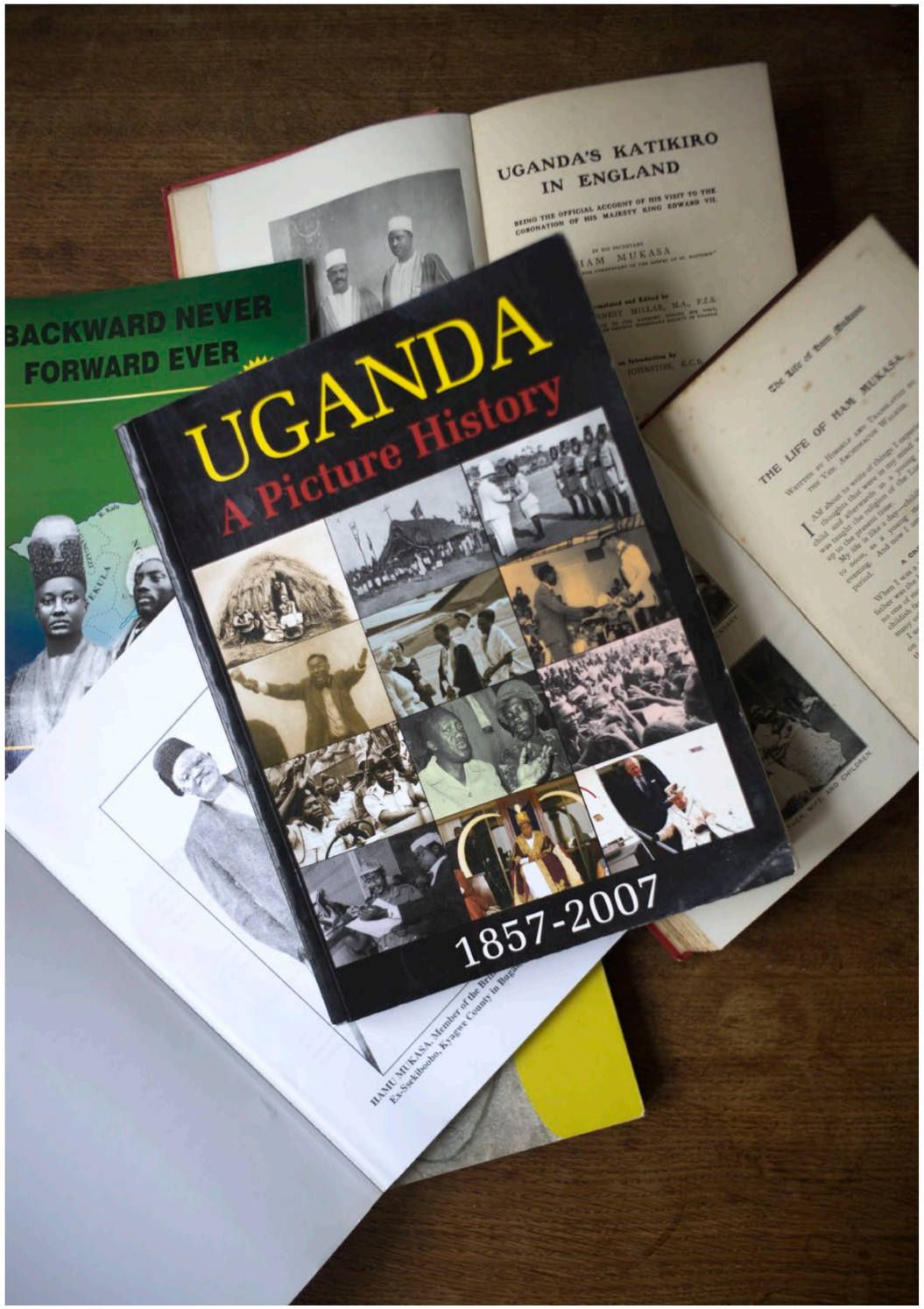
Ebifananyi : a study of photographs in Uganda in and through an artistic practice

Stultiens, A.



Chapter 4

Mind the Gaps and Make Pictures

This chapter is concerned with the gaps between different temporalities, media and visual cultures. It considers how these gaps can be bridged through attempts to translate documents produced in a certain medium and as part of a particular visual culture in the past, into the present, and asks what these translations can tell us about both this past and the situated present.

