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[Vincent Meessen and Thela Tendu "Patterns for \(Re\)cognition" at Kunsthalle Basel](#)

by [mousse](#)

February 13~2015



“Patterns for (Re)cognition” is the largest exhibition to date, and the first exhibition in Switzerland, by the Belgian artist Vincent Meessen, who will represent Belgium at the upcoming Venice Biennale. Meessen’s often collaborative and rigorously research-based practice includes investigations into gaps in the writing of history, particularly colonial histories. At Kunsthalle Basel, the artist presents several new modular sculptures; a series of 16-millimeter films based on found film fragments; a new sound piece; borrowed early-19th-century ritual objects originating from the Kuba Kingdom; and a series of folded paper works. All of these serve as a visual and conceptual backdrop for a selection of 1930s paintings by the little-known Congolese painter Thela Tendu.

Meessen acts as both artist and curator of what is the largest show of Tendu’s abstractions to date in a kind of exhibition-within-the-exhibition. Tendu’s artistic output includes geometric abstraction, folktale illustrations, and figurative paintings depicting his animal cosmogony and encounters with colonial modernity in different fields of quotidian life. As a precursor to Modern art in the Congo, his oeuvre offers a remarkable example of the development of abstraction in African art in parallel with—but without an awareness of—its proliferation in Western Modernism. The presence of the works here is possible because a significant cache of Tendu’s work, once owned by the art critic and colonial administrator Gaston-Denys Perier, was donated to the Royal Library of Belgium in 1959 and has been impeccably preserved by the library ever since.

[at Kunsthalle Basel](#)

until 25 May 2015











Vincent Meessen and Thela Tendu, "Patterns for (Re)cognition" installation views at Kunsthalle Basel, 2015

Photos: Philipp Hänger.



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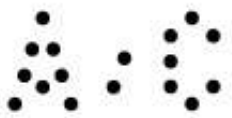
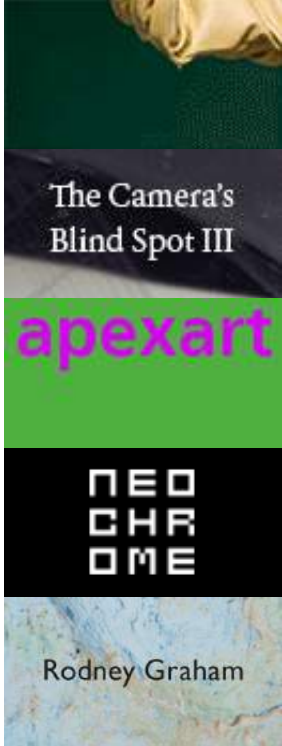
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