

TUNING MONUMENTS

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis examines the development of historically inaccurate monuments that censor and sanitize reality by questioning their ongoing legacies by using a derivative of counter monument culture. *Tuning Monuments* seeks to understand how architects might design monuments that stimulate civic life and become transcontinental bridges across communities. By looking at the postcolonial discourse between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Belgium, where the debate of the repatriation of artefacts has been reopened recently by the Reorganization campaign of the Royal Museum of Central Africa, this thesis advocates for the monumentalization of the process of repatriation. This monument, dubbed the repatriative monument, asks how the debate of ownership transgresses over time in physical space. By encasing a method of revising, criticizing, and reframing monumental space in relation to their foundational ideologies, the work hopes to see how the nation building ideologies of imperialism and its opposite in Zairianization can be used as contrasting lenses through which we can understand monumental architecture. The work will birth a design proposal, whose siting will be explained within the context of social, material and perceptual spheres. Ultimately, *Tuning Monuments* tries to understand the implications of building such a monument. It serves as a commentary of physically manifesting opposing ideologies within a singular site. Most importantly, it attunes the audience to invisible processes by allowing them to tune into their surroundings.

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To my mother and my father.

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PART 00

Introduction

The colonial and postcolonial relationships between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Belgium are marked by monuments that censor and sanitize unwanted historical truths. This research proposal involves the design of a monument that, when paired with the Royal Museum of Central Africa, not only questions the legacy of Belgian imperialism but also that of its opposite: the process of radical decolonization known as Zairianization. This thesis *Tuning Monuments* seeks to understand how architects might design monuments that stimulate civic life and become transcontinental bridges across communities. It advocates for the monumentalization of the processes of artefact repatriation with an interest in how the debates of ownership transgress time in relation to the holding of historical artefacts. I believe the transfers of artefacts are transfers of power and that such moments should be commemorated in the form of a monument. These ideologies are used as lenses through which we may further understand monumental architecture.

The first chapter revises the forces that have shaped the building of monuments throughout history to understand the history of orientalist strategies in a historical context. I look at the construction of national identities through the lens of orientalism to make sense of the origins, growth, and influence of both imperialism and Zairianization as they project into the built landscape. This is followed by an exploration of the authorship of the monuments at the hands of each of the respective ideologies. I identify three building types to have operated as engines of nation building propaganda. Such a staging further leads into the discussion of the use of landscape in understanding the curation of these “lieux de mémoire.”

The second chapter looks at criticisms of the spaces that these three buildings occupy. A journal is used to document a firsthand account of encounters with the monuments in Laeken in Belgium, Nsele in the DRC, and Tervuren in Belgium. The photographic essay serves to distil the approach to these buildings as warranted by typical protocols. The loop followed is naturally found in the guided movement of the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken, the guided looping tour of a presidential pavillion in Nsele, and the procession from south to north toward the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren.

The third chapter looks at the reframing of space. This chapter begins with a look at how rebranding is being undertaken to change existing identities and narratives. It begins with the grand reopening and raises the question of how one might deal with the issue of artefact repatriation that has plagued the memory of the museum. The final design intervention seeks to address the controversies of artefact repatriation. It begins with addressing the concept of tuning, relating it to the making of the monument. Following this, a series of themes are identified, which help in understanding the core tenets and sentiments that have plagued the memory of the imperialistic monument. The final design results in a monument to the act of artefact repatriation. The siting of this monument will be explained within the context of social, material, and perceptual spheres.

This thesis finishes with a reflection on the implications of building such a monument. The area and focus of the research is particularly poignant at this current time, given the grand re-opening of the Belgian museum in December of 2018 and the critical presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo in early 2019. The intervention, which I conceive as an act of “tuning,” will engage the social, material, and perceptual frameworks that surround the construction of monuments in order to catalyze the conversation around dealing with difficult memories. Ultimately, the work will serve as a commentary on both imperialism and Zairianization contained in a singular site, revealing the hybrid identities generated as a result of historical decision making processes.

Timeline

World Expositions and the Museum



Fig 0.02 1930 Congo World's Fair Pavillion in Antwerp

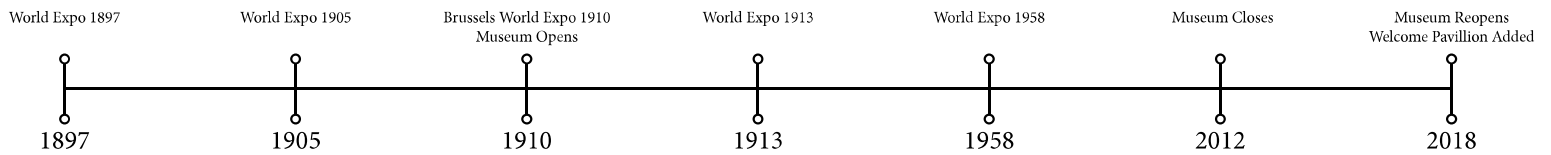


Fig 0.01 *Timeline of World Expositions in relation to the Royal Museum of Central Africa's openings.*



Fig 0.03 1913 Congo Pavillion in Ghent. The palace which recorded 248.292 visitors, was a huge circular building over 50 feet tall.

Siting



Fig 0.04 Site Location: Royal Greenhouses of Laeken (left) to Royal Museum of Central Africa (right)

This map positions the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken and the Royal Museum of Central Africa within the scope of the Brussels area and Tervuren.

Siting

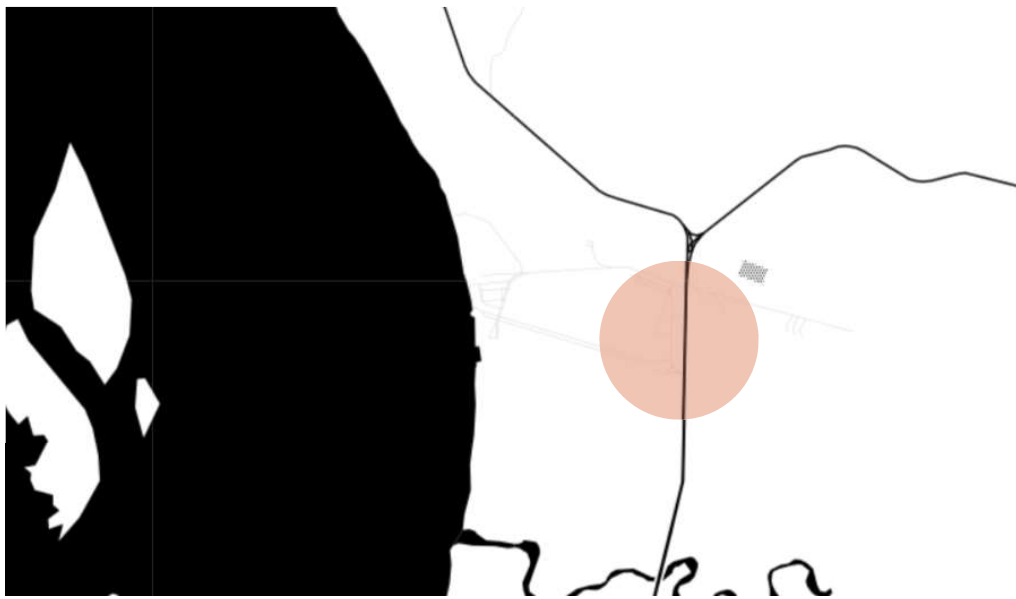


Fig 0.05 Site Location: Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele

This map position's Mobutu's pavillion in Nsele as it relates to the Congo river to the west of the map.

PART 01

Revisions of Monumental Space

The first chapter studies the forces that have shaped the building of monuments in Belgium and in the DRC throughout the years, to inspect and revise the history of orientalist strategies in a historical context. I look at the construction of national identities through the lens of orientalism to make sense of the origins, growth, and influence of both imperialism and Zairianization as they project into the built landscape. I further look at the authorship of the monuments in the hands of each of the respective ideologies. I then identify three building types that operated as engines of nation building propaganda. Such a staging further leads to the discussion of the use of landscape in understanding the curation of these lieux de mémoire.

I.1 Beginnings

Context

The decisions made within the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, which regulated European colonization and trade in Africa in the New Imperialism period have had many repercussions in the foundations of the world as we know it now. Prior to European contact, sub-saharan Africa was geographically organized into a series of kingdoms that show no resemblance to today's continental borders. The Kingdom of Kongo arose in the 1200s in modern day northern Angola and included the extreme western Congo and territories around lakes Kisale and Upemba in central Katanga. The Berlin Conference, which served as a means for European powers to divide up Africa as a means of avoiding conflict with one another, would result in the acquisition of what is known as the Democratic Republic of Congo as a piece of personal property by King Leopold II, the King of the Belgians from 1865 to 1909, within what is known as the scramble for Africa.

This large amassed piece of land was deemed as a geography that was unexplored and relatively uncertain. The grasp on the land mass known as the Congo Free State began in the 1870s until the brutal misrule of the Congo was made known to the outside world and the king forced to hand over the colony to the Belgian state in 1908. Colonization continued as an extractive process, contributing to the wealth of the Belgian State through harsh working regimes, while draining resources and morale from what was known as Belgian Congo.

Around 1959 Belgium lost power over the country, leading to a movement of independence that was finalized in June 1960. The Congo became independent, with Patrice Lumumba as prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu as president. Patrice Lumumba, a favoured Congolese politician, would in time be known for being a national hero. His assassination led the way to the authoritarian state run under the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga Congolese politician and military officer commonly referred to in short as Mobutu who was led the country from 1965 to 1997 under the country's new name of Zaire.

The Author

Every piece of literature holds within it some kind of inherent bias which will alter the method in which a story is told and a message framed. For this reason, it is important for me to articulate my own bias. I was born in eastern Zaire, but spent most of my life in Canada sequestered away from many issues of the "old world". Much of my recollection of the country's history initially came in the form of anecdotal comments and short stories from my parents. My early research into its history began in my first year of university, as a subject of learning that I would dive into while taking a break from my architectural studies.

Much of my extended family network outside of the DRC emigrated to Europe. France, Germany, and Belgium were the countries of choice as the migratory process allowed for almost guaranteed financial freedom for the parent's offspring compared to what was available at the time in what was then known as Zaire. Due to the distance, I made very few, but drawn-out visits to the members living outside of Canada. The visits to my relative's homes often became a multi-familial affair where many houses would be visited to maximize the time across the European framework. Around 2016, my family began reinvesting in the DRC as part of a real estate development project in Kinshasa, re-engaging me with the country once again. This project led me to make a few visits into Belgium and the DRC.

Monumentalization

It was not until the beginning of my architectural education that I began to understand the importance of monumental structures in facilitating the public's ability to collectively remember and cherish the past. However, my interest in the subject experienced an exponential growth during a visit to Brussels while visiting family. A drastic shift in cultural spaces drew me to look back anew at cities that I had previously explored, looking for key indicators of history in sites outside the typical landmarks. I began to look for sites that lived in the very psyche of nations. Sites that were built and embedded to support the notion of nationhood and collective being became a new point of interest. The monument, in that respect, became my guide in understanding the values of an inherent society, and the act of building monuments as a collective process of teaching within the public realm that allowed for deeper confrontations with history.

For me, this did not come all at once. The search for understanding the monument translated into a necessity of understanding monumentalization as a process. I embarked on a journey to find what I thought would have already been properly monumentalized within the postcolonial discourse while in Belgium. While I found many statutory monuments relating to the Crown, I found large gaps in the built environment, which did not seem to address certain core issues of representation, acknowledgement, and repatriation in relation to the Congolese discourse supporting it in the past.

I noticed that monuments were mostly self-referential to the nation itself. Monuments were found within important roundabouts, intersections and places of maximum visibility where they served as centerpieces. The imperial monuments found appeared to serve as backdrops of social settings in the material of bronze and stone, managing to override language and class divisions. These imperial monuments appeared to celebrate as an altruistic enterprise. In Brussels, this was most notably shown in the Thomas Vincotte's Colonial Monument from 1921 which reads:

{Below the low central figure:}

The Congo River

{Below the right-most section of relief:}

The Explorers

{Below the central section of relief:}

The Missionary

{Below the leftmost section of relief:}

Belgians in the Congo

{Above the relief:}

I have undertaken the work of the Congo in the interests of civilisation and for the good of Belgium. Leopold II. 3 July 1906.

{Below the top group of figures:}

The black race welcomed by Belgium

{Below the figures at the left:}

Belgian military heroism crushes the Arab slave

{Below the figures at the right:}

The Belgian soldier sacrifices himself for his wounded commander ¹

¹ "Monument: Congo Monument," *Brussels Remembers*, Accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.brusselsremembers.com/memorials/congo-monument>



Fig 1.01 Vincotte's Colonial Monument - Sometimes referred to as the "Congo Monument"

The encounter with the monument, tucked away within one of the city's many parks, triggered my search for places with collective memory of this effort. Despite this sombre and potentially depressing search, what I saw surrounding me was a multicultural city that seemed to function, irrespective of its heavy political differences, as the unofficial European capital. Clearly, the monument was an antiquated relic from the colonial period, given the vastly different cultural landscape of the new millennia. I returned to Canada with questions about the static nature of monuments, hoping to understand whether I had reached the crux of this issue and whether there was a means of creating more meaningful interactions with outdated traditions.

Following this initial impression, my curiosity was piqued by the types of places in which colonial monuments existed. Over the years, this curiosity about the memory of spaces was shifted rapidly into the realm of postcolonial discourse. Ultimately, I found myself wondering about the role of the architect in the process of generating spaces of collective memory, with hopes that there could be an alternative to the fixed structures I was used to seeing.

I.2 The Form of the Monument

The Monument

The *lieux de mémoire*, also known as a memory space, is a concept coined by the French historian Pierre Nora in his book *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*. Within it he testifies that, a *lieux de mémoire* constitutes the following:

[Any] significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community (in this case, the French community). The narrow concept had emphasized the site: the goal was to exhume significant sites, to identify the most obvious and crucial centers of national memory, and then to reveal the existence of invisible bonds tying them all together.¹

These places, objects or events have special significance related to a group's remembrance. One example of the *lieux de mémoire* is a monument. This thesis attempts to create layered meaning in these memory spaces by conjuring a new kind of monument to occupy the postcolonial discourse.

The monument, whose origins stem from the Greek *mnemosynon* and the Latin *moneo*, *monere*, refers to something meant "to remind," "to advise," or "to warn."² By allowing us to interpret our understanding of the past in order to further propel this into the future, the monument becomes a tool for teaching and instruction fixed in the public psyche as a node within the collective memory. In English the word "monumental" is often used in reference to something of extraordinary size and power, as in monumental sculpture, but also to mean simply anything made to commemorate the dead, as a funerary monument or other types of funerary art.

Due to their relation to memory and time, the monument and the memorial are often used to denote similar memory spaces, muddling the interpretation of the words. Within this thesis, the monument will be used to describe a site that commemorates an ideology, stance, or a person with a particular position of authority in society. The monument may serve as a site of remembrance and storytelling, becoming a rallying point throughout history. Memorials, on the other hand, celebrate individuals or groups related to specific efforts. The memorial is used to describe a site that commemorates perished groups, individuals related to efforts irrespective of titles, or an important event. These may serve as sites of inaugurations, gatherings, the stagings of speeches and the commemoration of missions. The structures can range in form from cultural landmarks, buildings, statues, sculptures, and fountains to entire parks.

1 Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996)

2 American Heritage® *Dictionary of the English Language*, Fifth Edition, S.v. "monument," Retrieved January 28 2020 from <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/monument>

The Counter Monument

The typical monument is static in nature, imparting a very fixed ideology to its constituents throughout time. It is for this reason that throughout the years, many monuments have found themselves at the center of heated debates of remembrance in society. This produces an unfavourable scenario, which negates the layered nuances of history that is revealed as times change against unfavourable ideologies.

One proposed solution to the problem of static nature of traditional monuments is the idea of a counter monument. The concept of counter monument originated in Germany, where between 1986 and 1993, the Hamburg Monument Against Fascism designed by Esther Shalev-Gerz and Jochen Gerz to protest against the celebration of the Nazi's war disappeared from sight.³ The counter monument can have two forms: It can be a monument without monumentality, or it can be a monument in direct opposition of an existing monument. This thesis deals with the latter type of counter monument. It is due to the ability of the counter monument to impart a temporal quality to the site that allows for a more flexible and honest confrontation with history. In the essay "The Counter Monument: Memory Against Itself Today" James E. Young, a professor of English and Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst explains:

The material of a conventional monument is normally chosen to withstand the physical ravages of time, the assumption being that its memory will remain as everlasting as its form. But as Mumford has already suggested, the actual consequence of a memorial's unyielding fixedness in space is also its death over time: a fixed image created in one time and carried over into a new time suddenly appears archaic, strange, or irrelevant altogether.⁴



Fig 1.02 *The unveiling and first four sinkings of the Hamburg Monument against Facism. From the invitation to the ceremony commemorating the fifth sinking.*

This thesis takes the notion of counter monument as a social mirror, reveling in the ability of a structure to remind a community of its ability to respond to the memory of its own past. The counter monument is often seen as a structure whose temporary nature is necessitated for it to function successfully. I suggest that there is a means of using this notion of temporality to create another kind of monument that relates to issues of the present day.

3 James E Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267-96. Accessed January 28, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/1343784.

