession—so it was a complete opening of the mind. We did everything possible to earn money in order to pay the academy fees, but everything we learned there helped us enter professional life quickly.” — Christ Mukenge

The Principles:

Article One:

Always find your own place. When you arrive in a new place, you must not disturb anyone; you have to adapt to the circumstances. You may even look for a piece of wood to sit on. At any moment, you are ready to begin a new life in a new place—wherever you arrive and find an opportunity.

„The first artists I met personally who also saw an artist in me were Christ Mukenge, Michel Ekeba, and the others from the Carré Magique in 2012. They had decided for themselves to make art—independently of their their studies or what the people around them thought about it. I identified with that very strongly. We were free spirits: at night, I climbed over the walls of the Académie des Beaux-Arts with them, we painted together, and we organized exhibitions in the street, in friends’ houses, and at local art venues.“ —Lydia Schellhammer



Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer

Article Two: Find work, and by midday get yourself something to eat without disturbing others. Always save a cigarette for the morning, and always have your toothpaste and soap so as not to disturb the people around you.

Article Three: Remain independent. Always have your backpack, so that you can carry everything you need during the

day: a brush, paints, a change of jeans, clean underwear, a toothbrush—like nomadic peoples. We were very independent.” (Amourabinto Lukoji alias die Spinne)



Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer



Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer



Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer

Artists of the Carré Magique (selection)*: NGALULA alias Grand Gaul, Raul MOSENGO, Kiki ZANGUNDA , Mega MINGIEDI, Christian BOTALE, Seigneur MEKHAR, Rino PANZU, Yannick MAKANKA alias Majesticos, Christ MUKENGE, Ricardo PINTO, Mike SAPWE alias Kool Shen, Aicha MUTEBA, Nico LUZWAKI, BINA MUN 4045, Michel EKEBA, Androa MINDRE KOLO, Julie DJIKEY, Laurent ASIKABIO alias Mudjika, Lardo MALASI alias KIRIKU, Korré Malolo, Djo BOLANKOKO, Trésort KINTOKI alias ATAGUERRA, MATINGU, Bobo LOMBOTO alias 3030, Clovis MALALA, Dolet MALALU, Tickson MBUYI, Flory SINANDUKU, Olivier KANIKI alias OLIJAH, Gaulthier MAYEMBA, Chris SHONGO Benito BARAS etc. as well as a large number of theorists and researchers, such as Pagna BULABULA, alias Philosopher, Jean KAMBA, and Clement, alias “Anthropologue.

Partagisme



Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer

Partagisme is an artistic movement that has been defined as a term since 2014 by artists and students of the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Kinshasa. Its roots, however, go back to the 1990s. At that time, only realist painting and sculpture were taught in the academic curriculum. Because of the intense time pressure during practical examinations, painting and sculpture students often worked together on the same canvas or sculpture. In order to meet the instructors' expectations and produce realistic works in a short

time, the candidates supported one another. In this way, a practice emerged in which several people worked on a single artwork.

The rules of Partagisme:

- Anyone can organize or participate in a Partagisme.
- No artistic training is required for participation.
- All authors of a work have equal financial and copyright claims, regardless of the form of their contribution.
- Partagisme understands itself as a transmedial movement.

As part of the first Yango Biennale in Kinshasa, the Belgian artist Jean Dalemás proposed a duo and trio project in 2014. Participating artists from Kinshasa included Dolet MALALU, Aicha MUTEBA, Christ MUKENGE, Bouvy ENKOBO, Flory SINANDUKU, Kura SHOMALI, Bebson de la Rue, Shaggy LUAMBA, Reck KANDOL, Francis MAMPUYA, Julie DJIKEY, Vitshois MWILAMBWE, Junior MOYEFA alias Senzo TANAKA, and Modi BARRY.

In the aftermath, a public debate on collective artistic work emerged. Those involved saw the need to name their own form of collective practice, which had long existed in Kinshasa, in order to prevent it from being perceived solely as an initiative of the Belgian artist.