Ebifananyi #4 and #8 both include a collection that was made on my initiative by many producers of pictures. Ugandan artists, designers, art students and crafts people (*Ebifananyi* #4 and #8), as well as art students in The Netherlands (*Ebifananyi* #4), were invited to engage with historical documents that testify to an absence rather than a presence of pictures in Buganda - a facet of the discussion which I will return to later. They were asked to produce visual responses to the documents in a medium of their choice. I have started to think of this, initially intuitive, approach as an essential part of my artistic practice that is carried out from the changing position of a relative outsider.
A photograph made in Buganda in 1875 (*Ebifananyi* #8) and a list that describes illustrations meant for a history of three *Kabakas* from mid-19th until early-20th century Buganda (*Ebifananyi* #4) formed the starting points for explorations of pictures rather than of photographs in Buganda. These explorations lead to new pictures, which were made by others who then became part of my artistic process.

Every message, whether in a picture or in words, has a form in which it communicates. The message is fully readable if its receiver can interpret its form. Even if this is not the case, the form can be meaningful. The awareness that a form is not accessible, that a picture cannot be understood but still has value for others,
is in itself a powerful message.
The question of whether historical documents formulated in a particular language or form are translatable can be rather paralysing when the essential quality of the form in which a message is offered is, as German philosopher Walther Benjamin stated, not "communication or the imparting of information".[189] I argue that
the translatability of a message, or lack thereof, cannot be found in its form, but in the expectations and questions that are brought to the encounter with this form.[190] In this project effort has been made to use this form appropriately, and as an accessible vehicle, around which correspondences unfold.

This view resonates with ideas argued by American and Italian anthropologists William Hanks and Carlo Severi re-

189 **Benjamin (1996), p. 253**
190 **Ibid., p. 254**

spectively, and Kenyan comparative literature scholar Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Hanks and Severi argue that translation is at the heart of any anthropological inquiry and that the process of translation, including failures, may be "our best tool in discerning what is specific" to both the society that is studied, as well as the society that is the audience of the study. Any translation, they say, is in principle "selective, which implies loss of features from the original" and "also adds in supplementary features absent from the original [...,] the interpretant can be said to translate its object into an understanding of it". The translation is then an interpretation and itself is a source of information.[191] Within a literary context Ngugi Wa Thiong'o has repeatedly claimed that it is important to make statements in one's native language, because this makes these statements accessible to the community one belongs to and understands.[192] However, he also states that,

> "Translation is the language of languages. It opens the gates of national and linguistic prisons. It is thus one of the most important allies of world literature and global consciousness. But most important it is the globalectic reading of the word. [...] Globalectic reading means breaking open the prison house of imagination built by theories and outlooks that would seem to signify the content within is classified, open to only a few."[193]

I agree with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o that translations are important vehicles to attempt to communicate beyond the limited scope of one community. They make comparisons between cultures and places possible and their particularities apparent beyond structures and boundaries that are laid out in theories.[194]

The translations of historical documents presented in *Ebifananyi* #4 and #8 are explicitly interpretations rather than attempts to stay true to the message of the original. Each one of these interpretations contributes to a collectively made whole and posits the question, how do these collectively made collections contribute to an understanding of photographs in Uganda as well as what is their position in my artistic practice as a research method?

The letter that relates to *Ebifananyi* #4 addresses Ham Mukasa, the Baganda chief whose pictures and writing in the book are based on. In relation to *Ebifananyi* #8 I wrote to Prince Joseph Walugembe Musanje, who produced the most ubiquitous portrait of Kabaka Muteesa I in Uganda.

191 Hanks & Severi (2014), pp. 2, 3. Also see Imbo (2002), pp. 109-128
192 Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1987), (1993), (2012)
193 Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (2012), p. 61
194 Ibid.

Published June, 2015

Quote from Mukasa, 1904-1, p.27

Introducing Ham Mukasa and his documents

Chief Ham Mukasa (ca. 1870-1956) was a prominent figure in Uganda. To his descendants, he is known as the scholar who never went to school.
Ham Mukasa befriends high-ranking colonists and missionaries and is photographed by them. He is involved in the establishment of formal education in Uganda and donates land to the Church of Uganda for educational and medical purposes.

