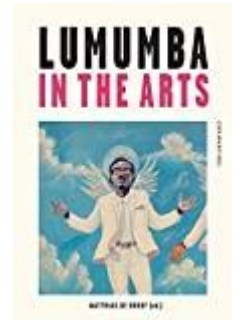




Matthias De Groof, ed. *Lumumba in the Arts*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019. Illustrations. 464 pp. \$79.00, paper, ISBN 978-946270174-8.



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Lumumba in the Arts, edited by Matthias De Groof, provides multidisciplinary analyses of Patrice Lumumba's life and legacies through a remarkable range of art and media in a beautifully illustrated volume that will benefit both scholars of Congo and undergraduates alike. This is a momentous book in every sense of the word, totaling twenty-two chapters written by twenty-five contributors in addition to an extensive gallery section, and numerous photos, poems, paintings, and songs. Part of what sets this work apart from previous analyses of Lumumba and his legacies is that it includes contributions from artists as well as scholars. Established scholars of Congo and Lumumba, such as Jean Omasombo, Karen Bouwer, Johannes Fabian, Bogumil Jewsiewicki, and Elikia M'Bokolo, make important contributions, but we also hear from artists like Tshibumba Kanda Matulu, and Luc Tuymans, as well as perhaps Lumumba's most famous biographer, filmmaker Raoul Peck.

Overall, this volume moves beyond earlier analyses of Lumumba, many of which have fo-

cused on his rapid rise to power and the Cold War politics behind his equally rapid fall, in order to grapple with the global decolonization moment that Lumumba came to represent. Contributors explore the myriad ways through which artists from across Congo and around the world have honored his legacy, mourned his premature death, and constructed their own versions of Lumumba in the process. A common thread across these contributions is the idea that Lumumba's specter, whether in film, photos, his writings, or his speeches, continues to loom over international relations, neocolonialist politics, and most of all, Congo's tortured postcolonial history. For many Congolese, this is true in a literal sense, as Omasombo and others discuss here. Lumumba's body being dissolved into acid and denied a proper burial by his Belgian killers freed his spirit to wander, both haunting those who conspired against him and inspiring those whom he left behind.

De Groof begins the volume with an introductory reflection on the iconography of Lumumba

that guides readers through previous discussions of Lumumba while also laying out the multiple frameworks through which he is analyzed in this volume. De Groof establishes two questions that frame the work: “*What iconography arose around Lumumba and why is that iconography so diverse?*” (p. 9). This volume builds off of two previous edited volumes from the late 1990s (Pierre Halen and János Riesz’s *Patrice Lumumba entre Dieu et Diable: Un héros africain dans ses images* [1997] and Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Donatien Dibwe da Mwembu’s *A Congo Chronicle: Patrice Lumumba in Urban Art* [1999]), which reflected on Lumumba’s legacy and depictions, but it works to globalize and expand the discussion to include a wider range of global perspectives and art forms.

Part 1 interrogates the historiography of Lumumba, focusing on the shift from his initial demonization by European and other Western writers to his beatification as a symbol of the still-born possibilities of independence and third worldism. Isabelle de Rezende’s chapter sets the tone for the whole book when she notes that “Lumumba’s ‘after-lives,’ as items of living memory, have also been of a strikingly visual nature, both in Congo and globally” (p. 37). These visual memories are most prominent in the gallery, and in part 2, they remain an important theme throughout. The remainder of part 1 consists of primarily historiographic analyses that analyze Lumumba’s tragic death and the unfulfilled mourning of Belgian colonization in Congo (Omasombo), Lumumba’s influence on Congolese intellectuals and absence from postcolonial theory (Pedro Monaville), the ways intellectual and political actors have attempted to predict what Lumumba would have done had he survived (Christopher L. Miller), and the evolution of Lumumba’s historiography over the past six decades (interview with M’Bokolo).