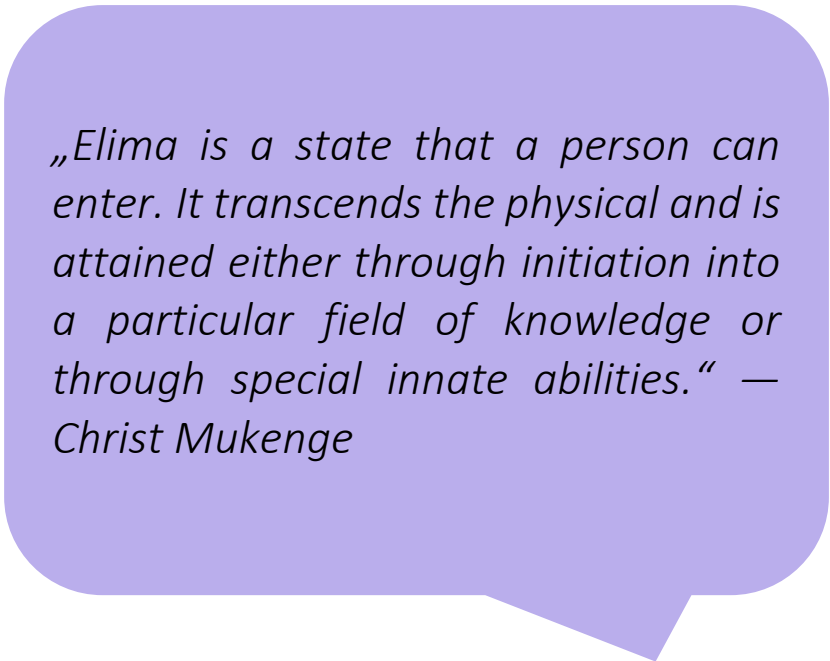
Foto: Mukenge/Schellhammer

- In public discussions attended by numerous artists and intellectuals, the term Partagisme was established as a term for this practice. Derived from the verb partager—“to share”—it refers to a theory and practice of shared authorship. From this conceptualization emerged numerous projects and exhibitions that extended beyond painting and sculpture.

Between 2014 and 2017 in particular, numerous collective performances, installations, paintings, and videos were created. Even though the conflicts that arose from collective work weakened the movement in the following years, the debates around authorship, collectivity, copyright, payment, and sales have had a lasting impact on Kinshasa's art scene and made it internationally visible. Partagisme sessions still take place there today.