In 2012, I came into contact with several of Ham Mukasa's grandchildren after someone spotted a photograph of one of his daughters on the History In Progress Uganda Facebook page. The family's collection of photographs struck me as a treasure trove because of the variety of the available materials and their age and quantity – all of which I was allowed to digitise.

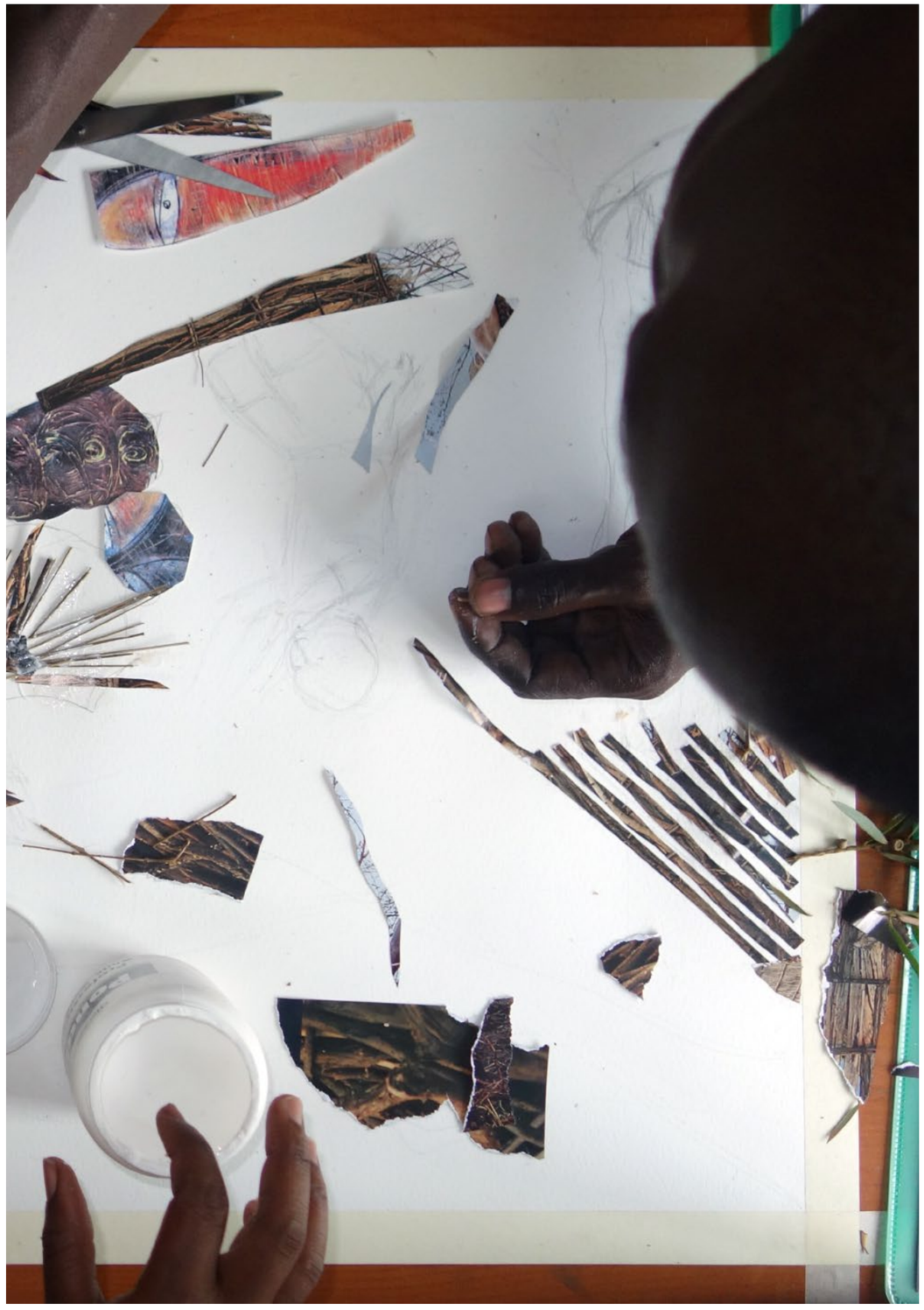
The family tried to turn Ham Mukasa's house into an attraction for tourists who have an interest in cultural history. Every time I visited the house, there were more framed pictures in the sitting room. I saw photographs that I had reproduced elsewhere with other members of the family. They were recognisable to me because I had also photographed the frames.