4 *Ibid.*

The Monument to the Repatriation of Artefacts

What I define as the monument to the repatriation of artefacts comes as a derivative of the counter monument, opposing the innate qualities of the imperial ideology that it converses with. In doing so, it engages the postcolonial discourse, echoing some of the precepts found in Belgian imperialism's ideological mirror likened by mandates such as Zairianization in this context. The monument to the repatriation of artefacts as a concept is to explore the concept of power, authorship, and ownership.

This notion of repatriation refers to the process of returning an asset, often symbolic in value, to their place of origin. The monument in this regard serves to keep track of the process of the repatriation of artefacts. It generates a monument whose iterative building is more important than its finalized static end. This is one of many tools that can be used in the defining of space in order to deal with highly politicized discussions that necessitate reconciliation. It is ultimately a solution oriented approach of dealing with contemporary controversies.

I identify that the monument to the repatriation of artefacts must hold within it three key components. It must first be bilaterally site specific, relating to the particular geographical region both of origin and destination of the assets in question. Its second criteria requires it to be object oriented, necessitating a physical asset of discussion. The assets related to the repatriative process must be held accountable by the body or institution in control of them. The third criterial for the monument necessitates a process oriented approach to the monument's completion. Its construction must be made into an active spectacle that relates to the symbolic aspect of repatriation.

Doing this prioritises collective reflection and anticipation as part of the process of experiencing space. The monument cannot be self actualized, necessitating synchronic action from the institution which it addresses in order to become complete. As such, the monument to the repatriation of artefacts generates a public display of accountability. Its definitive strength stems from its ability to celebrate the process of reconciliation.

I.3 Empowering the Ideology with the Monument

Monumental Ideologies: Orientalism in the Postcolonial Discourse

There has always been a connection between political ideologies and monuments. Monumental space becomes a physical embodiment of political ideology as it intersects within the public realm. For this reason, its siting is rarely arbitrary, as it becomes a stage chosen for maximum key exposure to its audience. It is for this reason that I aim to revise monumental space with respect to the formulative ideologies impacting the issue of artefact repatriation today. This means that I will have to attach key elements of postcolonial discourse into the narrative of the thesis in order to fully grasp the interventionary action necessary to remediate the chosen site.

The colonial and postcolonial relationships between the DRC and Belgium are marked by monuments that censor and sanitize unwanted historical truths. My research proposal involves the design of a monument to the repatriation of artefacts that, when built, not only questions the legacy of Belgian imperialism but also that of its opposite: the process of radical decolonization, known as Zairianization. It asks how architects might take inspiration from counter-monuments in their design process in order to stir civic life and become trans-continental bridges across communities.

These ideologies are bound by their necessity of orientalist practices to operate. Orientalism is a term coined by Edward Said, a Palestinian American academic and one of the founders of the academic field of postcolonial studies. In his book *Orientalism*, he describes the means through which the process of “othering” generates a sense of identity.¹ It is through the lens of orientalism that one can understand the means through which both King Leopold II, the King of the Belgians from 1865 to 1909 and Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga, a Congolese politician and military officer who was the President of Zaire (present day Democratic Republic of Congo) from 1965 to 1997 could, in part, build states that gained a sense of common values. These kleptocratic leaders used orientalism to invert the gaze from that of the colonizer to that of the colonized, from the constructed self to the impressionable.² This can explain the tenets of imperialism and Zairianization, as a binary between the “we” and “they” is made. The use of institutions and exposition showed cultural representations of orientalism and the exercise of power as defined by Paul-Michel Foucault, a French philosopher, historian of ideas, social theorist and literary critic whose theories address the relationship between power and knowledge, and how they are used as a form of social control through societal institutions.

A series of institutions, which are understood to operate as propaganda within the processes of nation building, is examined. Propaganda is the production and dissemination of information to help or hinder a particular institution, person or cause. It is within the history of architecture to serve a role within the propaganda machine. I look at architecture as a measure through which national identity became the purpose of monument making.³ For this reason, I chose to look into three buildings, an orangerie in Laeken, a pavillion in Nsele, and a museum in Tervuren which originated at key moments when national identity, and the appearance of the country on the world stage were of much importance.

1 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

2 Absolute monarchy and dictatorships are similar in their sole proprietorship of power and absolute governance. This generates nationalism based on ephemeral ideology rather than existing realities of the populace. Inherent in both systems is a desire to prove the legitimacy of reign and provide unquestioned power.

3 National identity is the constructed solidarity formed between a group of people who claim to share a set of common values in tradition, culture, language and politics. Orientalism creates such a distinction by allowing individuals to quickly self-identity through the exclusion of the distinct other. The cohesiveness of the whole can be interpreted through tradition, culture, language and politics. National identities hope to diminish some of the core tenets of tribalism within diverse states and facilitate ruling by unifying people toward a singular cause.

Power and Architecture

This thesis looks at assertions of soft power within a strategic system of informal diplomatic networks in the building types of an orangerie, a pavillion and a museum. It uses the work of Foucault to understand these spaces as institutions of power to relate them to their intrinsic purpose in nation building. According to Foucault, institutions are a way of freezing power relations so that a certain number of people are advantaged. The role of the institution is to operate as a space for reform. The institution branches off into broader society in what is known as a carceral system. This includes the architecture of the institution, its regulations and staff, cementing the place of the institution in society.

Each building has functioned to assert power and competence in some manner. The orangerie in Laeken operated as a space of informal and private diplomatic engagement, carefully curated within a timely modern architectural technology. It asserted on fellow states the ruler's competence as a monarch. The pavillion in Nsele was established to help strengthen relations with the East, ultimately landing with China at a time when public displays of European approval went against state public ideology. The museum in Tervuren established the authority and rightful rule of Leopold II within Central Africa. The museum was closely intertwined in many aspects of civilian life from secondary education to universities. Ultimately, I speculate that these spaces operated within frameworks that attempted to improve the pre-existing perception of national identity.



Fig 1.03 The Winter Garden at the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken. To this day, the buildings continue a history of welcoming heads of state during official visits. It also functioned as a site of important events, along with its orangerie. This includes the engagement of Rudolf of Austria and Princess Stephanie of Belgium (pictured above).

Monumental Ideologies: Through the Lens of Imperialism

The orientalist practice of imperialism in Belgium had the ambitious goal of casting Leopold II as an ingenious and generous colonial ruler.⁴ Although national bonds are nurtured in the ephemeral realm of thoughts, physical manifestations often serve as a means to finalize these in place. It is within this capacity that monuments serve as concrete representations of the nation and its aspirations. Memorials, monuments, and museums intersected with expositions in what Tony Bennet, an English sociologist and academic, has called the “exhibitionary complex” where permanent museums and temporal expositions complement one another.^{5,6}

In the concluding chapter of his book *Selling the Congo* Matthew Stanard, professor at Berry College, points out that “Belgian imperialism was not a given but rather something always in the process of becoming, and even into the last days.”⁷ The top down approach to nationalism resulted in vulnerabilities further exploited after the colony’s turnover from Leopold to the Belgian State in 1908 due to a growing indifference of the masses in relation to all things colonial. As such, the then called Congo Museum’s (later renamed to Royal Museum of Central Africa) role was to generate knowledge that would re-inspire interest in the process of empire building.

In the words of Jean Stengers, a Belgian historian, the “attitude of [Belgian] public opinion...was the major paralyzing agent which stifled any possibility of effective reaction to nationalist demands. In the Congo the protagonists of Congolese independence were the Patrice Lumumbas and the Kasavubus; in Belgium the protagonist was, more than anyone else, the man in the street.”⁸ What Jean Stengers refers to can be understood as the *esprit du clocher* (church bell-tower mentality), a French expression which relates to a lack of interest in anything outside one’s own village. This parochialism, a state of mind whereby one focuses on small sections of an issue rather than considering its wider context, ultimately blocked further public support through sheer lack of interest and has further rooted itself in Belgian culture within Europe. To this day, this apathy is viewed negatively by the Congolese due to the severity of colonization within Africa, thus breeding grounds for contempt in discussions about colonial topics. It is for this reason that discussions about Belgian imperialism are treaded lightly by the Belgian public. The effects of the state’s propaganda only really came into full effect in the period following World War 2 until decolonization. Until that moment, it was not uncommon for Belgians to be reluctant in settling within the colony.⁹

4 Matthew G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo: A History of European pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

5 Tony Bennett. *The Birth of the Museum : History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

6 The exhibitionary complex was a response to the problem of order. It aimed to reduce the ungovernable into a system of classification. It provided a context for the permanent display of power knowledge. The exhibitionary complex puts the nationalized citizenry on the side of power, thus identifying its hierarchies as for the good of all. This power is subjugated by flattery, generating complicity rather than a submission to it. The result of which is the creation of a collective “we” through its representation of otherness. The principles of the exhibitionary complex regulated the crowd by making the crowd itself the ultimate spectacle. The orientation of these disciplines within the exhibitionary complex was that of ‘show and tell’.

As a key component of the exhibitionary complex, the museum’s roots grew from that of the studios and the cabinets des curieux, which withheld its contents from the public gaze. Private ownership and restricted access provided their cultural leverage. Fairs functioned as aids to public order. Museums and expositions appealed to the middle classes and the skilled working classes. Museums and expositions set out to win the hearts and minds of their visitors with the aim of transforming people through awe and reverence of the nation. The endeavours, self-aggrandizing in nature, generated a sense that the nation was to become part of the identity of the self.

7 Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 12.

8 Stengers, *Precipitous Decolonization*, 335.

9 Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 259.

Following the colony's turnover from Leopold II to the state, the colonial endeavour necessitated support from the church, state, industry, and active segments of the metropolitan population, especially veteran groups. Veterans were extremely vocal advocates for the empire as nationals with ties to the efforts began to be idolized after 1908.¹⁰ The Congo Free State became the Belgian Congo after governance was taken from the Leopold II and turned over to the Belgian state in 1908. This demonstrated a metropolitan support, albeit minority, that extended beyond soldiers to various curators, academics, and pro-empire groups supporting the colonial endeavour within Europe.

The building of monuments is the physical writing of a curated history that ties citizens closely together by emphasizing national culture. Primarily, colonial monuments were built by those with the most personal and financial incentive within the colony. This comprised of veteran groups, local governments, and local colonial interest groups. Up to the 1950s, the Belgian Ministry of Colonies was responsible in subsidizing the building of monuments and commemorations, in part to ramp up the imperial efforts, and create personal links with the endeavour.

¹⁰ Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 12.

Monumental Ideologies: Through the Lens of Zairianization

Orientalism provides a lens through which we can understand Mobutu's campaign to decolonize the former Belgian colony. Mobutu maintained power from 1965 to 1997. His reign was compounded by tensions of the Cold War, in which the country was situated as a key material provider for larger powers, thus influencing the politics of the time. The search to forge a common national identity sought to attract foreign money through investment and relief. Orientalism provided the framework for Mobutu in his ambition of generating a postcolonial identity.

Zairianization was set up as a state policy that transpired from Mobutu's campaign for *l'authenticité*, which roughly translates to authenticity. The campaign for *authenticité* bred a state ideology that embedded the radical process of decolonization in order to render the West obsolete. Mobutu's aim was to remove the image of Europe from the country, if at least superficially. This was done through the eradication of Western cultural norms such as the names of people and places including the renaming of the country, clothing attire, currency, political structure, and many other customs. From the outside, it appeared as if only the use of Christianity and the French language was kept. This was far from the truth as Mobutu's rule could only function as supported from the West at this time. These ironic transactions with the West for his own personal benefit and assurance of power occurred as he simultaneously fiddled with notions of creating new public bridges with China.¹¹ The final aim of the authenticity campaign was to generate a singular centralized postcolonial identity that would be authentically African.¹² By 1972, Mobutu had changed many of his subject's names, the currency, and the name of the country—to Zaire. In ruling the one party state, he effectively replicated many of the similar outcomes from colonial days through his use of absolute power. His rule left the country bankrupt, thus failing to reverse the trajectory set up by colonialism.

Mobutu's attempt to return to *l'authenticité* also called for the return of artefacts from the Royal Museum of Central Africa to Zaire. It was during his role as leader of Zaire's one party state that the museum initiated its first transfer of artefacts. However, this initial set of transactions left much to be desired. The museum director since 2001, Dr. Guido Gryseels, a Belgian academic and agricultural economist, has often been known to cite this transaction in his discussions regarding the issue of the repatriation of artefacts. The issue did not remain localized in Belgium. While being discussed at large globally, it found itself the subject of an online piece by writer Alex Marshall, a European culture reporter for The New York Times in 2018. Within the paper, Marshall writes:

The Africa Museum has experienced problems returning objects before, Mr. Gryseels said. Between 1976 and 1982, it sent back 114 objects to Congo [Mobutu's Zaire]. The country was then ruled by Mobutu Sese Seko, a dictator who renamed the country Zaire in a break with its colonial past. But after Mr. Mobutu's regime collapsed and the country fell into civil war, most items went missing and are assumed to have found their way onto the black market. Mr. Gryseels said he is sometimes alerted about items for sale.

¹¹ The notion of "East" refers to China.

¹² Mobutu's postcolonial identity was rooted in the idea that an authentic African identity needed to be built within the country. A separation from European norms generated a necessity to return to one's own roots.



Fig 1.04 Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele. As one of his favourite residences, it welcomed important visitors of state while Mobutu was in power. It was at this pavillion in Nsele that he declared the end of his one party rule. Upon the end of his reign and the reinstatement of a new presidential candidate, many of Mobutu's residences were looted and changed forever in what is referred to as the "pilage." The "pilage" was a week-long spree of looting and destruction in September of 1991 that was done by underpaid troops of the national army in major cities across the country resulting in hundreds of deaths. It had a horrible effect on the economy, ultimately turning military bases thriving markets for looted goods up for resale. This included his private residences and pavillions.

Mr. Gryseels admitted that by highlighting such issues he could make himself unpopular among those seeking to return objects. But he said he should not be misunderstood: Objects should be returned where possible. "It's not normal that 80 percent of African heritage is in Europe. We need to do something about it," he added. Mr. Gryseels said that in some cases it is better to first talk about long-term loans, or helping Congo build its own museums and staff to conserve objects.¹³

In recent times, a new museum being built in Kinshasa, the nation's capital, through funds provided by the People's Republic of Korea has brought this debate of artefact repatriation back into the limelight. This new structure has been the subject of international attention vying to see the legitimacy of the promises made by the Royal Museum of Central Africa. Despite Mobutu being long gone, elements of his rhetoric continue to be used in discussions including the notion of "authenticity" or that of the "authentic" origins of these artefacts. It is for this reason that he too, in part, must be understood in order to have a true understanding of the present day situation.¹⁴

¹³ Alex Marshall, "Belgium's Africa Museum Had a Racist Image. Can It Change That?" *The New York Times*, December 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/08/arts/design/africa-museum-belgium.html?auth=login-google>

¹⁴ Mobutu's Zaire had many fragilities that resulted from his inability to provide for his own people. It is for this reason that it is not shocking that these items found themselves back on the streets of Brussels, as the director had mentioned. Since then, the country has seen several changes in administration, with some seeing hope for a more stable future home for these artefacts.

Ryan Lenora Brown, "In Congo, a New National Museum Renews Quest to Reclaim History," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 27, 2018, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2018/0427/In-Congo-a-new-national-museum-renews-quest-to-reclaim-history>.

From the Postcolonial Discourse into the Physical Manifestation

Ultimately, this introduction into Belgium's imperialism and Zaire's zairionization within the postcolonial discourse is meant to create the kind of friction which is to manifest a monument to the repatriation of artefacts in this book's finale. Before this is done, I will need to create a connective thread between the ideologies and the monument. I begin doing this through the use of a journal, which sets its sights on three sites of which I have deemed instrumental in the understanding of the ideological reframing which I anticipate will be created by the monument to the repatriation of artefacts. Ultimately, the use of this journal will provide further context and support in the selection of the monument's site of intervention.

PART 02

Criticisms of Monumental Space

The following chapter describes, in the form of journal entries, the architecture of the orangerie, the pavillion, and the museum as they present themselves in their varying assertions of power. Critiquing their original purpose, the journal experience of the modern-day occupancy within these spaces serves to contextualize these monuments within a contemporary setting. The journals use the work of Foucault intermittently, to understand the means through which these spaces might be interpreted to operate as institutions of power. Thus, an implicit remark denotes the assertion that these spaces were representative of the process through which nation-building occurred in their unique ways. A dichotomy is made between spaces that influence the spheres of the public and those that influence the spheres of the elites.

Through my retelling of these sites through first hand experience, I hope to show a narrative provided to the visitor in these politically charged spaces. This will allow the reader to understand what is gathered and digested from being invited to these sites as a guest, as all three of the provided sites were created for a very distinct purpose. The personal perspective is to set the scene for what will be a finalized design project at the end of part 3.

Equipment

- Camera:** Sony A7sii
- Lens:** Voigtlander 40mm f1.4 Leica M Mount
Sony FE 28-70mm f/3.5-5.6 OSS
Nikon Nikkor 24mm f2.8
- Adapters:** Leica M Lens Mount Lens to Sony Alpha Nex E-mount Body
- Filters:**
43mm Infrared (IR) Filter 760nm Fotga
49mm Infrared (IR) Filter 720nm Polaroid Optics X-Ray
52mm Infrared (IR) Filter 720nm Neewer
52mm Infrared (IR) Filter 760nm Neewer
52mm Infrared (IR) Filter 850nm Neewer
52mm Infrared (IR) Filter 950nm Neewer

Notes On Photography

Context

During my travels in Belgium and the DRC I created a photographic record of the Royal Greenhouses in Laken, Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele, and the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren. Their unusual aesthetic invites an explanation. At some point during my thesis research, I stumbled on the work of Richard Mosse, an Irish photographer who travelled the DRC taking photographs with Kodak Aerochrome film. Beyond the stunning visuals, I thought there was an inherent metaphorical quality to shooting within a segment of the light spectrum unseen by the human naked eye. The notions of revealing what is unseen, but ever-present was attractive to me.