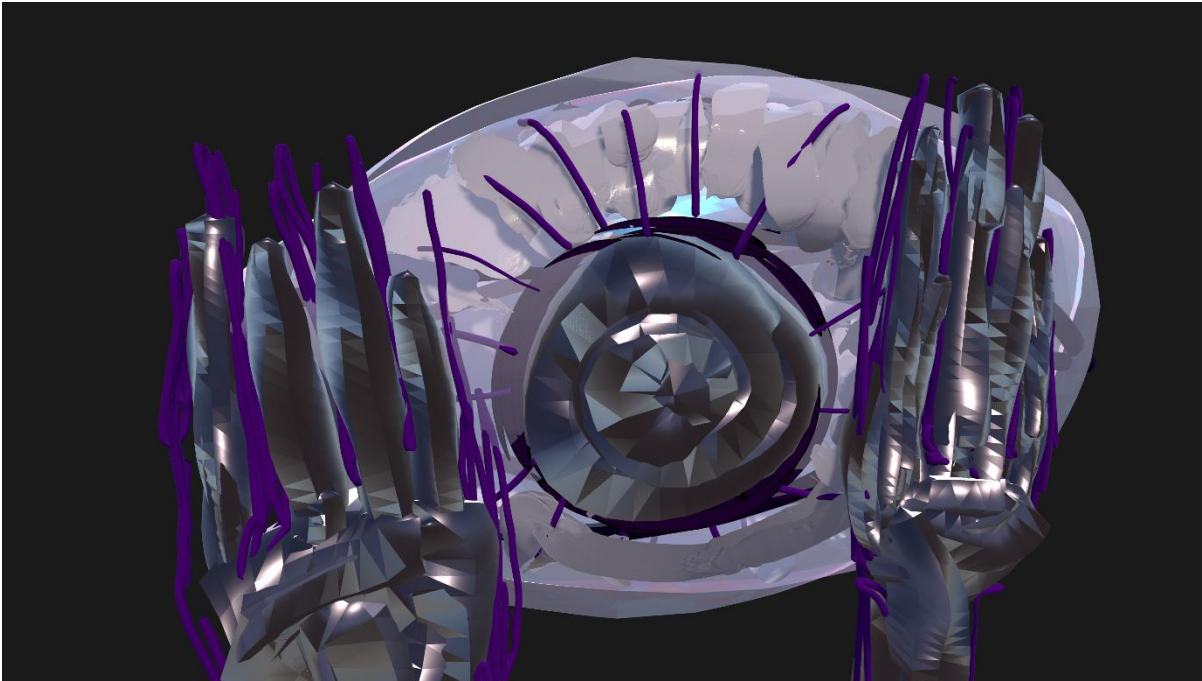
Exhibition title: Elima–NoBody

Already in the title of the exhibition, deliberately chosen to be bilingual, different transcultural* layers of meaning are reflected. The term Elima, derived from the Bantu language Lingala, had consistently positive connotations in the precolonial period and operated within a semantic



„Elima is a state that a person can enter. It transcends the physical and is attained either through initiation into a particular field of knowledge or through special innate abilities.“ — Christ Mukenge

range encompassing knowledge, education, wisdom, and consciousness. Elima refers not merely to the accumulation of information, but to a reflective, responsible, and often communally grounded form of understanding. It was only with the advent of colonialism and missionary efforts at the end of the nineteenth century that the meaning gradually changed, and Elima developed into a synonym for an evil spirit or negative energy—a meaning that in some cases remains valid in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to this day. The history of the term makes clear how language is shaped by historical power relations and how cultural meanings shift under colonial conditions.



Mukenge/Schellhammer, *Paranoia*, Film Still, VR Painting, 2026, Courtesy the artists and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin.

A similar dynamic applies to the English term Nobody, which can initially be translated simply as “niemand” (“no one”). At the same time, the title points to the physical body, a reference deliberately emphasized through the spelling NoBody. Between absence and corporeality, a field of tension emerges that runs throughout the exhibition. Nobody not only denotes the absence of a person, but also opens up the possibility of evading fixed attributions. Being “no one” is not understood as a loss, but becomes the starting point for empowerment. This creates room for action beyond societal expectations.

Mukenge/Schellhammer use these linguistic variations as an act of self-empowerment and, through the medium of painting, open up a multiperspectival discourse that makes the fine nuances of the transcultural visible..

“Private” Mythologie

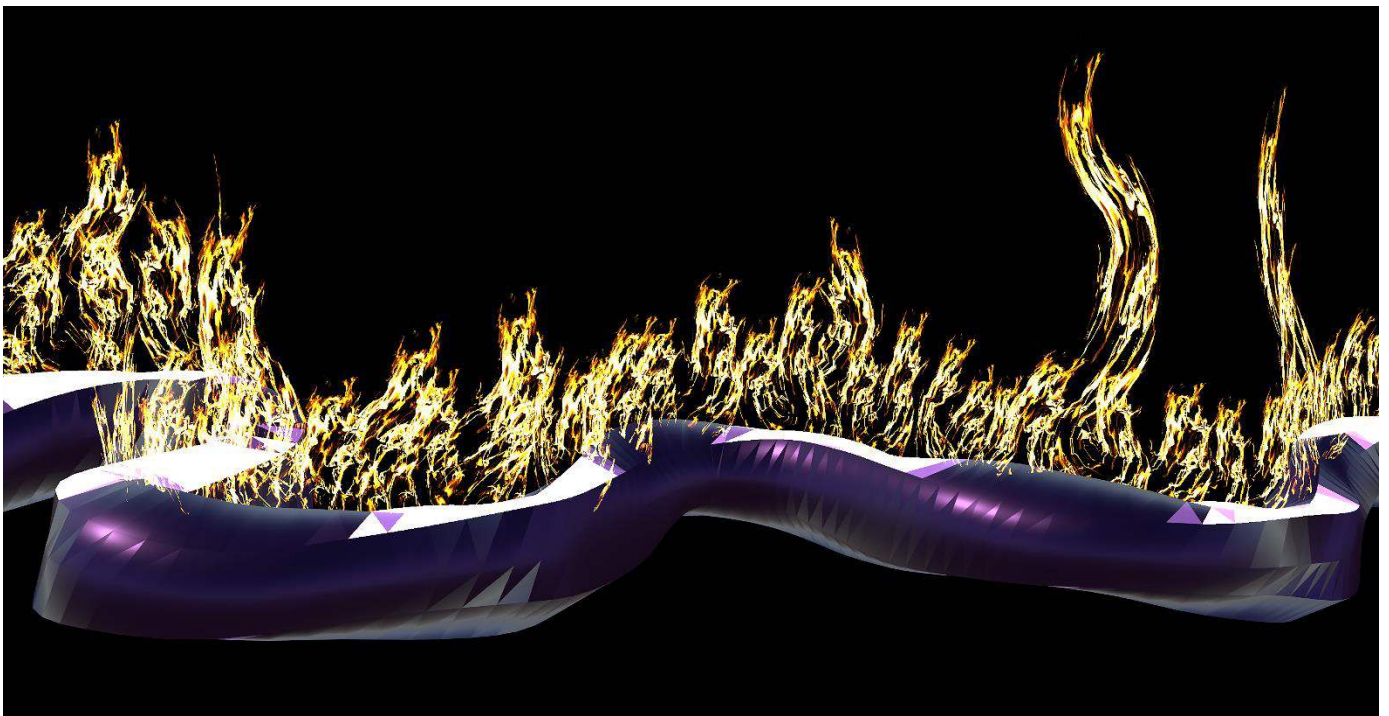
As if sprung from a dreamlike intermediate world, a multitude of beings populates the pictorial worlds of Mukenge/Schellhammer, their physiognomy oscillating between hyper creature and ancient species.