Ham Mukasa's relatives' collection does not only consist of photographs. There are also a lot of documents. These are mainly letters, minutes of meetings and short memos. Amongst these papers, I came across five typed pages stapled together. Although the text was written in Luganda, I immediately realised that it was an important document. It transpired that the text consisted of brief descriptions of illustrations. In the 1930s, Ham Mukasa wrote a history of Buganda. These were illustrations intended for that history titled 'Simuda Nyuma'.

This history is known and was partly published, but it would appear that the illustrations were never realised. I invited Ugandan artists and Dutch and Ugandan students to create them. We encountered ambiguities and clichés, but we also brought the past to life.

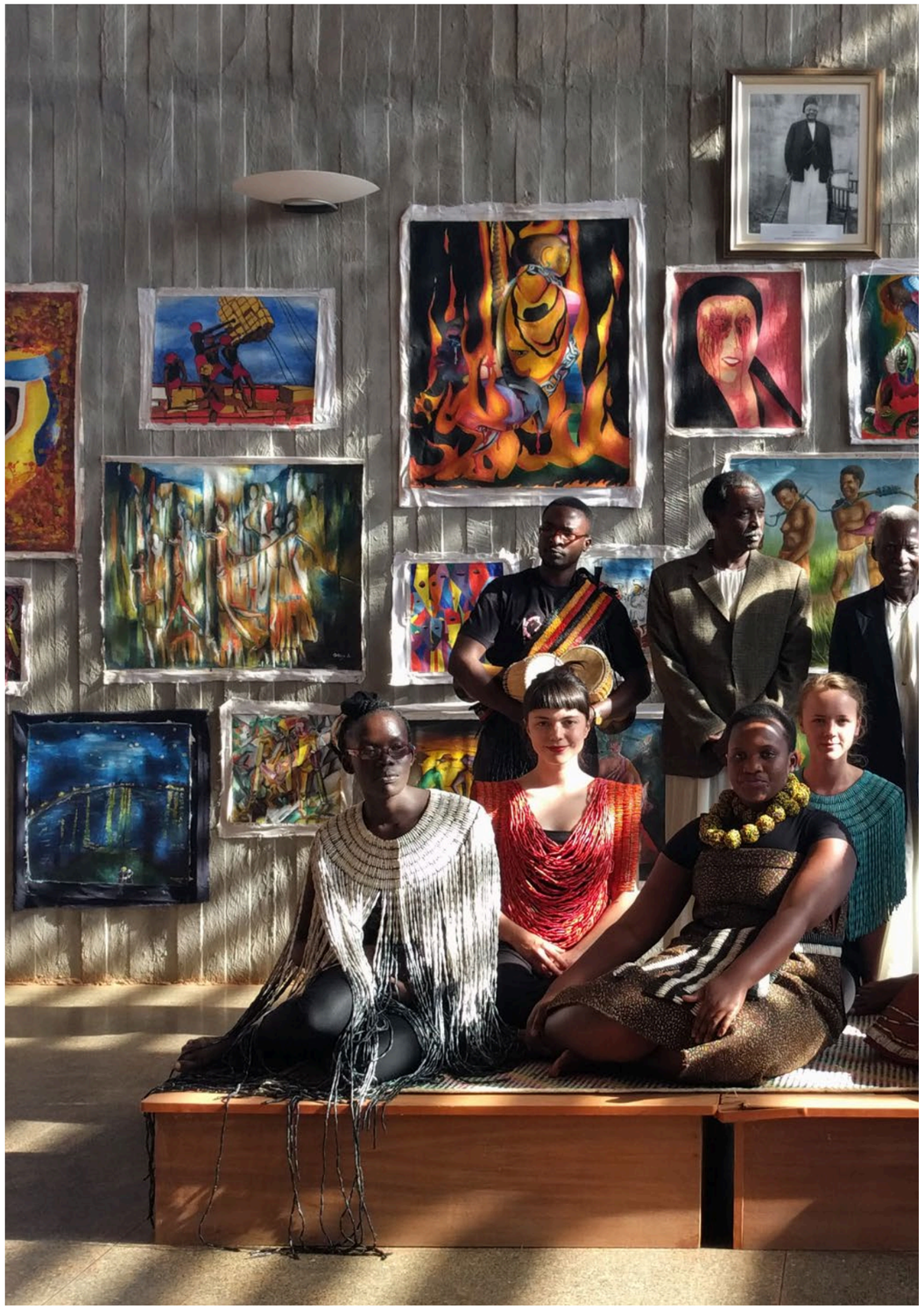
Gallerist Daudi Karungi at book launch of *Ebifananyi* #1, Afriart Gallery, Kampala, 2014