My original intent was to display these infrared images in black and white, as I found the haunting visuals provided would be relevant to a thesis discussing the ghosts of the past. Within the medium, greens turned ghostly white, and skies darkened to deep grays and blacks so as to provide extreme contrasts. The typical camera blocks the infrared spectrum within the body of the camera. The degree to which this is done varies by manufacturer. To acquire true infrared photography, a standard camera must be altered in a way that allows for this unseen portion of the spectrum to be visible. Depending on the make of the camera, a compromise may be made through the use of infrared pass filters. These filters try to negate the visible part of the light spectrum in favour for infrared light. Coupled with what is known as a "converted" camera (a camera which has been converted for compatibility with infrared photography), these pass filters would greatly amplify the experience of shooting in infrared by allowing the photographer to see exactly what the final result appeared to be on the camera's viewfinder, prior to postproduction. I decided to buy these filters, but was hesitant on giving away my Sony camera to a stranger for modification due to fears regarding poor manipulation of internal parts and the risky return on investment. My filters arrived the day I was about to depart for Belgium, and at such a moment, I decided I would make the compromise not to convert the camera body and see how the images turned out in the end.

The resulting images did not provide me with the precise aesthetic I intended to have. The images appeared more so as an image set seen within a dark room, with the red light flushing the entirety of the image. It did not take me very long to realize that I had made a grave mistake in not converting my camera body. Despite this, and given the massive markup to camera equipment found in Belgium, I decided to continue with the equipment that I did have. I made amends that the photographs I now had would instead of presenting an ethereal atmosphere would instead convey the intensity of emotions roused by the colour red, unless converted to a monochrome black and white format again.

The photographic set of images pictured is called *The Dark Room*. Dark rooms are often pictured in their red-lit state. The safelights provided within them produce this effect due to their suitability to the process of developing imagery. The red lighting allows photographers to control light carefully, so that light-sensitive photographic paper does not become overexposed and ruined in this process. Metaphorically, *The Dark Room* presents a series of images that allowed me to process the spaces which I visited. It represents an inherent process of developing imagery, reminiscent of the initial methods of producing photography. Sequenced vertically, *The Dark Room* envisions a world perpetually cinematically in production - one that has yet to reach its finality.



Fig 2.01 *The Royal Greenhouses of Laeken*

2.1 The Orangerie: Royal Greenhouses of Laeken

Context

Six kilometers from the centre of Brussels, the Belgian royal family built a series of greenhouses around the Royal Palace. The average public visitor to the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken is only granted a three-week window in spring that allows them access to the premises. As such, visits to the royal grounds become events for locals and tourists alike. My visit to the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken was done during this brief timeframe. People are drawn to the greenhouses for both the variety of flora, the architecture of the building, and the exclusivity of the visit. There is a fee for entry, despite the compounds being subsidized by public taxes. Since their inception in 1874 the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken have not grown tremendously. The current work being done on the royal grounds is associated with minimizing the carbon footprint of the royal family's residences.

Origins and Purpose

Before identifying the origins and purpose, I will acknowledge the primary elements of the site. The Royal Greenhouses of Laeken are comprised of two primary elements. The first is the orangerie towards the front and the greenhouse complex in the back. The orangerie serves as a threshold from which one enters and leaves the greenhouses. It is for this reason that I will primarily focus on its story of origins.

Taking reference from the cabinets of curiosities, the origins of the orangerie gave it a kind of cultural power, due to the novelty of the building type and its association with wealth. The orangerie is a kind of conservatory that evolved in the renaissance gardens made possible by the improvement of glass technology. The conservatory, in the past, was broadly used to define glassed buildings inhabited by plants. The original purpose of the orangerie was to provide a space where orange and other fruit trees could be protected from the weather during the winter. Over time these buildings became signs of wealth. The orangeries became spaces of admiration for owners, both for the structure and the flora. Tours by such owners relied on the fact that the spaces created a platform for the objectification of the exotic.

The typical orangerie is composed of stone and glass. Oriented lengthwise, the southern orientation maximizes heat gain to cater to its fragile flora. To the north can be a thermal mass to retain and dissipate this heat or the second series of windows where the aesthetic trumps function. In Laeken, the factor of the aesthetic was used to override this function. The shallow depth of the plan ensures ample lighting throughout the space.

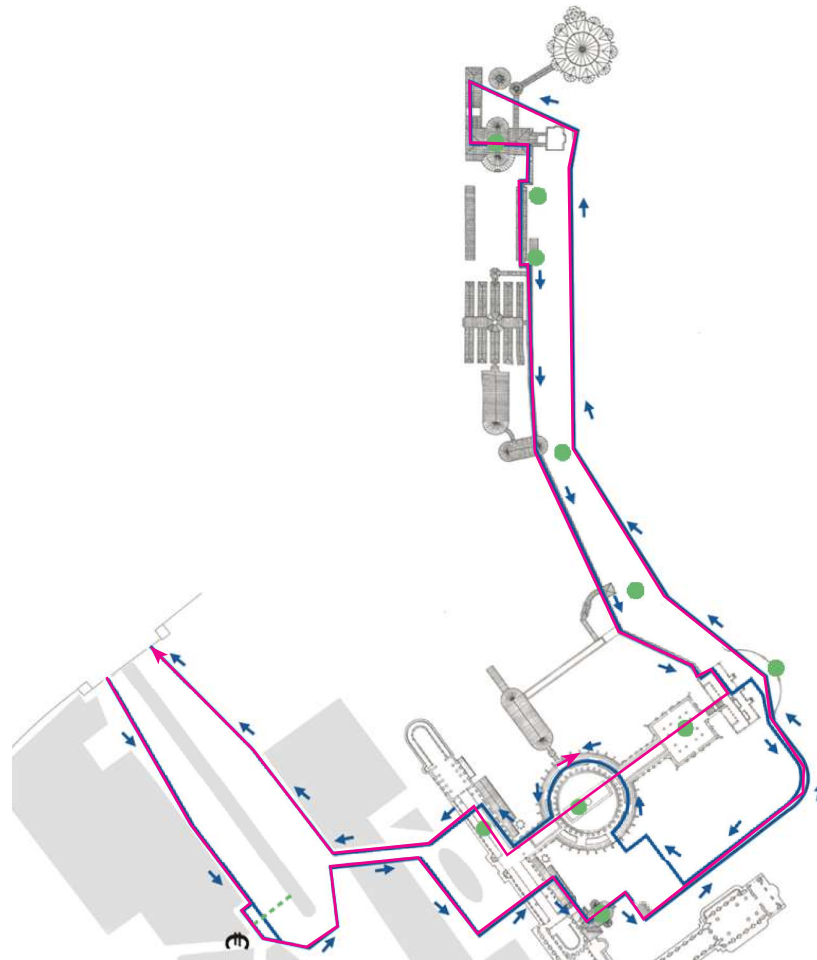
The Laeken orangerie was used for the advancement of the reputation of the Belgian Royal Family. It was privately owned and with restricted access, providing it with heightened cultural leverage. It can be symbolically seen to establish the new Saxe-Coburg dynasty within the network of European monarchs. The history of the orangerie is directly related to the history of gardens, bringing the social dynamics of the French garden into a building type. The social dimensions of the building are further emphasized through the arrangement of seating and fountains. Today, once a year during the spring, the public is invited to visit the greenhouses. Journeys taken within the compound are carefully guided. Two loops exist, one for able-bodied pedestrians and one for the disabled. Both of these routes are protected throughout by security personnel who keep the visitors away from the royal residences frequently connected to the greenhouses.



- The Orangerie at Laeken*
- The Winter Garden*
- The Congo Garden*
- Circulation*

Fig 2.02 *Royal Greenhouses of Laeken*

The image shows an aerial view of the Greenhouses. Highlighted are key components to the site.



- Major Points of Interest
- My Path
- Alternate Path

Fig 2.03 Plan of the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken

The diagram shows the circulation path taken.

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.04 *The Royal Greenhouses of Laeken*

While Focusing on the Pagoda

Some of the developments surrounding the site of Laeken stem back to the time of the Brussels International Exhibition of 1897, where Leopold II intended to inspire confidence in the imperialistic endeavour. Initially planned for 1895, the opening date of the International Exhibition was delayed until 1897 to provide enough time for a Congolese section in Tervuren to be complete. The quest to exhibit contrasting societies did not limit itself to Central Africa. The Chinese pavilion and the Japanese tower came from Leopold's desire to have two sections destined to illustrate the economic possibilities offered to Japan and China, similar to the industrial producing presentation of Africa at the museum. This was because they were becoming important outlets for the country.

In 1904 these plans to exhibit the extreme orient were relocated to Laeken, making it the current locations of the Japanese tower and the Chinese pavillion adjacent to the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken. Two structures are found on the perimeter of Laeken's gardens. The idea of building these two structures originated from Leopold II's fascination with the "Tour du Monde" panorama at the Paris World Exhibition of 1900. The first structure is a Japanese pagoda built for Leopold II in 1904 and inaugurated in 1905. The second structure is a Chinese pavillion which began being built for Leopold II in 1905. This was due to previous ambition to embellish the surroundings of the Royal Domain of Laeken. This would ultimately leave Tervuren to be exclusive grounds for the study of the colonial question. It is ironic that Mobutu would choose to take a similar approach to Leopold II in executing his very own Chinese pavillion, albeit for different reasons which will be outlined in the following journal.

The tower first appeared in sight as I walked along the edge of the wall concealing the contents of the royal park in Laeken. Located toward the north of Brussels, it operates as a key structure marking an approach to the royal grounds. Once within the gates of Laeken, it reappears briefly, only to recede into the background of the landscape. In the spring, the pink flowers accent the otherwise green hills with a short-lived bloom. Its last appearance, due to the nature of the visitor's route in the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken, appears on an unmarked path that leads toward what appears to be a private entry to the site. This is intermingled within varying greenhouse structures and the Royal Palace. Its appearance and disappearance within the journey serve as a kind of visual choreography to the experience of the site.

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.05 *The Royal Greenhouses of Laeken*

At the Orangerie

The orangerie is met twice within the visit to Laeken. It is experienced at the beginning of the tour and at the end of the tour. Serving as a kind of occupied threshold, the orangerie's use was transitory and brief for most visitors, while it operates as a final place of repose for others. Within the following spaces, nature and artifice in the form of its man made editing are combined to generate a very curated space that positively reflects on the Crown. The orangerie and the gardens within the greenhouse complex become spaces where discipline is exerted onto the flora. The orangerie presents itself as a construct removed from society, appearing periodically every spring for three weeks.

Upon entering the building, the first thing one notices is the smell. At times it is the familiar pungence of roses. At other times, the refreshing scent of citrus from the orange trees. Every now and then, unfamiliar and intriguing flowers combined scents to create a draw to varying corners of the rooms. The blending of aromas, which intensify when daylight warms the intimate space, create extremely vivid memories of the space.

The compact dimensions of the space force visitors into a single file. Then, bodies move in uniformity into the subsequent rooms, marching as if on military command. They are directed by the unilateral and curated experiences set forth by the Crown. Eventually, the visitors arrive in a large space to be used for big social occasions. Most notably, across the window is a view of the Winter Gardens, which are experienced at the end of the tour.

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.06 *The Royal Greenhouses of Laeken*

Leaving the Orangerie

The spaces exert power and authority and assert the Saxe-Coburg dynasty to be rightful ruler of Belgium. This, I assume, must operate as a space of informal and private diplomatic engagement, within a sea of carefully curated flora. Such a space asserts a position of power to fellow states. Ahead is a rolling landscape of lawned hills and lush forest. Adjacent are the Winter Gardens, which functions as a place of repose before a journey returning to the orangerie is made.

The movement within the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken occurs within a loop. The experience begins at the orangerie. It moves through the greenhouses, then the open gardens, more greenhouses, and finally finishes within the orangerie once more. Large vaulted spaces such as the Winter Gardens and Congo Gardens are interlaced with intimate and narrow paths lush in the intoxicating scent.

Exerpts from the Dark Room

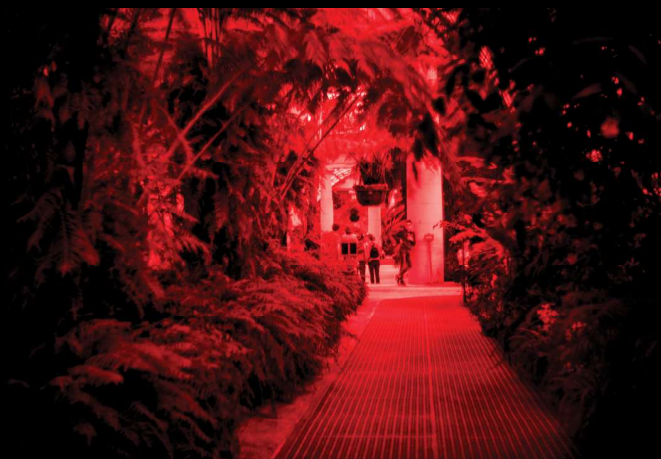


Fig 2.07 *The Royal Greenhouses of Laeken*

Towards the Winter Dome

Within the domed spaces of the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken are moments of awe—awe of the structure's scale and the irony of the flora's juxtaposition within this environment. Within photographs, the palm trees almost appear as pillars piercing into the glass roof, supporting the space in metaphorical likeness to the colony's support of the country over the years.

Metal grills lace the path toward the domed spaces such as the rotunda as the densification of greenery creates a more intimate experience waiting to be experienced in the following moments. The system of classification present operates as an imperial exercise. Physical markers are made within the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken which depict a Western approach to botanical nomenclature with latin origins. In the lush paths, these meticulous systems of classification exoticize the fauna through an exercise of power that delineates the flora's order and origins.

The Dark Room



Fig 2.08 *The Royal Greenhouses of Laeken*

Power and the Orangerie

It is useful to think of the orangerie as a kind institution that operates as a private museum. Its claim in exerting power lies in its ability to efficiently produce an environment that is conducive to its highly curated plant growth and its function in providing a medium through which the fruits of empire can be admired. Botanical order is carefully thought out, labelled through Western latin classification systems. Most importantly, the space is relegated to be exclusive, becoming a cabinet of curiosity for the elite which is seldomly, but deliberately shared with others of esteemed status.

Feasibility

When compared to the museum in Tervuren, the site is not suitable for the implementation of the repatriative monument. This is due to its short opening hours, exclusivity, and highly prohibitive regulation which diminish the amount and the type of work which can be done on the site. The site lacks continued public access which would make it more readily engaging on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion

The isolated case of the Congo Garden building within the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken can be seen as metaphorically bringing Africa into Europe. It is here that the Congo is personified as a hot house in Laeken.



Fig 2.09 *Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele*

2.2 The Pavillion: Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele

Context

A few kilometers outside of Kinshasa, Mobutu received a pavillion as a tactical gift in 1970 as part of an agricultural development program developed through Mobutu's new ties with the East. This program, along with the structure located near the presidential compound, was later overtaken by communist technicians after Mobutu acknowledged the People's Republic of China in 1973. The average Congolese person does not typically visit Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele. The siting of the project was done so as to be out of reach for the common person as Mobutu felt it would be against his interests to be included within the periphery of the city. He often joked that building roads would only beget the population to come to harass him. As a result, no public mode of transportation connects the site to the city center. In addition, the premises are guarded by the militia. Known initially for its opulence and famous guests, the pavillion fell into disarray after Mobutu's regime was brought down.

Origins and Purpose

Mobutu, upon his inauguration, attempted to sever visible political ties with the West in favour of the East. Mobutu's decision to build a pavillion was affected by his admiration of Chinese temples after visiting the Forbidden City. Mobutu was not a known Buddhist, so one may assume that this pavillion did not have religious meaning behind it, but a broader political meaning.

For Mobutu, the Chinese garden existed with an inherent political purpose, serving as a site for soft diplomacy. He wanted to enforce his power and authority by creating a space that would host foreign heads of states, akin to the Greenhouses of Laeken. The ambition was in strengthening relations with China through the art of mirroring familiar structures. The presence of the pavillion, was intended to assert Mobutu's ability to have a sovereign, unified state as he presented himself to other foreign leaders.



- 1 *Entrance Gate*
- 2 *Pavillion Primary Building*
- 3 *Server's Quarters*
- 4 *The Ring*
- 5 *Pond*
- 6 *Pavillion Outer Buildings*
- 7 *Unknown Structure*
- 8 *Wall Surrounding Site*
- 9 *Road leading to the Agricultural Site*

Fig 2.10 *Aerial View of Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele*



Fig 2.11 *A view from the second floor of Mobutu's pavillion in Nsele looking out onto the driveway.*

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.12 *Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele*

Towawrds the Garden

The linear progression and upward ascension into the pavillion through the center denotes clear methods of control through motion. The landscape unfolds in a cinematic reel as one moves through the spaces. The remote location of the pavillion, removes it from the noise and pollution of everyday life, making it a distant part of the urban system of Kinshasa.