All elements in the drawings, paintings, and videos arise from the artists’ lived reality, which includes external influences as much as individual imprinting and inner states. From this, a cosmos develops that is closely related to the artistic concept of Individual Mythology. Mukenge/Schellhammer create a figurative visual language in which animals are assigned their own canon of meanings. Birds and dragons, for example, function as protective beings, while the snake embodies the artists’ alter ego and not infrequently has several heads. Decisive here are the characteristics of the snake: it can move and look in all directions. In addition, there is something dangerous about the snake, while at the same time it is gentle, almost fragile. In exceptional cases, even venomous snakes can be tamed and displayed in public, as is the case in the Congo. They are also used in ceremonial practices and form part of initiation rituals.

Catholicism, spread since 1491 by Portuguese priests and seafarers, continues to have a massive influence on the lived reality of Congolese people to this day. Towering billboards, almost godlike, rise meters high into the sky, offering promises of salvation in exchange for payment.

„After attending a non-Christian concert, where I felt the same thing I had felt during church services, I realized that I was feeling the music, not the Holy Spirit. That’s when I left the Christian cult in which I had grown up.“ – Lydia Schellhammer

Regarding the snake, the Old Testament says in the Book of Genesis: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made (...)” (Genesis 3:1). It is regarded as the cleverest of all animals. In the context of Genesis 3, its superiority over other animals is shown in the fact that it can speak and think and knows the tree of knowledge. Ultimately, in Genesis 3, the snake also partakes in the numinous world, for it knows more than human beings and opens their eyes through its knowledge. The action of the snake causes human beings, on the one hand, to lose paradise, and on the other, to gain knowledge of their humanity.



Mukenge/Schellhammer, Auf deinem Bauche sollst du kriechen und Staub fressen dein Leben lang II, VR Painting, (film still) 2026. Courtesy the artists and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin.

After Adam was unable to resist Eve’s temptation and ate from the Tree of Knowledge, God said to the serpent:

“[...] On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. [...]”

— Genesis 3:14

In this uncompromising passage of damnation, the artists introduce the element of fire in the form of a giant serpent in flames. This drawing, connected with virtual reality, takes up the quotation from Genesis and employs it in an expanded form. It therefore suggests that the digital component of the work points to the artificial interpretation of faith as such. As an element of purification and transformation. The burning serpent also stands for initiation—the transition into a new form of existence.

„In the Carré Magique, there were many people who, for various reasons, were regarded by the academy, their families, and their social environment as not suited to art—too radical for their families, too undisciplined for the academy, too behaviorally unusual for those around them. Yet they had decided to be artists nonetheless; they were utterly grandiose in their ambitions, dreaming of major exhibitions and travel. That was when I decided to make art and joined them.“ – Lydia Schellhammer



Mukenge/Schellhammer, *Initiation I*, Acryl und Ölkreide auf Leinwand, 180 x 100 cm, gerahmt, 2026. Courtesy of the artists and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin.

Initiation

The concept of initiation exists across historical epochs and is common to all cultures. It marks both the (ritual) transition of a person into a higher social status and the passage into a new level of consciousness.