To Daudi Karungi's right, on the notice board, hangs the call for the residency towards *Ebifananyi* #4 at 32 Degrees East



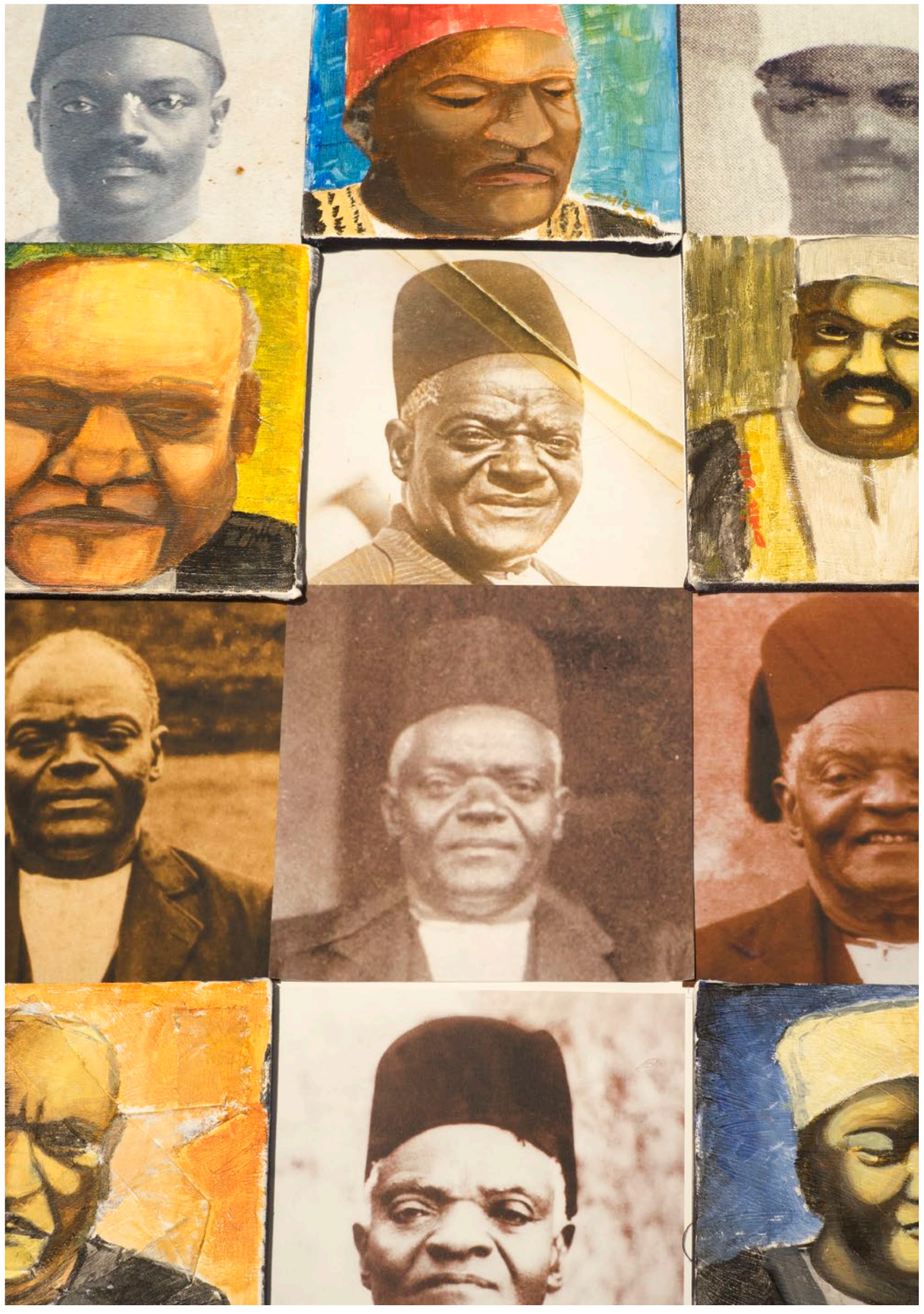
Workshop that kicked of the course in which Ham Mukasa's described illustrations would be realised by students.