Exerpts from the Dark Room

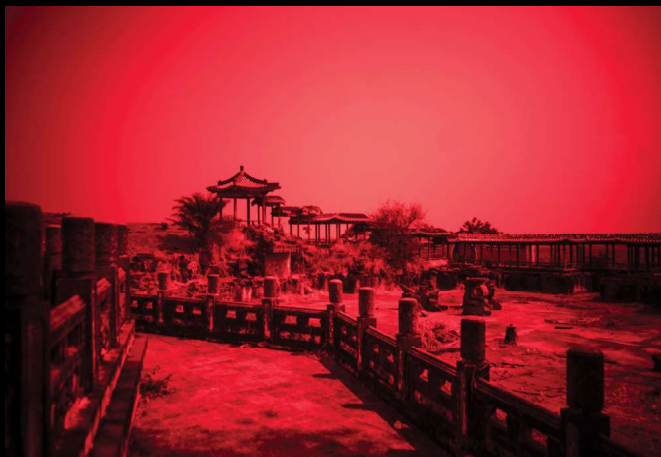


Fig 2.13 *Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele*

Within the Garden

The Chinese garden was intended to be a place for Mobutu's elite circle and guests to experience refuge from the city of Kinshasa. Typical Chinese gardens contain natural scenes with bridges, creeks and winding paths that are interspersed with magnificent palatial architecture representing royal dignity. Chinese gardens do not exist in isolation as they are complementary to a house, which is defined by a central axis. Their organic shape provides a contrast to the orthography of the house. Thus, the house becomes a way of constructing social hierarchy and experiencing the garden. Within it, the garden exposes itself as a cinematic reel, revealing a procession of views to be generated linearly as opposed to the perspectival gardens of the Italian Renaissance. Concerning the garden, the home generates a frame of reference from which one can enjoy this manufactured display of nature.¹

According to Dr. Xing Ruan, a professor of architecture at the University of New South Wales Sydney, the Chinese gardens should be understood as a place and understood through its synthesis. When speaking of the means through which we can understand the synthesis of the Chinese gardens, he mentions that epicurism, literature, art, and architecture are the tenets that may be used.² To understand the garden, it is to be populated with people and events as we create the distinction through the making of the event. These places hosting the event would be rather open, often with a pavilion open on all sides. Thus the garden operates as a place of refuge from the chaos of the city.

1 Xing Ruan, (2012, March 2). Retrieved February 5, 2020, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyYXK4kRrig>

2 Ibid.

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.14 *Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele*

Overlooking the Landscape

There are three means of ascension that define the form of stairs in this pavillion. The first means is found along the edge of the walls of the structure's centre, typically done with a “z” shape. There is a landing around the pillar on every level. The second means is found through the hollow space in the centre. The third means is found where space is tight. Here, spiral staircases are present, making the ascension take much less space, becoming one of the few means of moving up due to the broken principal staircases.

Mobutu's pavillion is composed of four primary levels, three of which are above ground, and the last which serves as an underground chamber. It is composed of masonry block construction, which is a fairly typical material choice within Kinshasa. The stairs, floors, verandas, and eaves of this building type are usually made of brick or stone, creating material consistency in the building. Within the center is a large brick pillar that connects to the roof structure. Every floor is connected to this central pillar and the walls to form the whole. This building typically asks for a means of arch bonding to build floors and stacking bricks around the central pillar.

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.15 *Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele*

From the East Wing

At the height of its use, the site showed Mobutu's outlandish opulence as it required an enormous amount of resources to function, a commonality in all of Mobutu's places of residence. Mobutu's staff used the East Wing as the server's quarters. They would serve the primary building by retreating into this space designated for the processing of daily goods. The view to the garden is cut off mostly here, implying the lack of importance of these quarters and their utilitarian origins. They kept a space underground to bring treasured items out. The place remains in ruins today, though it is heavily protected.

The site now functions like an open-air museum, for those who can acquire access. It provides a glimpse of the past into the world of the dictator of Zaire, though now it appears as merely a shell of its former opulence.

On April 24th of 1990, Mobutu succumbed to the mounting pressure to open the country to a multi-party system. This new form of multi-party politics was similar to that of the United States of America. However, a few months in, over 12 groups already clamored for power. In 1991, what is now known as the "pillage" swept the presidential city, including the pavillion. To retreat, Mobutu fled to Gdabolite, his hometown and location of what reporters in British media from the Guardian have touted as his African palace of Versailles. This place provided him temporary safety, as the people of his hometown had greatly benefitted from his rule. In 1997 rebel forces led by Laurent Kabila captured Kinshasa, ending Mobutu's reign and immediately forcing him into exile. Mobutu ultimately died four months following this, while exiled in Morocco.

The Dark Room



Fig 2.16 *Mobutu's Pavillion in Nsele*

Power and the Pavillion

The pavillion as an institution mimics the function seen in the Belgian orangerie in Laeken. The looped movement carries itself through the compound, allowing the landscape to unravel cinematically in a uniform sequence. The imposition of discipline on the body is generated in the theatrically processional nature of the plan.

Feasibility

When compared to the museum in Tervuren, the site is not suitable for implementing the repatriative monument. This is due to its distance from Kinshasa and the lack of public transportation available. Besides this, it requires some upkeep due to the previous damages imprinted onto it. Ultimately, while insightful in the thesis's understanding, it is better suited for alternate interventions possibly involving turning this into a different facility.

Conclusion

The role of the pavillion within Nsele can be seen as metaphorically bringing Asia into Africa. It is here that China is personified in a Chinese garden within Nsele.



Fig 2.17 *The Royal Museum of Central Africa*

2.3 The Museum: Royal Museum of Central Africa

Context

Seven miles from Brussels, Leopold II built a museum and laid the foundations of plans for a colonial school that would serve as ongoing pieces of propaganda for the imperial campaign in 1897. The average Belgian visits the museum twice in their lifetime. The museum was conceived with a direct connection to Brussels through Tram 44, to motivate the metropolitan population to engage with the colonial question. Memories of commuting from Brussels into Tervuren by the tram, or from surrounding regions on transit toward the northern edge of the museum, are common in the memories of children and adults alike. The museum, for quite a while, remained stagnant in its exhibitions until its closing in late 2013 due to the grand renovation put in place by the director Guido Gryseels. Since then, a new structure in the form of a welcome pavillion has been erected and they have made modifications to the existing building. The implementation of a new building suggests that a key motivation may have been guilt, perhaps for being considered a relic as the last colonial museum within Europe.

During the time of colonization, it was important to have a clear and uniform message about the colony. The Ministry of Colonies, which financed many colonial projects within Belgium, provided the Museum of the Congo with the authority of controlling the final image of imperial propaganda. It provided financial support to schools to create miniature colonial museums, so long as it enforced uniform messages as per the colonial administration's wishes. The Tervuren museum targeted children and teachers to support ongoing imperialism and nationalism. Thus, the colonial edifice used education as a means to preserve the status quo as set by Tervuren by using the museum to ephazise student visits through its Journée d'Études Coloniales.

Origins and Purpose

The museum's history has roots in the tradition of international expositions. To understand it, a brief dive into the context of the museum within the world's expositions must be made. What started as an instrumental piece of the Brussels International Exposition in 1897 as the Museum of the Congo grew into the institution we now know as the Royal Museum of Central Africa. The Belgian Minister of Colonies, Jules Renkin said at the museum in 1912 that the colonial exposition "is a world of popularization intended to familiarize the general public with colonial questions."¹ We can think that for many, the exposition was most likely the first observation of the colony. For this reason a spectacle was created, watered down for the enjoyment of the masses. This was because most visitors were interested in the lighter side of events as they were seen as an excuse to dress up, go out, and have fun. By asserting the irrevocably intertwined nature of Belgian and Congolese economies, the Ministry of Colonies sought to rebuke criticism of colonial rule. As such, within the expositions a rewriting of history occurred.

¹ Procès-verbal de la séance du 17 juillet 1912," groupe XIX, classe 117, liasse 205.812.22. Expos. et foires diverses organisées en Belgique. Expos univ et interne. de Gand. 1913, portefeuille 418 OC, AA. Quote from *Bulletin de la Société d'Études d'Intérêts Coloniaux de Namur*, n°.5 (May 1913): 50.



Fig 2.18 *Aerial image of the Royal Museum of Central Africa*

The museum at Tervuren nurtured a sense of national pride. Its ambition was to instill a collective dignity found in Belgium's international role: spreading Christianity, combating the slave trade and developing industry. Joseph Maes, a curator of ethnography at the Royal Museum of Central Africa, in the 1925 museum guide books wrote that "[the] goal of the Museum is to instruct, to create the colonial education of the visitors, to create and develop a colonial mentality in Belgium... The museum must be a permanent instrument of sound propaganda of the colonial idea; a living and active school."² By reducing the Congo into a singular integrated possession, the museum emphasized its unity. This was contrary to its reality as a sprawling territory comprising varied environments, regions, peoples, languages, and cultures. The controversy is that the image of the Congo never changed in Belgian displays, as the directors had always been satisfied with the displays as they were.

Control was exerted through dissecting and classifying things through photographs, objects in vitrines, maps, and sculpted figures accompanied by captions. This classification reduces things to controllable, discrete, tangible collectibles. The museum is deemed a memorial as it commemorated the Belgians who had died in Africa during the Leopoldian era. It excluded other European and African allies in its commemorations—except for one Luxembourg national (Nicholas Cito)—despite the massive external assistance provided by non-Belgians from Italy, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. Overwhelmingly, the tight grip the museum held in its curation of exhibitions made it an effective tool in rewriting history.

The museum captured the imperial endeavour in one place. Its original program included two rooms for anthropology, one for political and moral sciences, four for social sciences and five for natural sciences. It promoted a certain vision through the selective dissemination of research material. The museum presented the Congo as fixed, regressive and incapable of change, as it was providing no room for contestation or adaptation. The vision of the Congo created by the museum deluded Belgian visitors into complacency, possibly explaining the shock after 1960 of the Belgian population upon learning of the colony's independence. Within this vision was the depiction of the unhindered and ongoing growth of the Belgian empire in Africa. In addition to this was a prevalent censorship of the local population's somber opinions on the empire, thus making the news of independence a very stark contrast to the population's expectations.

2 Joseph Maes, *Musée du Congo Belge à Tervuren*, 11.



Fig 2.19 *The Northern Face of the Royal Museum of Central Africa shortly after its construction.*

The Museum North

Across the street from the museum, a clear space mirrors the two gated openings coming from the garden. This park faces the north elevation of the museum in a discrete fashion, adorned with low-lying bushes. The vegetation is curated to point toward the museum's primary northern door and is complemented by the openings at the eastern and western gates. However, I noticed some lack of continuity of experience from the garden south of the street and the park north of the street. The design of the hedged shrubs was sparse on the site, only serving to outline the perimeter of the patches of grass.

Overall, something about this park appeared vapid and unwell. South of the museum was a carefully articulated French garden in all of its ornate traditions. What I found north of the site seemed dull in comparison, almost complacently generated as a design exercise from the original designer. Most importantly, with the exception of historical images, the facade receives the least amount of press. It is for this reason that I thought this was the precise space of intervention that I needed. The visitor's entrance into the northern park could challenge how we perceive the entire museum. These thoughts would linger with me until my return to Canada.

A few years after its opening, around 1935, the statue of an elephant was added north of the museum doors in the empty park. Crafted by the Belgian sculptor, Albéric Collin, the statue displays a concrete African elephant mounted by three native people. It was commissioned for one of the world exhibitions within Belgium and relocated to the Royal Museum of Central Africa as a gift from the Côte d'Or chocolate company. The sight of this sculpture caused me to wonder whether there was a method of re-interpreting the English metaphorical idiom of revealing "the elephant in the room" through the use of architecture. In doing so, I imagined that perhaps such an intervention could serve as tactical inspiration to discuss the legacy and reputation of the museum.

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.20 *The Royal Museum of Central Africa*

The Museum's Perimeters

As I move through the northern axis, statues present as key features making way through the garden. The garden orchestrates itself as a kind of guided historical lesson of the empire. This is anchored within the confines of the orangerie where statues of several important figures are interspersed into narrated paths. The museum's weight on the site gives it authority in composition as the garden descends toward the lake from the museum. As such, I notice a visual hierarchy is created from afar, seating the museum at the top of this chain. This line is continuously echoed in the landscape as the bushes are trimmed to accentuate their parallel relationship from east to west. The building acts as a compass to the directionality of the landscape and the use of the French garden is made to compliment the structure and aggrandize its weight on the land.

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.21 *The Royal Museum of Central Africa*

The Museum's Perimeters

The drop of the garden away from the museum synthesizes a sense of grandiosity of the building. I can see the entire garden generating a sense of hierarchy and presence on the site due to the terracing.

Exerpts from the Dark Room



Fig 2.22 *The Royal Museum of Central Africa*

The Museum's Perimeters

I also noticed that they rarely advertise the building beyond the southern face. This occurs despite the popular northern arrival using Tram 44 at Tervuren Station, using alternative public transit such as the bus route, or by the museum workers who park alongside the northern edges. The cascading horizontal lines of the south provided me with thoughts that they might continue to echo themselves in the garden to the north. This did not happen, as the garden which faces the northern elevation of the museum lies flat aligned with the street. This is what I came to think once I reflected on the experience south of the site.

Exerpts from the Dark Room

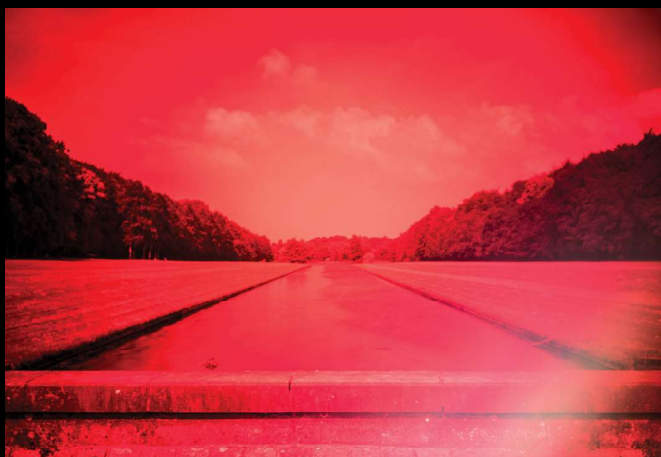


Fig 2.23 *The Royal Museum of Central Africa*

The Museum's Perimeters

While unable to enter the building due to the delayed opening, I decided to make a loop surrounding the gardens that encircled the compounds. This path took me from the forest to the park north of the museum and back down again. The symmetry comes as an illusion of proportions, as both sides do not completely mirror one another in the gardens. To the naked eye, however, virtually everything appears to be planned with symmetry in mind.

The role of the reflecting pool is to create a metaphor of infinity and generate a centralized focal point at a site outside of the primary building. It makes a horizontal path parallel on every level of the cascading landscape. This motion, delineated by the museum's presence, is mimicked from the reflecting pool south of the museum to the larger body of water running down the base of the forest of Tervuren. This curated landscape serves to shape clear means through which it makes the experience adjacent to the museum. The paths moving west to east across the site seem to extend infinitely into the wall of trees on the horizon.

The Dark Room



Fig 2.24 *The Royal Museum of Central Africa*

Power and the Museum

The museum, much like the orangerie, functions as an institution of power. This is reflected in the shared architecture, materiality, and function of both structures. The typical orangerie is composed of stone and glass, like the museum. Oriented lengthwise, the southern orientation maximizes heat gain to cater to its fragile plants in the case of the orangerie. In the case of the museum, however, a different issue is addressed with light. It is, on the one hand, necessary to have enough of it for viewing pleasure, but on the other, detrimental to have too much of it as it might damage the museum artefacts. When comparing the orangerie and the museum, similarities can be found in the shallow depth of the plan, which ensures that ample lighting permeates throughout the space.

Feasibility

The site is suitable for the implementation of the repatriative monument. This is due to its distance from the heart of Brussels and the direct connective use of public transportation available. In addition to this, the new Welcome Pavillion has added a new elevated site from which one might view the intervention from above. Ultimately, the park north of the museum seems to show the most potential in addressing some of the core issues that compositionally are lacking on the site. The process of intervening onto this site will optimize the existing surroundings, generating a more harmonious architectural landscape which speaks volumes to the museum's changing landscape.

Conclusion

My initial reading of the museum within Tervuren saw it as a crossroads of the imperial ideology. A true lieu de mémoire. It contains an intent to metaphorically bring Africa into Europe through its function and artefacts. For this reason, I argue that the designed intervention should highlight this feat through the display of opposing narratives north of the site in the making of a monument.

PART 03

Reframing of Monumental Space

The reframing of monumental space is to be done through a process of tuning. The process of tuning implies the adjustment or adaptation of something to a particular purpose or situation. It is a term with musical connotations as it is commonly used to refer to instruments. The word has also been used figuratively to pertain to the process of becoming aware, as in “tuning in” to the radio, or “tuning out” when eliminating reception. Within the confines of this work, the process of tuning is used to fix a perceived incongruence to its correct state. In the case of the RMCA, the idea is to alter the museum’s message through the design of the monument, which integrates the struggle for repatriation into the new narrative of the museum. The following chapter looks at the reframing of monumental space by identifying the museum’s rebranding process pre-opening, its rebranding post-opening, and finishes by identifying modifications in physical space that can be applied after the implementation of these rebranding initiatives.