In Mukenge/Schellhammer's work as well, the evocative title *Initiation I* (2026) refers to the concept of belonging, which is closely linked to principles of belief and connects to broader discourses on faith. Dark tones blend into the expressive neon colors, as if seeking to extinguish their brightness.

At the center of *Initiation I* stands the protective and powerful figure of the Nkisi, one of the best-known entities or forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The figure is

intended to protect communities, houses, or individuals from illness, witchcraft, and danger. The nails driven into the wooden surface of the statuette serve to activate its spiritual powers. Perched on its shoulder is an eagle owl, its plumage glowing in bright purple. In the Congo, owls and eagle owls are regarded as ambivalent mythical beings. They stand for nocturnal vigilance, but in local understandings, they are often associated with witchcraft and viewed as eerie omens or bearers of bad news. In large parts of Europe, by contrast, the owl or eagle owl is still associated with wisdom. Because of its anatomical ability to rotate its head up to

270 degrees, the eagle owl can perceive and observe its surroundings even from behind. Not least because of this trait, and because these are nocturnal birds, they have repeatedly evoked fears of demons and dark powers since the Middle Ages.

What may initially appear to confirm cultural differences reveals itself, upon closer examination and deeper reflection, as largely congruent. The decisive difference lies rather in the European and Congolese frames of reference. While the nails driven into the (wooden) flesh recall the wounds of Jesus Christ, painful torture here too undergoes a reinterpretation—from an agonizing form of execution to a promise of salvation. The pierced hands and feet recall the price Jesus paid to atone for humanity's guilt. Analogously, facets of missionary activity at the end of the nineteenth century intermingled with the diverse, original belief systems of the Congo. Instead of Christ's stigmata, however, the upwardly outstretched painted hands contain eyes that weep bloody tears, while the empty eye sockets of the Nkisi and the eagle-owl are turned toward the viewer. Beyond indicating a physical inflammation of the eyes, bloody tears point to a divine sign, a miracle, or a stigma.

Mukenge/Schellhammer astutely reveal cultural differences only to negate them at the same time by transferring them into a new frame of reference. They propose a conception that makes clear that the global entanglement of differently shaped cultures requires a new sensitivity to language—one that also includes the visual arts.

Skinless, Ekangami, Homme Hyène



Mukenge/Schellhammer, *Skinless*, Acryl und Ölkreide auf Leinwand, 180 x 100 cm, gerahmt, 2026. Courtesy of the artists and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin.

- Drawing on West African folklore and mythological narratives—such as the figure of the “Homme Hyène” (hyena man)—as well as on European visual traditions and spiritual transmissions, Mukenge/Schellhammer develop their own image-based mythology within their artistic oeuvre. This mythology unfolds across the three paintings *Skinless*, *Ekangami*, and *Homme Hyène*.

Though independent works, they have been deliberately conceived by the artists as a triptych. This creates the impression of a connected sequence of images unfolding across three scenes—an arrangement that recalls

the structure of Christian altarpieces. Here, however, the triptych functions less as a religious format than as a consciously chosen historical quotation. In the appropriation of this pictorial form, a field of tension becomes visible: between European visual traditions and the stories, symbols, and experiential spaces of the West African hemisphere.

Within this framework, the three paintings unfold a narrative and at the same time autobiographical constellation.



Mukenge/Schellhammer, *Homme Hyène*, Acryl, Sprühfarbe und Ölkreide auf Leinwand, 180 x 100 cm, gerahmt, 2026. Courtesy of the artists and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin.

The title *Skinless* already resists any clear attribution. Without skin, those outward markers are absent by which origin, identity, or belonging are often—and so often falsely—defined. At the same time, “skinless” describes a state of particular sensitivity: an individual who perceives their surroundings with extraordinary sensibility. The missing skin thus becomes an image for the absence of a protective membrane, one that would ordinarily shield a person from being directly exposed to the actions and utterances of others.

Beyond this, the composition also generates a form of self-portraiture. Lydia Schellhammer appears as the central figure, her body entwined by a snake.

Hovering above her, the eagle embodies the artist Christ Mukenge. In this way, both animals function simultaneously as protective figures and symbolic extensions of the depicted bodies.

In the work *Homme Hyène*, this constellation shifts. Christ Mukenge now appears himself as a hyena man, while Lydia Schellhammer accompanies and protects him in the form of the hyena.

The mythological figure of the shapeshifter thus becomes a metaphor for transformation, for the interplay of identities and roles within their shared artistic practice.