After part 1, the thirty-six-page gallery section enhances the written analyses, using a combination of photographs from throughout Lumumba’s

political career, political cartoons alternately lauding and demonizing Lumumba, photographic coverage of the global protests following Lumumba’s death, and paintings from around the world depicting Lumumba. Part 2, on the iconography of Lumumba, takes up the bulk of the work and includes eighteen chapters subdivided into sections on cinema, theater, photography, poetry, comics, music, painting, and public space. De Groof’s chapter on Lumumba in cinema surveys some of his many depictions and emphasizes especially how films have used Lumumba’s specter or ghost to discuss his complex legacy. Next, Peck, whose two films on Lumumba are discussed in numerous contributions here, reflects, in Q and A form, on how he came to write, direct, and depict Lumumba’s tragic history in his films. Bouwer follows with a gender-focused analysis of Peck’s two films that builds on her own path-breaking research into this topic, *Gender and Decolonization in the Congo: The Legacy of Patrice Lumumba* (2010). Rosario Giordano then analyzes a little-known topic within studies of Lumumba, Lumumba’s multiple portrayals in Italian cinema. Next, Congolese filmmaker and academic Balufu Bakupya-Kanyinda, interviewed by De Groof, reflects on imaginings of Lumumba in Congolese and foreign cinema as well as his own works.

Following the cinema section, contributors discuss Lumumba in theater (Piet Defraeye), photography (Mark Sealy), poetry (Mathieu Zana Etambala), and comics (Véronique Bragard), before three longer sections on Lumumba in music, painting, and public space close out the work. Among these contributions, Léon Tsambu’s analysis of Lumumba in Congolese popular music stands out for its emphasis on specifically Congolese depictions and imaginings of Lumumba, where Gert Huskens and Idesbald Goddeeris focus on Lumumba’s invocation in rap music from North America and Western Europe. An important theme that unites these diverse analyses is the global scale of Lumumba’s influence as a Pan-Africanist political figure and icon of decoloniza-

tion. We can see this in Jewsiewicki's "A Congolese Hero to the Oppressed Peoples of the World" but also in Marlene Dumas's and Tuymans's reflections on how they came to depict Pauline and Patrice Lumumba in their art. On the Congolese side, we also have a fascinating conversation between Congolese popular artist Tshibumba Kanda Matulu by Fabian, recorded by Fabian in the early 1980s, and interspersed with iconic works by the late Tshibumba. The final section on Lumumba in public space reflects on how Lumumba has been remembered in a range of artistic media, including stamps, banknotes, and postcards (Pierre Petit); Belgian colonial propaganda (Julien Truddaïu); street names (Robert Jacobs); and statues in Ghent's Citadelpark (Piet Defraeye), while the epilogue by De Groof takes the reader on an evocative visual exploration of Shilatembo, the place where Lumumba was killed.

This collection covers an impressive array of geographic, cultural, linguistic, and artistic terrain in reflecting on Lumumba's iconography in art. It provides an exciting array of new directions for scholars of Congolese, African, and postcolonial studies to follow toward furthering our understandings of Lumumba as a person, an icon, and a martyr of Congolese independence. One notable absence from this otherwise excellent collection is Lumumba himself in terms of his thoughts, words, and writings. While readers do encounter numerous excerpts from Lumumba's revolutionary independence speech and his prophetic final letter, we do not encounter words from many of his more mundane speeches or his evolving political thoughts as laid out in his journalistic writings in Stanleyville throughout the 1950s or his posthumously published book, *Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé?* (1961). The focus on Lumumba the icon tends to overshadow Lumumba the man. This critique is by no means unique to this volume but can equally be extended to numerous politically focused analyses of Lumumba and the Congo crisis, which have tended to limit Lumumba's voice and agency and instead have focused on

how Lumumba was acted upon by Western governments or Congolese politicians. In any case, this edited volume represents a vibrant and innovative, new approach to understanding Lumumba that brings together a dynamic group of scholars and artists into a fascinating, thought-provoking, and visually delightful conversation.

Contributions from *Lumumba in Art* would work well in undergraduate and graduate courses on African art, postcolonial Africa, postcolonial studies, or global decolonization. While contributors invoke complex theory in analyzing Lumumba in the arts, they do so without resorting to difficult jargon or overly academic prose. Although authors do engage with previous literature on Lumumba, they primarily discuss primary sources relating to his iconography, making for an easy-to-read and fresh discussion. This volume represents an important contribution to the literature on Lumumba that underscores Lumumba's impact as a Congolese, African, and international icon, and opens new vistas for further research.

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