Fig 3.01 Cheri Samba's "Reorganisation" Painting

3.1 Rebranding Pre-Opening

According to Adam Hochschild, an American author, journalist, and historian, Belgians today have experienced what he calls the “Great Forgetting” due to a diminishing knowledge of the colonial past. He adds that neglect of the brutal misrule and the attempt of rebranding its presence as exemplary adds to this forgetting.¹ Before its reopening, the Royal Museum of Central Africa was often criticized for being an illustration of this forgetting, for being a pure imperialistic artifact. While the Tervuren museum’s origins were rooted in imperialist practice, its focus prior to the renovation had slightly shifted from economic topics toward issues of colonial history.

In a press note geared to the public about the opening of the Royal Museum of Central Africa, Guido Gryseels, the Director-General of the museum acknowledges the museum’s lack of change since the fifties and the fact that the museum was still largely conveying Africa from an imperial perspective. In the interview, he delves into the development decisions of the museum and about its objectives that are created within a rebranding initiative. Within this initiative is a need to see the Royal Museum of Central Africa, colloquially known as the Africa Museum, to be part of a broad and historical perspective. Some of the information regarding the museum’s past is acknowledged, including its role as a piece of propaganda for the colonial efforts by Leopold II, from the international exhibitions right up to its turnover to the state in the 1960s, post-independence.

The Grand Opening has often been branded as a “reorganization,” referring to the famed painting by Cheri Samba from 2002. The work, commissioned by the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, reflects on the means through which Congolese history is represented within the museum. Within the painting, a group of Congolese attempt to pull down the sculpture, while the museum’s staff attempt to drag it back into the museum. The work puts the museum’s controversy at the forefront, stirring a debate on ownership and curation of artefacts within museums. It sets the stage for the discourse on the thematic qualities present in the work which monumentalizes the nuanced struggle for repatriation. It addresses the core themes of both imperialism and Zairianization. In a way, this strategic naming, in addition to using the painting as a backdrop in press notes, makes subtle suggestions that the museum is giving the people what they want. This in fact, is not an accurate depiction of the truth.

¹ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: a Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Mariner, 1999).

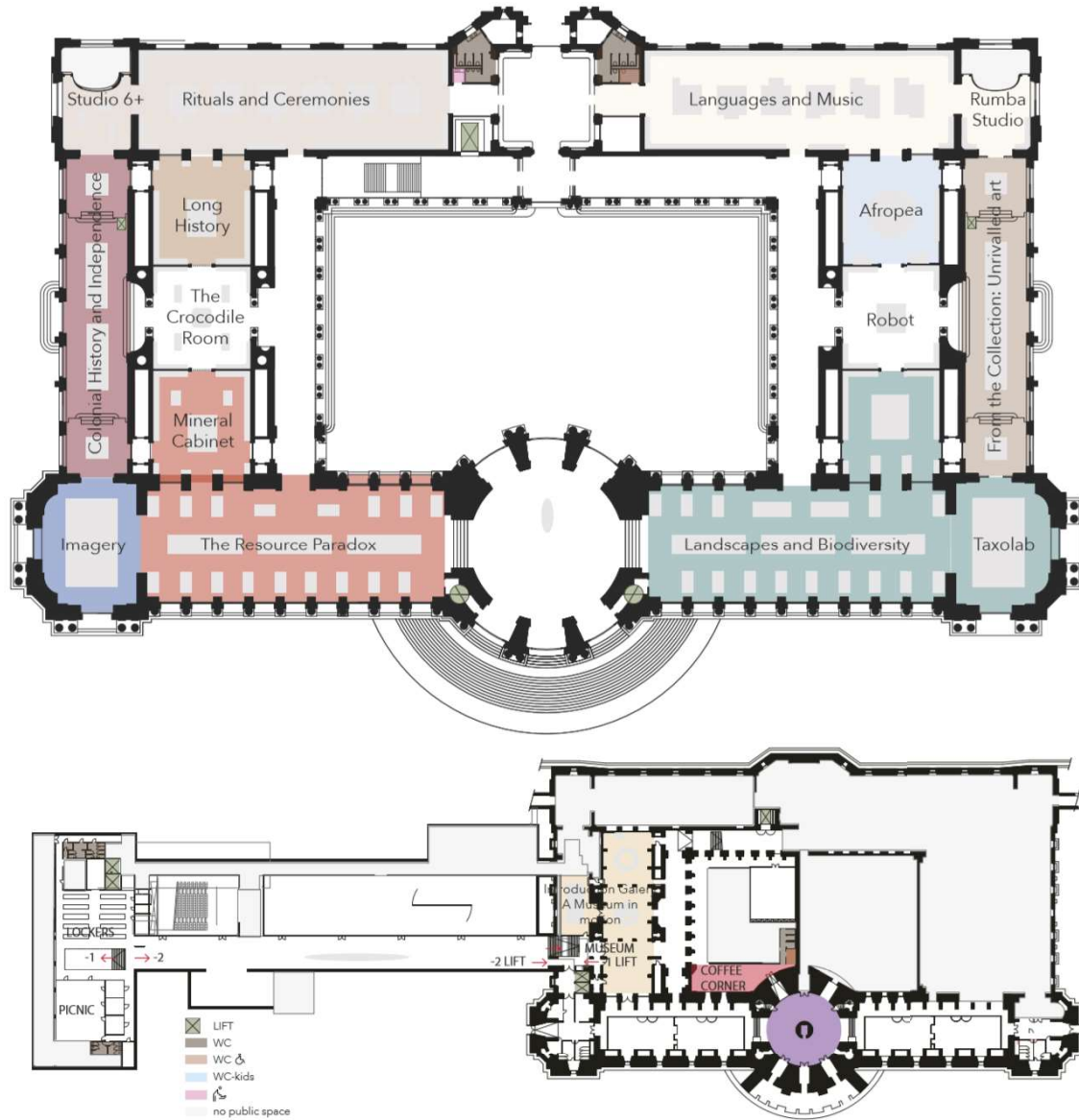


Fig 3.02 Museum Floor Plan Program

In 2006, the Royal Museum of Central Africa launched a competition to re-fashion itself as an “international museum and research institute for Central Africa.” It closed in late 2013 to allow for this major renovation and extension to be made.² A return to the colonial city was made by under Stephane Beel Architects. The new master plan would echo the plans of Charles Girault through the clear delineation of functions within the site, allowing each building to find specificity.

The plan foresees three axes on the site: Palais des Colonies and its media library open to the general public, a convention center and a village hall, the modernized Museum with a new reception pavilion in the park, and the knowledge center and research with a new building housing the collections.³

The extension plays on the longitudinal axis in terms of new development and integration. This includes the implementation of a covered walkway into the inner courtyard that has been reinterpreted to connect the old building and the new welcome pavilion underground. The director went on to describe why the land to the west of the museum building was chosen as prime real estate for development.

The building is a listed monument. The only way we could thoroughly improve the infrastructure was with a newbuild. All non-museum functions are centralized in the new building. An underground gallery connects the two buildings. The galleries for temporary exhibitions are also situated in this connection gallery. This allowed us to double the floor area open to the public, from 6,000 sq. m to just under 11,000.⁴

The museum’s reopening was not only an attempt to change its image, but also an opportunity to update its facilities in the most technical sense. Another ambition was in the decolonization of the museum. An African perspective, however, would hold strict requirements for what would constitute as a proper decolonization of the museum as seen in the reorganization painting.

2 Alan Hope, “Africa Museum in Tervuren Closes for Renovation Project.” RSS. *Flanders Today*, September 18, 2013. <http://www.flanderstoday.eu/arts/africa-museum-tervuren-closes-renovation-project>.

3 TV Beel Origins Arup RCR Kortenkaas BB Daidalos Desvigne, “Note de Presse: Musée Royal de L’Afrique Centrale, Chaussée de Louvain, Tervuren, Belgique”, Accessed May 31, 2018.

4 “Reopening of the AfricaMuseum,” *Africa Museum*. Press File, December 8, 2018, <https://press.africamuseum.be/sites/default/files/media/Persdossier-UK web.pdf>



Fig 3.03 *The Memorial Gallery "Shadows"* by Freddy Tsimba

In an official press file, the museum's director spoke about the means through which the museum has changed over the years concerning its exhibition of artifacts. Within it he notes:

Firstly, our new permanent exhibition aims to paint a picture of modern-day Africa. We no longer want to be a museum of colonial Africa. Instead, we want to focus on Africa in the present and future, without overlooking the shared history of Belgium and the Central African countries. [...] Secondly, we have developed a more critical narrative about the colonial past, compared with the one-sided perspective we used to offer. In addition, we want to become a 'site of remembrance' for Belgians and the Congolese. [...] Thirdly, we want to provide a platform for debates that welcome all opinions. In this framework, we decided to create an Afropea gallery, a dynamic gallery in which the people of the diasporas tell their stories themselves. [...] We hope to become a real meeting place and a center for dialogue for people who take a keen interest in Africa.⁵

The museum makes efforts to integrate the colonial past into its built fabric, but some of the most important approaches are fairly subtle. The director continues to speak about the approach by describing one of its most notable rooms:

A number of other galleries were also preserved unchanged such as the memorial gallery with the names of the 1,508 Belgians who died during the early colonial period (1876-1908) in Congo - [we] will be installing an artwork by Freddy Tsimba, a Congolese artist, as a potent reminder and memorial to the many Congolese victims.⁶

This artwork is placed on the inner glass of the museum's walls. The work plays with light and the rotation of the sun, carefully inscribing the names of the seven Congolese people who died in Tervuren's human zoos found in the French gardens during the International Exhibition of 1897.

5 "Reopening of the AfricaMuseum," *Africa Museum*, Press File, December 8, 2018. <https://press.africamuseum.be/sites/default/files/media/Persdossier-UK web.pdf>.

6 Ibid.

PRESS FILE

Reopening of the AfricaMuseum

08.12.2018

Leuvensesteenweg 13, 3080 Teruren.



AFRICA
museum

Fig 3.04 The Grand Reopening Press File Cover Page

3.2 Rebranding Post-Opening

The building opened in December of 2018. Since then, the grand reopening has been met with mixed reviews. The positive acclaim for the renovated building and the new structure is contrasted with criticism that the decolonization of the museum is incomplete.^{1 2} At the heart of this issue is the ongoing struggle for the repatriation of the collections containing the museum's artifacts, many of which have roots from the colonial era. As such, the issue not only becomes a question of changing the narrative but that of what happens when the contents of the collection are moved back to Africa.

Repatriation is defined as the process of returning an asset to its owner or place of origin. This is not the first time that the Royal Museum of Central Africa has come under fire for glossing over this issue, especially given the current climate where neighbouring France's president, Emmanuel Macron, has decreed that his country return all looted artifacts to their respective countries of origin.³ This set precedence for similar ongoing cases. Expressed during this speech on November 28th of 2018, was a desire to "see[ing] the conditions put in place to allow for the temporary or definitive restitution of African cultural heritage returned to Africa" within the next five years.⁴ A report authored by Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr and French historian Benedicte Savoy called for a change in heritage law that would allow thousands of African artworks within French museums to be returned to their countries of origin. Exceptions would exist if the museum can prove that objects were obtained legitimately. The effects of this vow continued to ripple into interviews provided with the Royal Museum of Central Africa, where the subject has been met with uncertainty.⁵

The United Nations has made further requests for Belgium's administration to address the issue with increased vigour after a recent visit.⁶ This is encountered with irony, as the mandates put in place by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization have resulted in increasing the difficulty in the re-acquisition of historical artifacts.⁷ The struggle for repatriation is amplified by the internationalist view on the subject. According to the United Nations, artifacts are deemed to be part of a shared collective and international history. This provides wealthier nations a monopolizing power to indefinitely hold such items within their possession until their host countries can materialize the means of maintaining such artifacts with equivalent international standards.

1 "Inspire the Public Sector," *Publica Awards, Publica-Brussels*, June 20, 2019, <https://publica-brussels.com/candidates-winners-publica-awards-2019-nl/>.

2 "Statement to the Media by the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, on the Conclusion of Its Official Visit to Belgium, 4-11 February 2019," *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, February 11, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24153&LangID=E>.

3 Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics," *restitutionreport2018.com*, November 2018, https://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf.

4 Ibid.

5 Alex Marshall, "Belgium's Africa Museum Had a Racist Image. Can It Change That?" *The New York Times*, December 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/08/arts/design/africa-museum-belgium.html>.

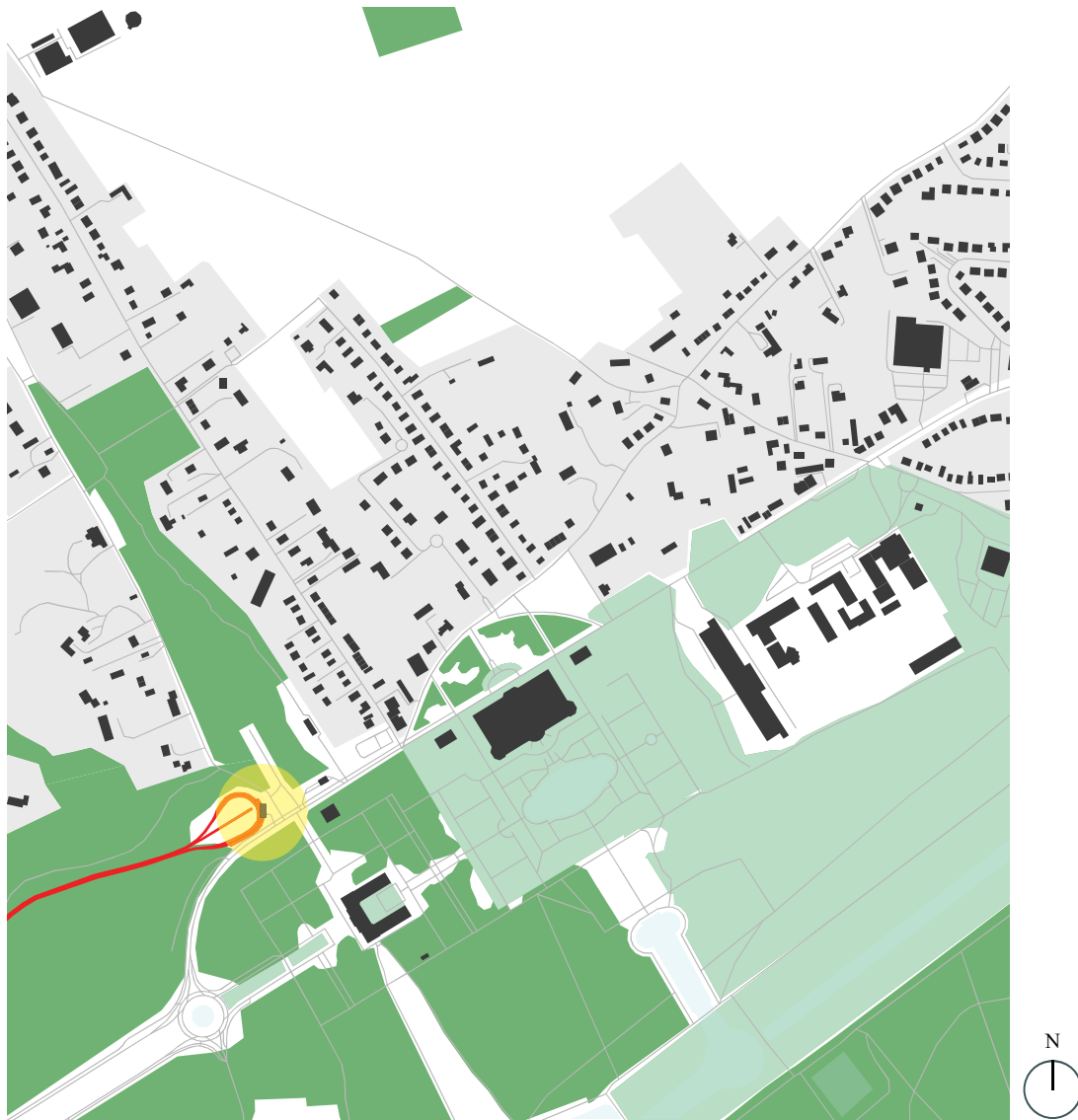
6 "Statement to the Media by the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, on the Conclusion of Its Official Visit to Belgium, 4-11 February 2019," *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, United Nations*, February 11, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24153&LangID=E>.

7 *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*, "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" 1-16.

3.3 Rebranding Modifications

The Repatriation Monument

This thesis suggests that we reframe the approach to the museum to provide a more contextually accurate intervention beyond the renovation. It does so by identifying some of the key criticisms outlined in the previous chapters by the UN, the diaspora, and the general public. Of these, two main points are addressed. The first is that of increasing the means through which the past is addressed with vigour. The second is the method through which the rebranding modification addresses the issue of restitution by remediating the open park north of the museum site that would be ripe for development. The rebranding modifications address the entrance to the museum, as it connects itself to the historical Tram 44, which connects the site to Brussels. Tervuren is a city outside of Brussels within a Flemish territory. Primarily regarded as a place for retirement and leisure, it has been made famous internationally within the African diaspora for its possession of the Royal Museum of Central Africa.