At the center of the triptych stands Ekangami. The title refers to a spiritual force or presence associated with ancestors, protective spirits, and ritual power, while also denoting a form of bond or entanglement. Thus, in the interplay of the three images, a mythology of their own unfolds, in which personal biography, collective memory, and cultural pictorial traditions merge.



Mukenge/Schellhammer, Ekangami, Acryl und Ölkreide auf Leinwand, 180 x 100 cm, gerahmt, 2026. Courtesy of the artists and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin.

Duo – a Transition

„But is it possible to imagine a work of art without a creator, without an artist who made it?“ – Valentin-Yves Mudimbe*

DUO: My story begins in 2012 in Kinshasa, although I was not officially founded until 2016. In 2012, Christ Mukenge and Lydia Schellhammer met in Kinshasa.

My visual language is shaped by this transcultural encounter between Christ Mukenge and Lydia Schellhammer; it emerges from a culture clash between two people, but also from the meeting of artistic traditions and understandings of art. When I think about my references in art history, I realize that, especially in painting, the encounter between Europe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo plays a major role.

Popular painting, which began in Kinshasa in the 1980s as a local urban culture and a socially critical commentary on current local and international politics, Congolese history, and everyday life in the city, changed when it entered the European art market. Themes once directed toward a Congolese audience are now often reformulated in order to meet the expectations of international collectors and galleries. Export increased the artists' visibility, but it also led to tensions between

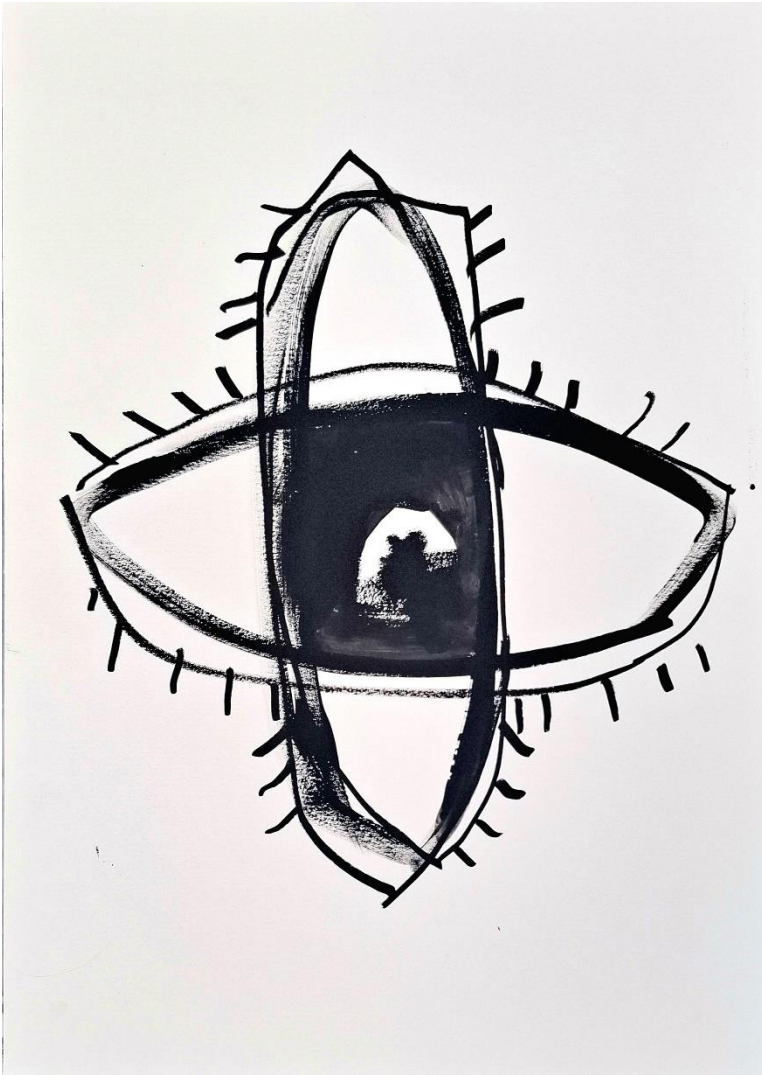
authenticity, market demand, and cultural self-representation. As a DUO, then, I have a prehistory that confronts me with many problems. I cannot escape them—that is impossible. I must face them every day, and endure the differences, the conflicts, the power dynamics, the mistrust, the historical traumas, the reactive psychoses; all of this shapes my visual language as well. An enormous pressure builds up, and through that pressure Christ Mukenge and Lydia Schellhammer fused into the duo.