Uganda Christian University, Mukono, 2014



Performance by Sanaa Gateja with students and volunteers at the Ugandan launch of *Ebifananyi* #4

Hamu Mukasa Library, Uganda Christian University, Mukono, 2016



***Ebifananyi*, Fomu Antwerp, October 2017 / February 2018**

A letter about Ham Mukasa's documents and the emergence of Collective Making as a research method

Dear Mwami Ham Mukasa,
After having worked with the wealth of writing and photographs that you left behind it is an honour and a pleasure to now direct these thoughts to you. It would appear that there is little that we share because we lived through different times and grew up on different continents. Nevertheless, encountering your writing and the photographs in your family's collections made me think about the challenges that come with the translation of meaning from one context to another. These contexts include your past and my present, Luganda and English, meanings conveyed in words and pictures in the Ugandan and Dutch context.

The fourth book in the *Ebifananyi* series presents the outcome of my engagement with photographs that testify to your life and a document with descriptions of over a hundred pictures, that I assume was written by you. I intended the book to be a proposal on how to deal with the challenges of translations and the gaps between different realities and media that sometimes appear to be hard to bridge.
Before I tell you more about the book and how it came about I want to share some observations on my encounters with your world and your writing because they made certain pitfalls I wanted to avoid apparent.

While browsing through the documents in Kwata Mpola House I wondered how it was possible that all the duplicates of letters, drafts of memos, the books filled with minutes of meetings, and the travel reports were produced in just one lifetime.[195] Your autobiographical account in The Wonderful Story of Uganda,[196] and the book on the journey made with Katikiro Apolo Kagwa[197] to England in 1902[198] both impressed me because of the details with which you describe your experiences. Both texts are accompanied by introductions written by Reverend Mullins.[199] He claims that "[your] style, whether owing to the writer or the translator, has a delightful naiveté and charm and recalls the rhythmical cadence of the Bible"[200] and that "some of [your] impressions are obviously false ones, and many of the numbers given are quite unreliable."[201]
These words caused unease and made me wonder how you felt when reading them. It looks as though you were not considered to be a member of the audience of your own texts. Mullins may have appreciated your words, but he undermines them at the same time. It is as if he cannot accept them for what they are and how they try to communicate. It looks as though, as far as Mullins was concerned, your imagined audience, "the natives of Uganda", was different from his imagined audience, the "English Reader", and that these were mutually exclusive categories.[202]

I own two editions of your account of the journey with the Katikiro. There are differences between these two books that I consider to be significant in relation to the mutually exclusive categories of 'us' and 'them'.

195 **Kwata Mpola House is located in Mukono, ca. 30km to the east of Kampala. This is where the biggest part of the family collection resides in a library and the sitting room of the house. Additional material was encountered in Mukasa's house in Mengo, near the *Kabaka*'s palace, and brought for digitization by one of Mukasa's granddaughters. The digitization of the Ham Mukasa family archive was funded by the British Library's 'Endangered Archives' programme and carried out in collaboration with Richard Vokes / University of Adelaide: https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP656 Last accessed 25-09-2018**
196 **Mukasa in Mullins (1904)**
197 **Apola Kagwa (1864-1927) was prime minister (Katikiro) of the kingdom of Buganda from 1880 until 1927. He is also known as a historian who wrote about Buganda in Luganda (Rowe (1998), p. 64).**
198 **Mukasa (1904)**
199 **Mullins also translated Mukasa's texts that were written in Luganda.**
200 **Mullins (1904), p. ix**
201 **Mullins in Mukasa, (1904), p. v-vi**
202 **Ibid., p. VI**