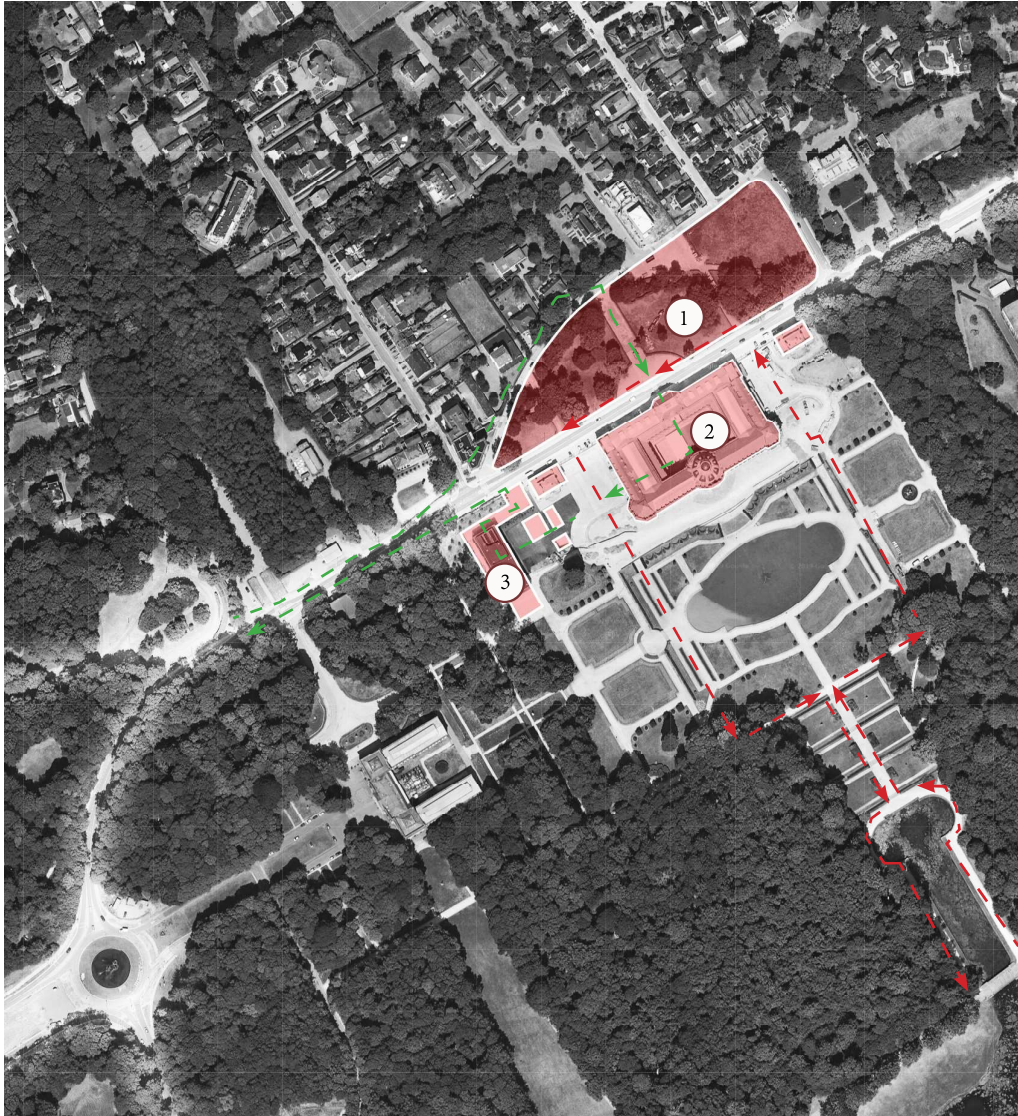


- Residential Zone
- Building
- Park
- Forest
- Rail
- Tervuren Station

Fig 3.05 *Tervuren's Surroundings*

Arrival into Tervuren

The journey begins at Montgomery station, where the historical tram 44 takes the visitor from the heart of Brussels into the Belgian countryside. As building density lessens with progression into forested regions, the passenger prepares themselves to reason with the remnants of a distant past as they overlook the green landscape beyond. The arrival from the station within Brussels to Tervuren station happens in about 20 minutes. It is important to note that this line was created specifically to connect the museum to the metropole. At this point, signage instructs the passenger to move eastward to meet the new RMCA. This time, they are instructed not to cross the road before meeting the 3rd phase as defined by this thesis, which is to be added to the museum's site.



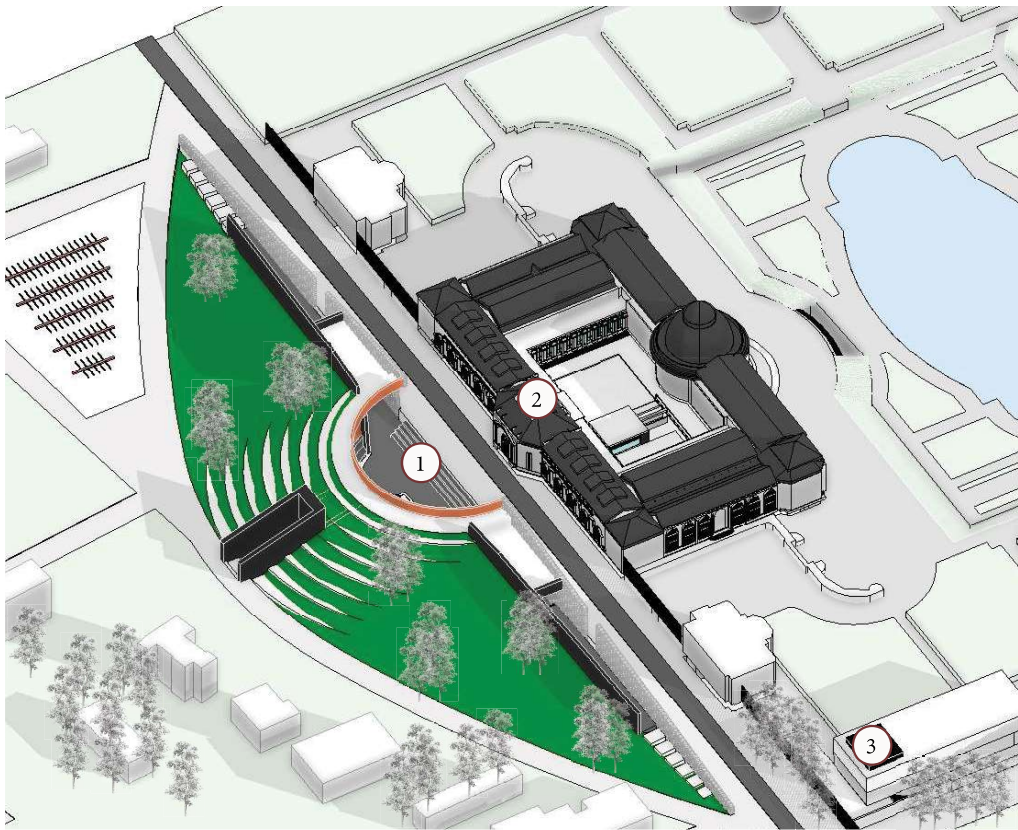
- 1 Phase 3: [THESIS PROPOSAL ADDITION] This includes the repatriation monument north of the museum.
- 2 Phase 1: [PRE-"REORGANIZATION"] This includes the primary museum building and its affiliated structures.
- 3 Phase 2: [POST-"REORGANIZATION"] This included the welcome pavillion opened in 2018.

- - - - -> Circulation loop from Tram 44.
- - - - -> Circulation loop within French Garden

Fig 3.06 Tervuren Development Phases

The Implication

The design proposal makes the argument that the process of repatriation cannot occur in silence. It builds a case that the memory of the struggle to acquire these goods must be etched into the physical landscape of the site, forming a final axis point that will properly re-narrate the museum's position. It argues that for the museum to truly resolve this issue, it must acknowledge this process, allowing this monument in the landscape to serve as a true "lieu de mémoire" in the closing chapter of the ownership and acquisition debate of historical artifacts. The design is deliberately situated at the northern entrance of the museum. The narrated experience of the museum must first be taken through the proposed intervention, thus altering the way in which everything else in the museum is interpreted. This provides a new direction in which visitors coming from Tram 44, or other public transit routes may experience the site. Ultimately, this provides a concrete method of reframing the museum as it has intended on doing by physically and metaphorically addressing the elephant in the room.



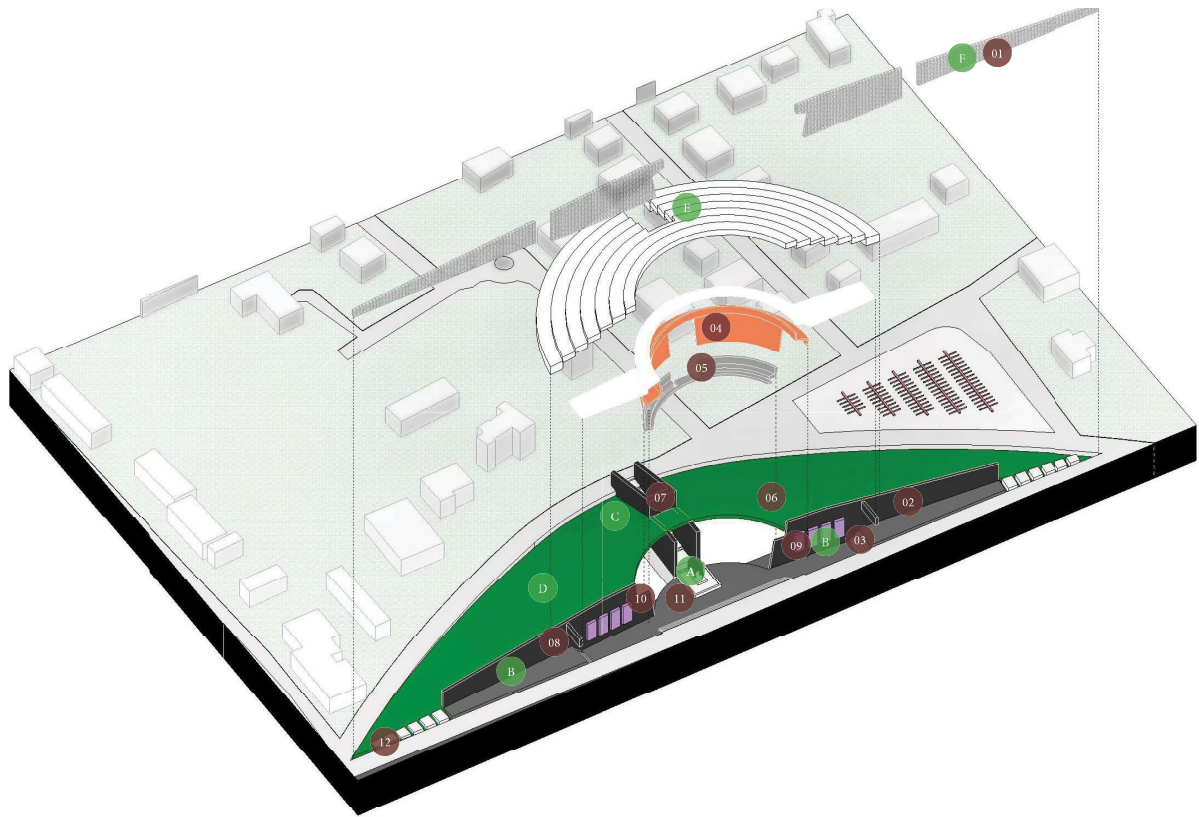
- 1 Monument
- 2 Museum
- 3 Welcome Pavillion

Fig 3.07 Tervuren Axonometric

Design Principles

The design of this monument is centered on the principle of commemorating silent processes. This presents as an intervention in the landscape that connects to the Royal Museum of Central Africa. The design will serve as a concurrent physical narrative to the controversies that have plagued the museum. It plays on the act of revealing and laying commentary on the public's interaction with the pre-existing monuments on site. Hence, the material palette of bronze, limestone, and concrete will bond the interventions to the existing site's imperial statutory monuments.

The monument re-designs the approach to the museum by looking at how people encounter its entrance. Typically shown from the southern facade, the intervention calls forth for a reorientation of the entrance to the north elevation. The monument is composed of a large mound, which is retained by a bronze wall that forms a semicircle around the elephant statue facing the museum. Two great gestures are made parallel and tangent to the museum through the landscape, leading to the creation of a circulation corridor moving north-south and east-west, intersecting at the elephant's statue.



- A *The Elephant's Room: A repatriative gallery showcasing all returned items in one space. This contains the semi-rotunda which is to be made of bronze plates.*
- B *The Commemorative Path: A panelized walkway which describes and denotes the process of the repatriation of artefacts as it relates to the museum's origins. The eight panels describe the opposing forces of imperialism prior to the country's independence and is followed by a series of four panels describing the country's radical process of decolonization and initial repatriative process in zairianization and beyond.*
- C *The Northern Path: A passageway leading towards the Elephant's Room.*
- D *The Mound: A raised park that ascends towards the South .*
- E *The Commemorative Stones: A series of seven stone platforms, commemorating the individuals who perished on the site is interwoven into the mound beneath. These allow ascent onto the top of the site.*
- F *The Wall of Shadows: A semi translucent wall which provides visual separation from the street, while still allowing some permeability in vision due to its material properties.*

01 - Translucent Concrete
 02 - Limestone
 03 - Concrete
 04 - Polished Bronze

05 - Wooden Bench
 06 - Grass
 07 - Limestone
 08 - Limestone

09 - Rusted Bronze
 10 - White Elephant Statue
 11 - Bronze Lined Reflecting Pool
 12 - Concrete

Fig 3.08 Exploded Axonometric

Materials

The statutory imperial monuments that were created to serve as propaganda for the colonial effort were constructed using the materials of bronze and stone. As such, the palette decided on tries to generate a method of processing these two key materials in varying degrees to produce a variety of meaningful phenomena. The process of polishing the bronze to a refined state comes to a halt at the semi rotunda. The stone itself continues to be a rugged material in texture while having a long and thin appearance. Concrete supports this structure. The entire body of the structure is conserved in an earthen mound to preserve the park as a green space.

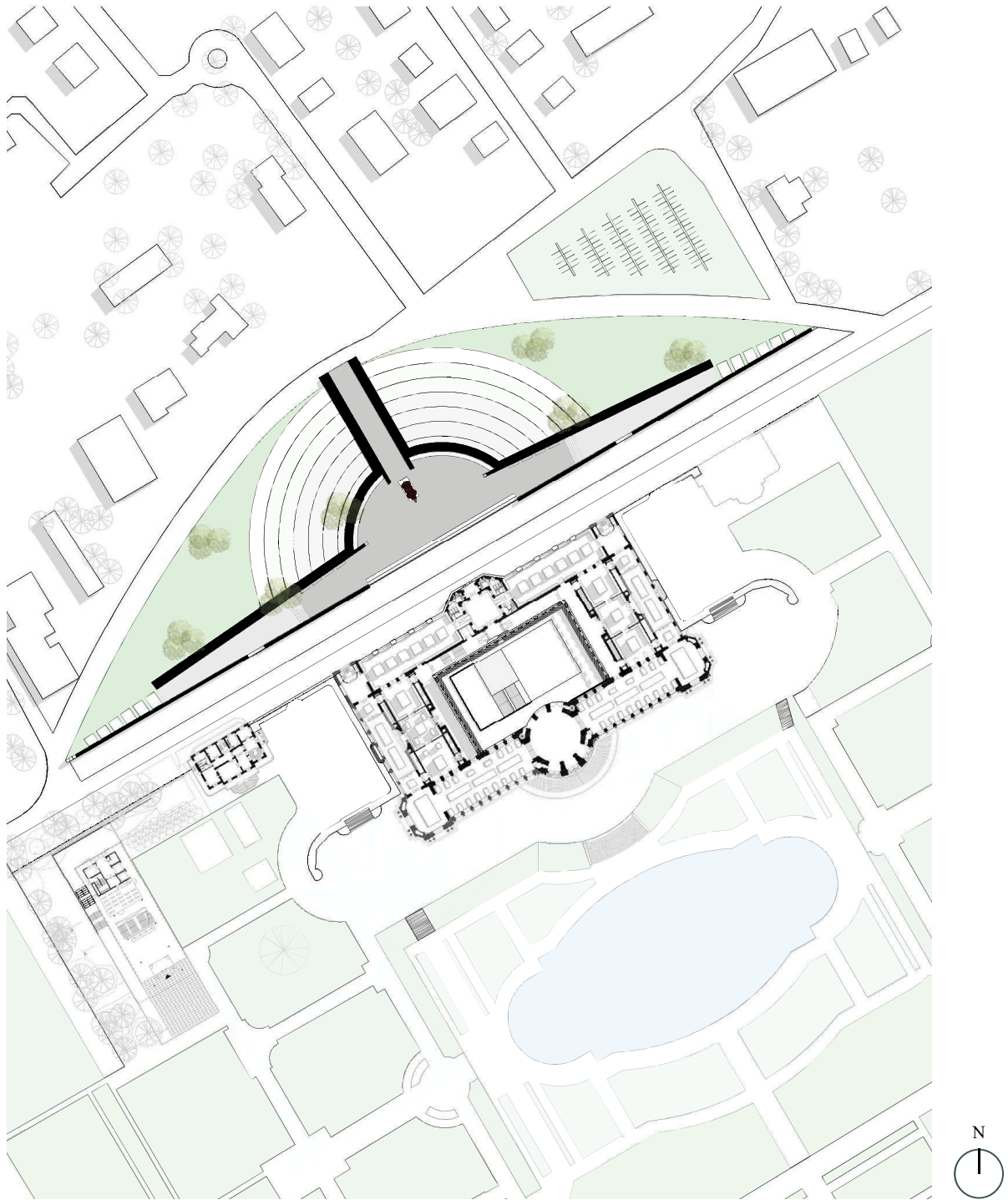


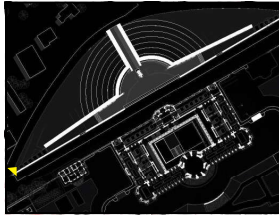
Fig 3.09 *Ground Floor Plan*



Fig 3.10 *The Statue of an African Elephant: Albéric Collin (Construction: 1935)*

The Statue of an African Elephant: Albéric Collin (Construction: 1935)

The “Statue of an African Elephant,” sponsored by the Côte-d’Or was an artwork commissioned to Albéric Collin to suit Rene Schoentjes’ Belgian Congo pavilion at the 1935 World Exhibition in Brussels. It has now been relocated north of the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren. The statue presents itself as that of a “black elephant”, mounted on a concrete sculpture, despite the statue being albino white.