Now viewers must think about a person who does not actually exist. This naturally creates a great deal of uncertainty among recipients, and I am often seen as a monster with four eyes and four hands. What is not understood, what is foreign, is something monstrous.

It is the distortion of a certain logic, of certain definitions and categorizations. I take things apart, put them back together, contextualize, decontextualize. There is also something dangerous about the monster, because I have become so strong, because I inspire fear. I can permit myself anything.

But I am not dangerous; it is often the unknown that provokes fear. Yet I also suffer from this distortion, from this monstrosity. I carry the entire historical burden and the current political pressure. As a monster, I devour everything I see and perceive; I have no filter and I am exposed to reality—that lies in my nature. I therefore cut off my eyelids so that I cannot rest, so that I cannot look away, so that I remain exposed to reality.

Yet much of what I see is too brutal, impossible to digest; when I swallow it, I later have to vomit it back out. In the moment in which I vomit up these undigested images, I become the [NoBody] artist.



Through my double perspective, I can move through worlds that do not normally meet, that are not accessible to everyone, and that do not understand one another. That is the beautiful thing about my work. I am like a stray cat—wandering, observing. A mangy cat, picking up blows, scratches, and fights in difficult streets

Mukenge/Schellhammer, *Misu Na Misu*, Bleistift auf Papier, A2, 2025.
Courtesy of the artists and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin.

Preview:

Just as, in the European understanding, the animation of something inanimate in the realm of mythology calls to mind the myth of Pygmalion, in the Congo the activation of objects takes place through what is known as charger (“charging”). This can be done with almost any object, provided one has been initiated into the practice of charging.

The prospective third part of the exhibition centers on the awakening of the DUO.



Abb.: Mukenge/Schellhammer, *Receive, My Love*, acrylic on canvas, 50 × 60 cm, 2026 Courtesy of the artists, Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin.

Biography

Mukenge/Schellhammer consists of Christ Mukenge (*1988, Kinshasa, DR Congo) and Lydia Schellhammer (*1992, Konstanz). The duo lives and works between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Germany. Their practice is shaped by the transnational encounter of different painting traditions—from Congolese Académisme to counter-movements such as Partagisme and urban performance practices from Kinshasa, to Surrealism and contemporary popular culture. In the post-digital age, Mukenge/Schellhammer consistently expand painting into other media such as AR (augmented reality), VR (virtual reality), video, and performance. By signing their works jointly, they subvert common notions of authorship, artistic tradition, and geographical attribution. Out of their long-term collaboration, a third visual language has emerged: the

duo's pictorial world, an autonomous hybrid being with a specific aesthetic, shaped by present-day conditions and contradictions. They respond to expectations directed at the Congolese-German collective less through explicit political positions than through formal artistic strategies. Of central importance in this context are ongoing processes of translation, which manifest in multilingual publications, performances, and videos. Mukenge/Schellhammer's works have been shown internationally, including at the pan-African video festival BodaBoda Lounge (2020), the National Museum of Kinshasa (2021), ifa Galerie Stuttgart (2022), the Yango Biennale Kinshasa (2022), documenta fifteen (2022), Marta Herford (2024), the Fellbach Triennale (2025), and Galerie Barbara Thumm (2024). They were fellows of Akademie Schloss Solitude in 2021/22 and of the Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg in 2023.



Photo: Siméon Kalonji

Glossary

Selection of artists from the Carré Magique, p. S

The names in the list are all written in capital letters, since in the Democratic Republic of the Congo family names are always written in capital letters.

Authorship

Authorship refers to the relationship between a person who creates a work and the work itself. This relationship is not only individual, but also shaped by culture and society: it helps determine to whom a work is attributed, what meaning is assigned to it, and how responsibility, originality, or artistic signature are understood.

Entity

An entity is an autonomous being, thing, or form of appearance that is perceived as a distinct unit.