Key Plan



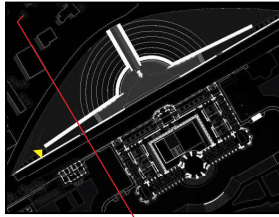
Fig 3.11 *View Facing East 1*

West to East

Approaching the Monument

The translucent wall invites the visitor by reaching in the direction of Tervuren Station. Its human-scaled proportions gently balloon to an extraordinary scale as it is brought to its focal point. From a distance, a singular line is observed as an individual drives on the road. From the pedestrian's point of view, a new line of sight is created in tangency with the existing museum building, administrative buildings, colonial library, and welcome pavillion.

The intervention plays on the process of discovery, creating two distinct experiences both above and below. Above is an elevated park, staggered with commemorative stone platforms that connects to the material of the passageway. At grade, a slope is made moving downward toward the north, pulling pedestrians toward the edge of the polished bronze wall, as two feet of this walking space is left flat to accommodate for flat walking surfaces. The podium of the elephant statue is experienced through the sensation of unstable grounds. The statue appears to fall forward toward the tiered seating facing the south. The spectacle is immediately viewable from the level of the street and from the interior of the museum's northern facing rooms, but is hidden from above.



Key Plan



Fig 3.12 View Facing East 2

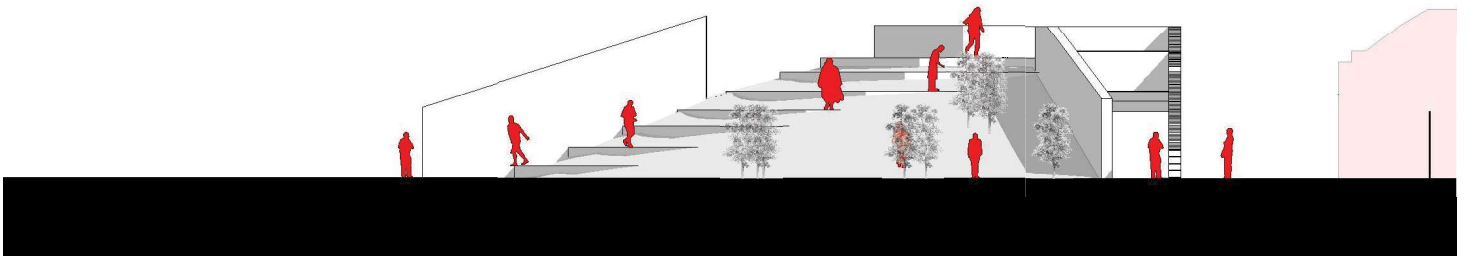
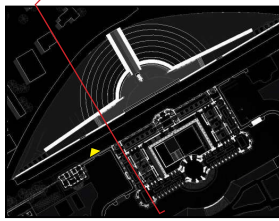


Fig 3.13 Section North South 1

Approaching the Crossroads

A fork in the road is reached. One may proceed to the northern side of the intervention or toward the southern end. Regardless of the choice taken, a telling experience will make a piece of the museum more evidently clear than it was previously. To the north (left in this image) will be the ascension and to the south (right in this image) will be the descent. This experience is mirrored on the eastern (far end) part of the site to allow for uniformity of experience of the narrative.



Key Plan

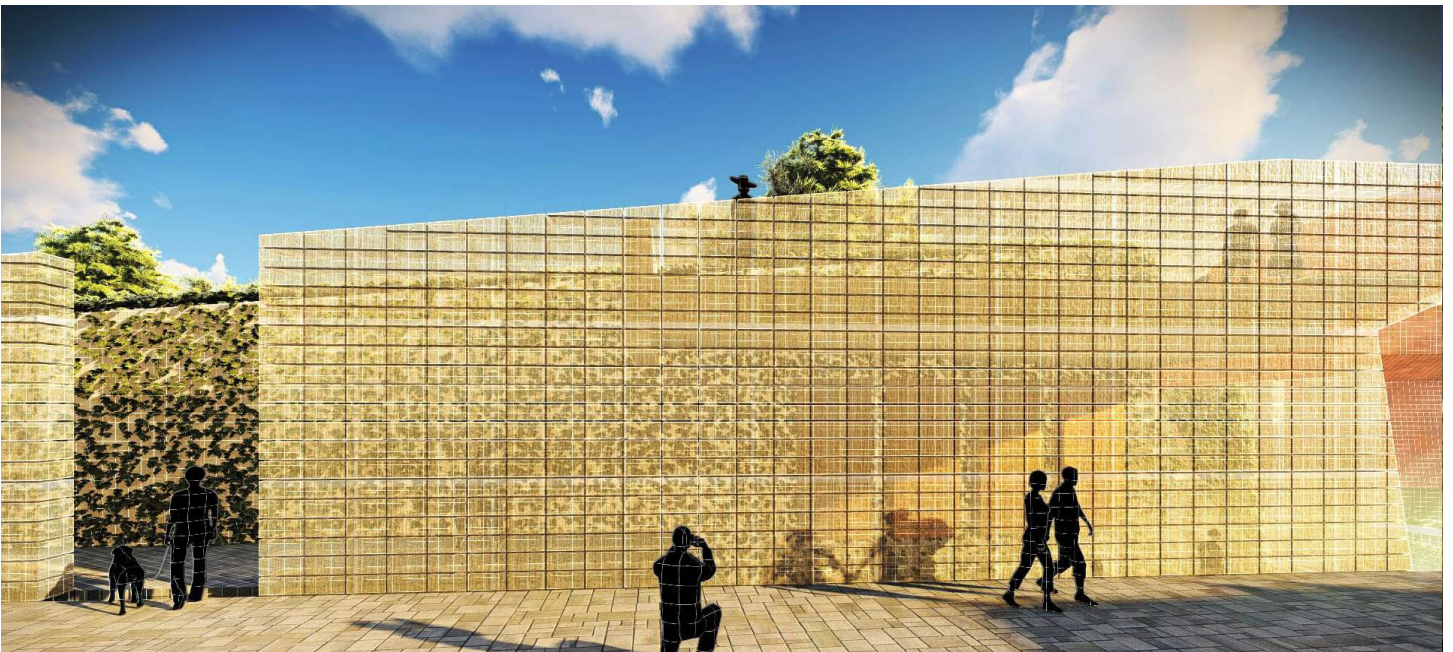


Fig 3.14 Sidewalk Render Close Up

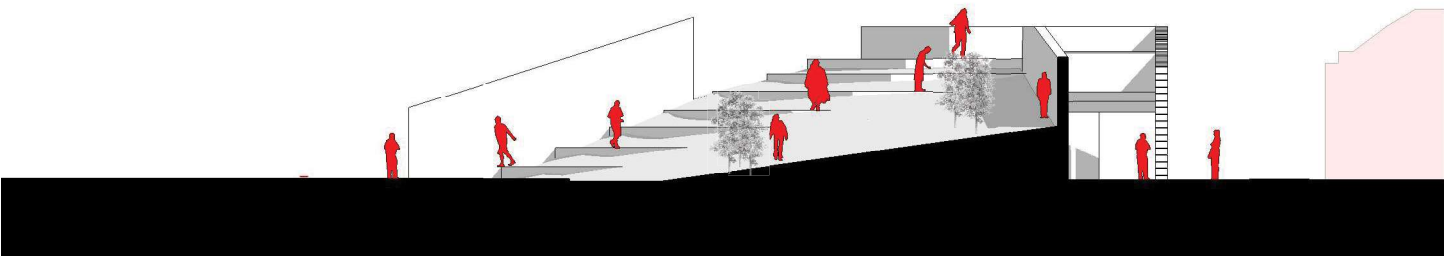
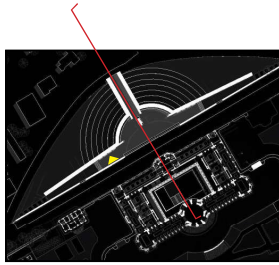


Fig 3.15 Section North South 2

Watching from Across the Street

A dance of hiding and seeking occurs behind the screen of translucent concrete. The bronze panels are didactic, illustrating the story of the repatriation of artefacts while showing a glimmer behind the translucent concrete. This is contrasted by the overgrowth of vines, which establish this structure within its context. The movement of people within the monument is observable from afar both during the day and at night. The result is an activation of spectacle to the northern function of the museum's building program.



Key Plan

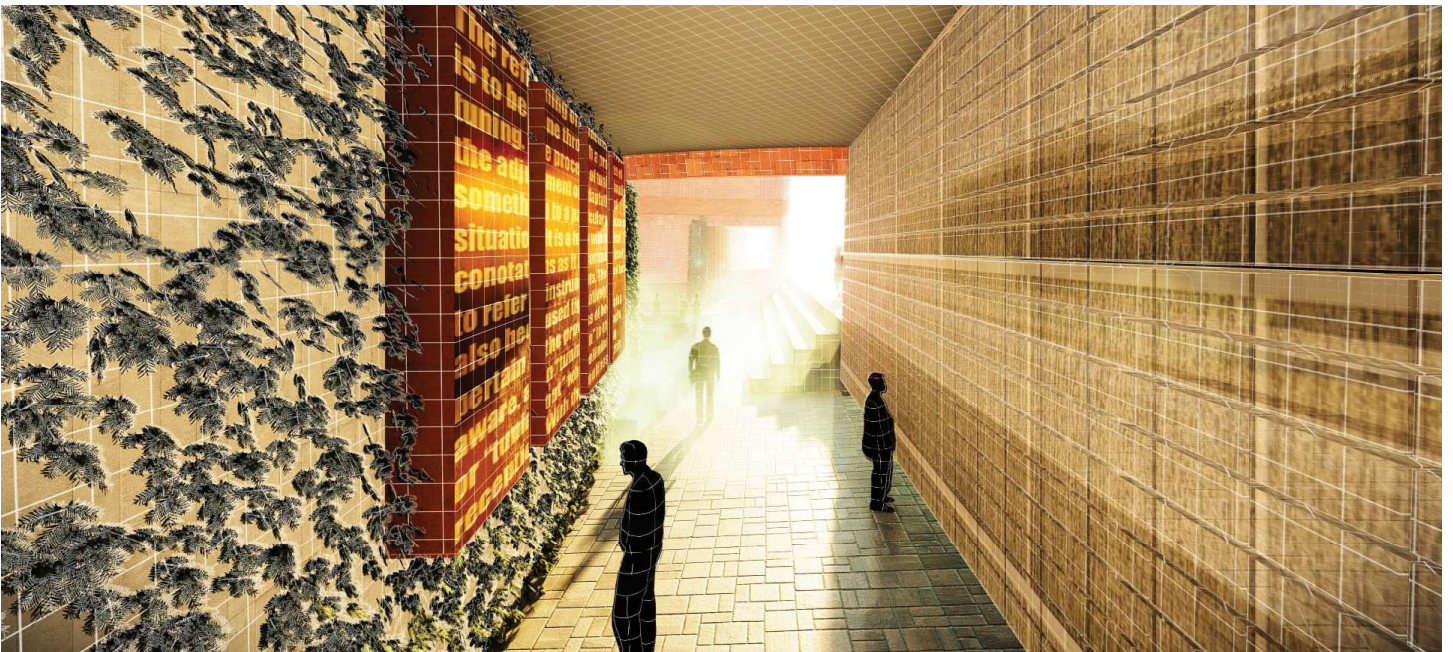


Fig 3.16 View Facing East 3

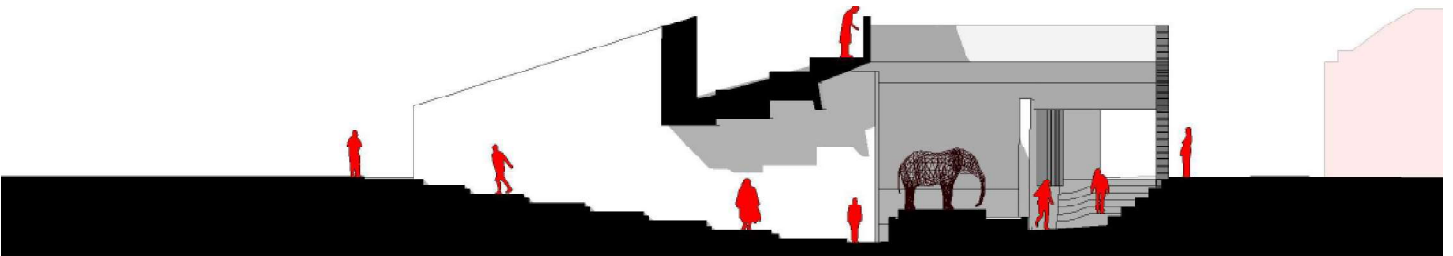
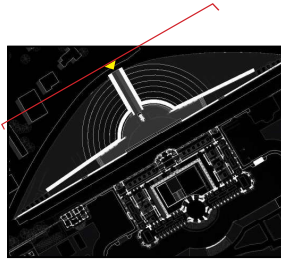


Fig 3.17 Section North South 3

Moving Through the Monument

There is an element of compression in the space as a few steps down are about to be made. To the left are panelized stories of the issue of the repatriation of artefacts. To the right is an almost permeable view of the museum. Ahead is a sloping ground and a very reflective rotunda. A series of colours and undulating light create for an intense affect as one reaches the apex of the experience.

The passageways found within the mound will help to contextualize the struggle, as pieces of the history of acquisition of these goods will be placed tangentially with information about the happenings of independence. From the north facing halls of the museum, the polished bronze will cast a golden flare towards the museum, calling attention to itself as the sun moves from the east to the west. The wall is composed of small rectangular composite bronze panels, which make a larger panel that defines this curving bronze wall. Each panel is directly representative of an artefact. Inscribed within the wall will be the series of names of the artefacts, which are destined to be returned to their original locations, along with a date, and a place of return. This process of inscribing will be ongoing until the wall has found itself occupied. The inscribed writings on this wall will attest as a memory of the process that has long been a criticism of the museum. Inscribing both the title and the relocation destination's coordinates on this wall will generate a mosaic of returned artefacts, acting as a kind of mapping.



Key Plan



Fig 3.18 View from the Northern Edge (Facing South)

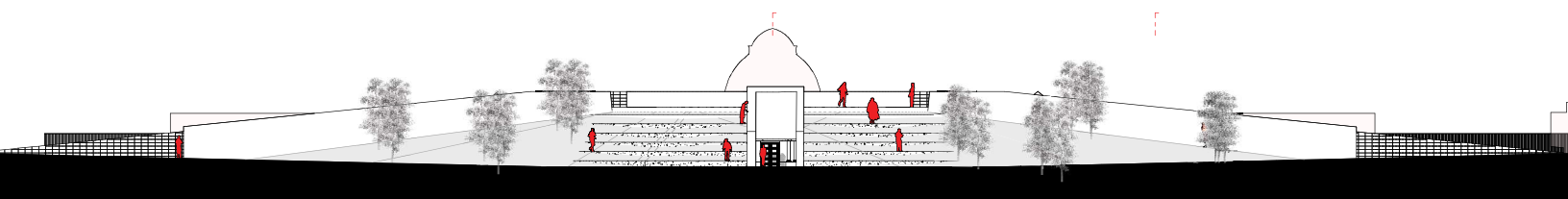


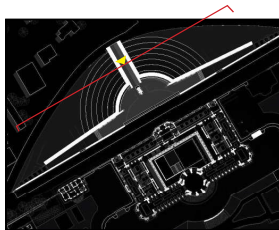
Fig 3.19 Section West East 1 (Facing South)

North to South

Moving Perpendicular to the Museum

The second journey begins north of the newly developed park. A series of seven solid blocks of stone climb to an ascending peak. These stones echo the commemoration of the fallen Congolese individuals inscribed within the museum's memorial gallery. Growing intermittently is the surrounding grass, shrubs, and trees, which give the appearance of having predated the site's new intervention. A certain sense that this project precedes the museum is embedded in the interwoven hard and soft scapes on the site.

Punctuating this radial progression is a singular mass adorned with limestone. This figure reaches out to the pedestrian, inviting a walk down its corridor to meet the white elephant facing the museum. This time, the elephant is being approached from behind, the visitor going without complete knowledge of its fully realized state.



Key Plan

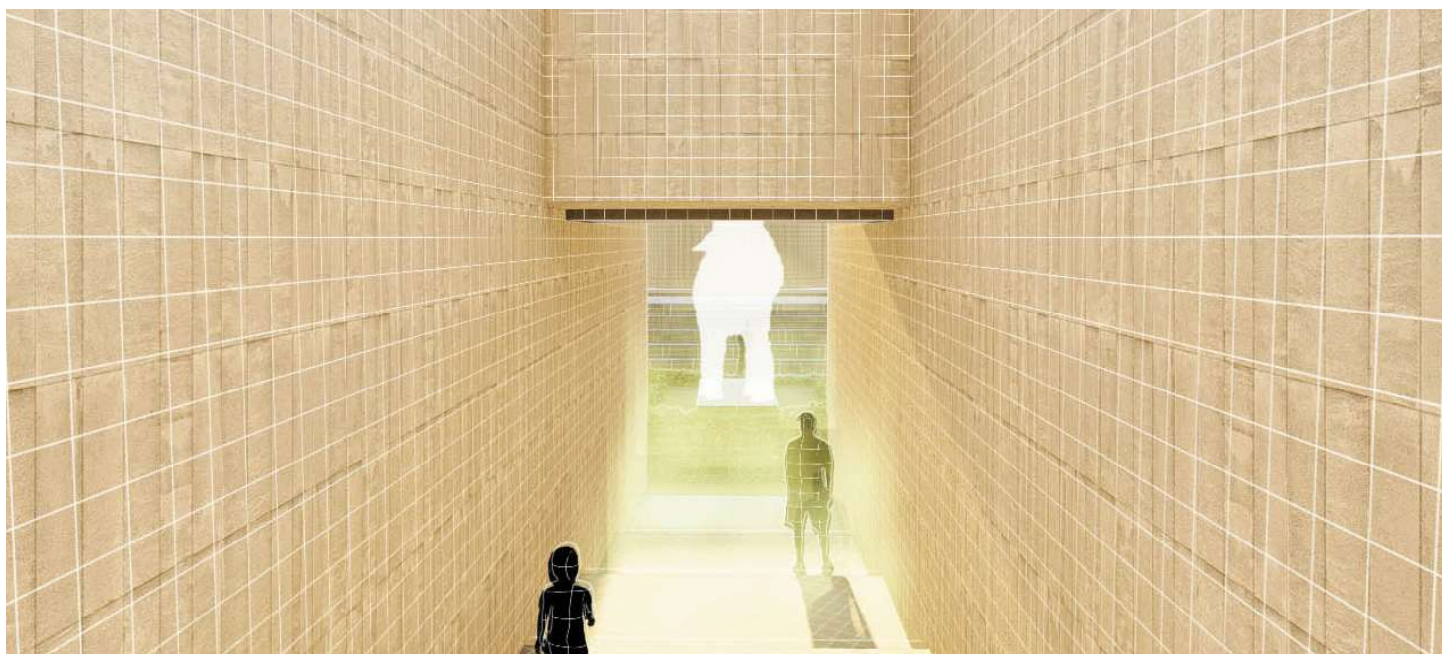


Fig 3.20 *The Northern Corridor: View into the Path (Facing South)*

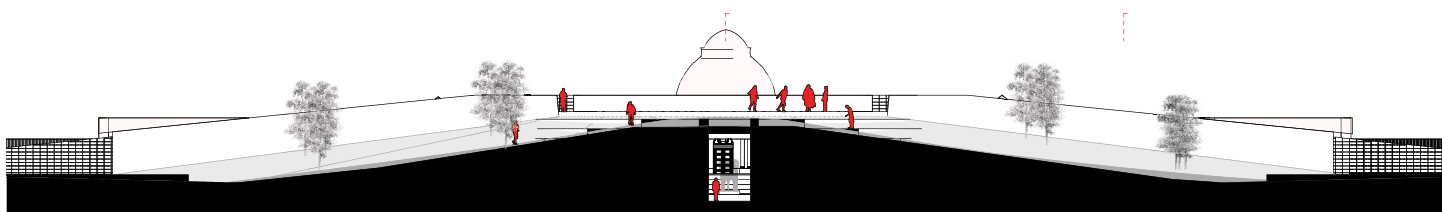
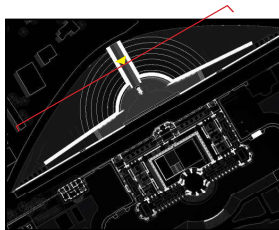


Fig 3.21 *Section West East 2 (Facing South)*

Moving Towards the Elephant

The object of interest appears to grow in scale as it is reached within this corridor. In addition to this, it is revealed that a kind of forum sits ahead of it. A slight pause is encountered as one is shrouded under the threshold.



Key Plan

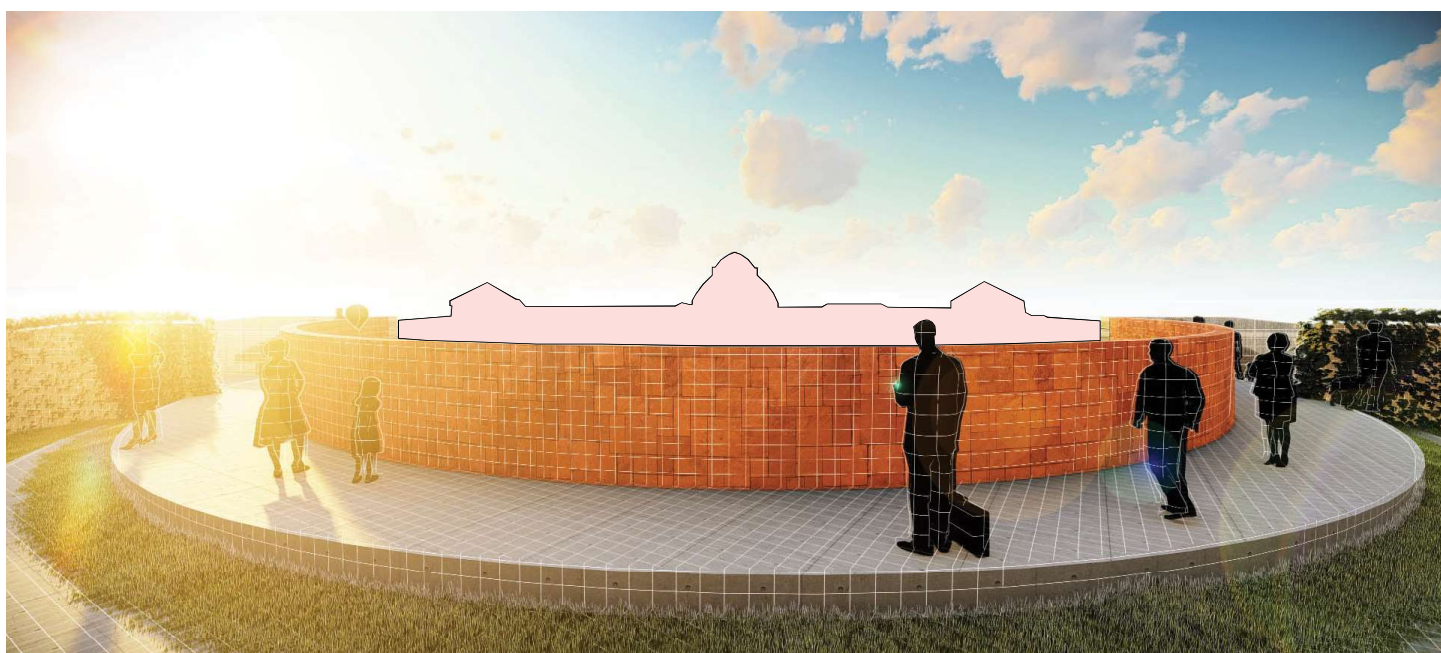


Fig 3.22 *The Ascent: View from the Top of the Mound (Facing South)*

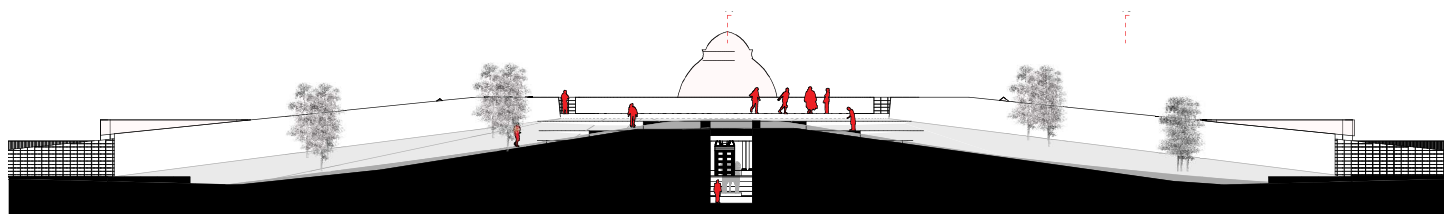
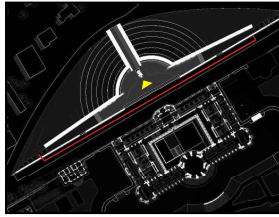


Fig 3.23 *Section West East 2 (Facing South)*

Standing Above the Elephant

While on top of the mound, the presence of the elephant is not felt. The momentous nature of progressively climbing up is met by a moment of climax once the edge is reached. The railing, comprised of the compositely panelized pieces of polished bronze supported by concrete retains the visitor as they are finally able to connect with the program below.



Key Plan



Fig 3.24 Aerial View Looking At the Monument (Facing North)



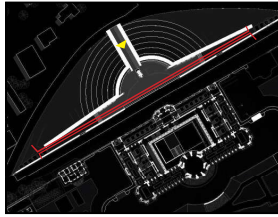
Fig 3.25 Section West East (Facing North) 1

In the Middle

From the Museum's Northern Doors: The Focal Point

The design is driven by the idea that a natural entropy of struggle within, will eventually lead the artefacts to their host countries, unraveling the tight grasp of the imperialistic endeavour that hold them captive. This drives the decision of using slopes to guide the movement of individuals, challenging the body to move in space as a repercussive response to the environment and its relation to its gravitational center. The design is also driven by the idea of the reveal, which in turn results in a reflection of one's understanding of the severity and magnitude of overlooking the nature of repatriation when it comes to the museum's artefacts and the meaning of the museum at hand.

During evenings, the monument is illuminated, and to some extent becomes the glowing visual hearth to the site. As people walk through the east-west axis, the shadows of their movement become a spectacle from within the north-facing corridor of the museum. Anonymity is maintained from within these passageways without compromising the essence of one's presence from the outskirts. The result is a choreography, a visual play between the monument and the museum.



Key Plan



Fig 3.26 Above the Elephant's Room: Aerial View Looking Down from the Monument

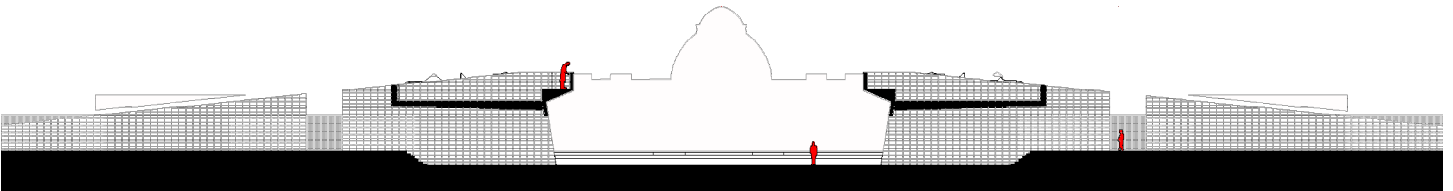


Fig 3.27 Section West East (Facing South) 2

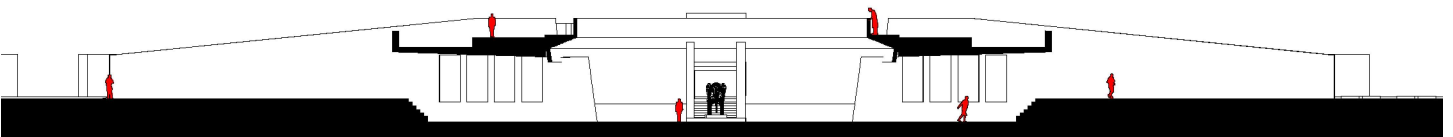
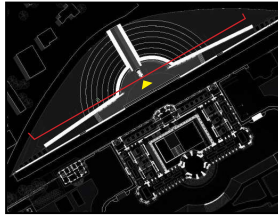


Fig 3.28 Section West East (Facing North) 2

Overlooking the Elephant

As the individual looks down, the polished bronze platform on which the elephant stands on shimmers to show the underbelly of the animal. It is at this moment that the elephant becomes a piece of the reality of the program above, albeit only in parts—only its underbelly, its mouth and its tusks. Facing directly ahead of the program on this edge of the park is the museum's northern doors. Revealed from this vantage point is a clever reveal of the elephant's underbelly. This serves as a metaphorical reflection of the issue of repatriation in relation to the public at large and their passive interaction with the imperial history of the site. The underside of the elephant may be imprinted on with the inscriptions that are only easily legible from above, as they would be experienced through the reflective nature of the overall experience. In the opposite scenario from the ground level, to see the inscribed notes looking straight on to the elephant with the head looking north would be to read backward.



Key Plan



Fig 3.29 *The Elephant's Room: View of Rotunda Facing North*

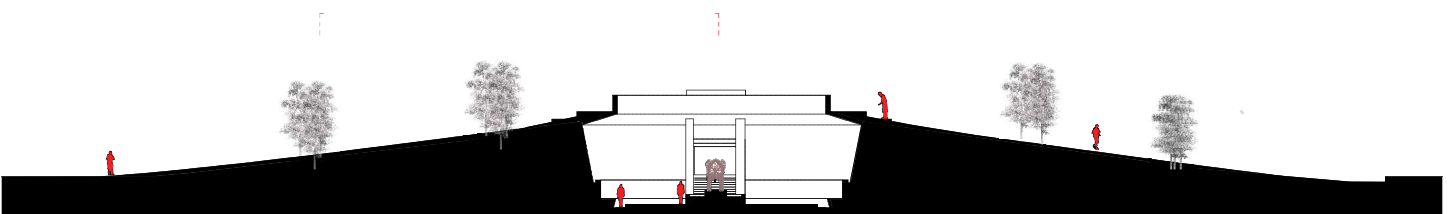


Fig 3.30 *Section West East (Facing North) 3*

A Rotunda in Bronze

Mechanically chiseled onto the rectilinear bronze wall panels will be a series of names of artefacts that are destined to be returned to their predestined locations. This process of inscribing will be ongoing until the wall has found itself filled. The inscribed writings of this wall will attest as a memory of the process which has long been a criticism of the museum. Inscribing both the title and the relocation destination's coordinates on this wall will generate a mosaic of returned artifacts, acting as a kind of mapping.

As one moves through the passageway and reaches the climax of the bronzed rotunda, the experience of seeing oneself grow as one moves away from the wall is deemed as an important optical part of the experience. The double curvature of the wall generates reflections that alter with the visitor's proximity to it. The play on distortion also plays a part in the experience due to a similar phenomenon. At all times in the center of the intervention, a vision of the elephant, its horizontal vertices stretched beyond the palpable imagination, is present.

PART 04

Conclusion

Since the grand opening in December 2018 in Tervuren and Kinshasa's new national museum opening, the discussion of the repatriation of artefacts has been a hot topic. Both new and old presidents of the DRC have made claims to request these artefacts back into the country. It has come to be one of the foundational issues which has stuck by long after the reign of Mobutu. Diplomatically, this would also be seen as a step in the right direction in relation to collaborative processes. Inherently, the implications of building the repatriative monument are both spatial and political. The physical stature of the monument creates an unmistakable level of accountability to the public at large to this endeavour. It generates an environment where the display of reciprocity is valued most. The repatriation monument's success lies in its ability to create transparency in historical collaboration.

By being the first thing that people see on the site, and then having that experience be mirrored across the northern room through the experience within the museum, the conversation about the museum's collection remains deeply entrenched into the mind of the visitor. It is for this same reason that it is visible from the new museum addition's restaurant. The gently sloping shape draws visual attention to its peak from quite a large distance. By being the first thing that people think of when comparing these two contrasting ideologies, you are forced to think twice. You are forced to double think in new ways you did not want to accept, challenging your sense of cognitive dissonance.

The social framework is affected as this now becomes a new site of commemoration. A collective point of gathering in celebration of this momentous event. The northern halls in particular find themselves in a favourable position to enjoy this monument. The material framework heralds back to the material references to statutory monuments erected to support the old imperial climate. The perception thus, is one that shows visitors that a clear dialogue is at play. It raises questions about who is the rightful owner of the artefacts within the museum. It puts people out of a state of cognitive dissonance about the issue at heart. It reveals the slowness of the process and the apprehension necessary to continue with such a project.

This project concedes itself as a call to action, implementable and realistic within the scope of the site. What this project suggests is fairly unique. This is due in part to how it addresses the controversy of the transfer of museum collections. Often the subject of losing all collections due to the process of repatriation is brought up. What this project does is answer to the notion that the process of repatriation can be both beneficial for museums and the destinations where the artefacts will be sent back. It shows how the repatriation process can be beneficial for both museums and their places of origin. A further exploration of this idea can be made where the monument should be paired with a reciprocal monument at the site which receives the artefacts, thus completing the cycle. Ultimately, the monument to the repatriation of artefacts presents a vision of the future that fully confronts its past, while carrying a modern and progressive value system using the means of monumental architecture.

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