Colonialism

Colonialism refers to the political, economic, and cultural domination of territories and populations outside a state's own borders. Its aim was usually the exploitation of resources, labor, and territory for the benefit of the colonial power. Colonial expansion was often legitimized by racist ideologies that portrayed European civilization and culture as superior. Colonialism shaped global power relations, the effects of which remain visible today in economic inequalities, cultural alienation, and postcolonial conflicts. It also had a formative impact on art history: artistic depictions of "exoticism," ethnographic exhibitions, and the appropriation of non-European objects in museum contexts are closely bound up with colonial power structures. Contemporary postcolonial and decolonial discourses call for a critical engagement with these legacies, for example in provenance research, debates on restitution, and the reassessment of Western canons.

Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts

The Académie des Beaux-Arts de Kinshasa is an art academy in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Musée d'Art Contemporain et Multimédia (MACM)

The MACM is part of the network of the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Congo (IMNC). The museum is dedicated to the preservation and advancement of contemporary Congolese art, with a particular focus on multimedia and digital works.

Performance

An artistic performance in which the process itself—for example, bodily actions in space, often live and before an audience—is central, rather than a finished product such as an image or a text.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonial discourses and theories address the persistence of colonial structures in contemporary society as well as the process of decolonization. Postcolonial perspectives are applied in various disciplines, including art, literary studies, geography, gender studies, and political science. Recurring themes include Eurocentrism and the exoticization of the “Other.” As both an academic and an emancipatory approach, postcolonialism seeks to deconstruct colonial power relations while representing and supporting those affected by colonialism, thereby challenging the status quo. It can thus be understood both as a scholarly framework and as a form of resistance.

Structural racism

This term describes historically and socially developed power relations that are deeply embedded in a society's structures, discourses, or images. Such structures can also result in certain population groups—for example, people with a migration history or People of Color—not being

represented in key positions in politics, public administration, or the economy in proportion to their share of the overall population.

Transculturality

Transculturality refers to a concept of culture in which cultures are understood not as separate, clearly bounded units, but as a dynamic formation. Cultures merge and influence one another, with the result that culture and individual identities are constantly changing and marked by heterogeneity. Related terms include multiculturalism, interculturality, transculturality, and pluriculturalism.

Tour de l'Échangeur

The Tour de l'Échangeur stands at the entrance to the city of Kinshasa. It consists of four reinforced-concrete pillars and has a total height of 210 meters. The tower was built by the French-Tunisian architect Olivier-Clément Cacoub.

Valentin-Yves Mudimbe

Valentin-Yves Mudimbe (1941–2025) was a Congolese anthropologist, writer, and literary scholar. In his now widely regarded standard works *The Invention of Africa* (1988) and *The Idea of Africa* (1994), he examines in depth the imaginary construction of Africa in colonial and postcolonial discourse.

Accompanying Programme

Guided tour by the curator Dr. Nadia Ismail

Sun. 27.09.2026, 3 pm

Art and Coffee

Wed. 26.08.2026, 3 pm

Registration by 24.08.2026

kunsthalle@giessen.de, +49 641 306 1041

Participation fee 2,50 €

Art Buzz – Short guided tours and drinks for young culturefans

Thu. 17.09.2026, 6 – 8 pm

Artist Talk

Thu. 08.10.2026, 6 pm

Art Education in individual conversation

Every Sat. 2 – 4 pm

Sunday Guided Tour

Sun. 3 pm

06.09. + 25.10.2026

Further information

www.kunsthalle-giessen.de

TEAM KUNSTHALLE GIESSEN

Director: Dr. Nadia Ismail

Curator: Dr. Theresa Deichert

Communication und art education: Eske Fredrich

Project coordination and art education: Marta Dannoritzer

Technican: Carsten Sehorz

Social Media: Lea Schmitz

Apprentice: Elisa-Sharon Diehl

Installation Assistants: Miriam Braun, Elina Ghanbari, Lou Hampel, Anne Horz, Khalil Lagnaoui, Selina Rinn, Enrico Schierer, Anna Seibel, Dirk Zschocke

Volunteers: Brigitte Arvin, Karin Bosco, Angelika Hammes, Monica Hillenbrandt, Elvira Jaworski, Ulrich Jost, Sabine Kirchhof, Sebastian Kortz, Christine Luh, Sabine Paige, Barbara Pisker, Gaby Gladisch-Schneider, Janina Schastock, Myriam Schmidt-Raphael, Ursula Spies, Ingeborg Weigel, Silvia Wirth

Art education: Wanda Sina Berger, Anna-Lena Fischer, Marlene Hick, Tillmann Schorstein, Noa-Kristin Strunk

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