These editions were published with an interval of 70 years. The one that was published in 1904 is, as you know, titled *Uganda's Katikiro in England*. The second edition, published in 1975, is titled *Sir Apolo Kagwa Discovers Britain*. Apolo Kagwa is present in both titles, but the position he had as Katikiro disappears. Rev. Mullins must have considered it to be known to or otherwise acceptable for the British audience in 1904. In 1975 however, with Uganda being no longer part of the British Empire after it gained its independence in 1962, Katikiro's proper names and the British title Sir were used.[203] I assume that this difference is related to the growing distance between Uganda and the British Empire. In addition, the older book was illustrated with photographs that were made in Uganda around 1900, while the newer one shows impressions of the U.K. from the same period. This can be explained if we consider which difference between the described and pictured reality is significant. In 1904 this is the difference between Uganda and Britain, whereas in 1975 it is the difference between the described past and the present in which the book is read. The 1975 edition was edited by Taban lo Liyong, a writer who was born in Sudan and studied at Makerere.[204] Rev. Mullins' introduction is no longer part of the book, and Taban lo Liyong removed what he considered to be creative editing of your words by the Reverend. Taban lo Liyong claims to have left out many of the "favourable remarks" that substituted omissions that were unfavourable to the Reverend and his family or friends.[205] I wonder though whether Taban lo Liyong had access to the Luganda original written by you, because another paper that reflects on the book mentions that it is lost and I have found no other reference to it.[206]

German anthropologist Heike Behrend compared your mention of 'wonder' on the account of your journey to England with the wonder of European explorers when traveling to Africa,

> "By the nineteenth century [...] English, French, and German travellers no longer wondered about anything. Their glance had achieved a confidence that allowed them to objectify and take possession of what was foreign to them. It was now the various Others, the objects of their glance, to whom they imputed the wonder they themselves were no longer capable of."[207]

Behrend also seems to think that your wonder was appropriated. She reads your travel report as "a hybrid construction, formed in dialogue in a field of power relationships."[208] It seems to me that she takes away some of your agency in interpreting the text. Ugandan literature scholar Danson Kahyana gives that agency back to you when he interprets your writing as a performance of "a certain kind of ambivalent subjectivity – marginal in relation to England and yet central enough to the institution of Empire and Englishness to merit response." I read their interpretations – arguably closer to translations - of your writing as a performance of how a German scholar and a Ugandan scholar speak from their different vantage points while writing about your words. The former reads your text from a European position, the latter from a Ugandan position. However, neither of them makes this explicit in their writing.

Being an artist who works both in the Netherlands and in Uganda, I was particularly struck by the connections you made between the reality you come from and the one you encountered, for instance when you compare the sizes of houses of prominent Baganda[209] to the ship on which you travelled.[210] I read these comparisons

203 I speak of proper names here as this is done in Uganda to make a distinction between titles and names, which are often used without differentiating between the two.
204 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taban_Lo_Liyong Last accessed 25-09-2018
205 Taban Lo Liyong in Mukasa (1975), p. V
206 Kahyana (2016). August 2018 I met Prof. Taban Lo Liyong in Kampala. He could not clearly recall having seen the Luganda text but said that "They have a lot in Britain. You should check it out".
207 Behrend (1998-1), p. 55
208 Ibid., p. 57
209 *Baganda* are the people (plural, singular is a *Muganda*) of the kingdom of Buganda.
210 Mukasa (1904), p. 19. Other explicit comparisons can be found on pp. 13, 27, 100.

as attempts to translate your experiences into images that could in turn be translated further into pictures, which brings me back to the list of illustrations that I mentioned above.

This list was meant for *Simuda Nyuma*, your "three volumes of historical narrative and personal memoir", that American historian John Rowe thought of as "one of the most impressive literary achievements in Uganda".[211] It is a five page long document that I encountered among piles of letters in Kwata Mpola House. In the margins and between the typed lines of the pages there are scribbles in a handwriting that is very similar to letters that were signed by you. I therefore assume that you wrote the list in the 1930s, just before or around the time that the first part of *Simuda Nyuma* was published.[212] When I initially asked a native Luganda speaker what this document is about, I was told that it is a list of photographs. Later, when a full translation of the text was made, I heard for the first time of the multiple meanings the word *ekifananyi* can have and that there is no specific word for photograph in Luganda. Taking the content of the list into account the translator concluded that we were dealing with a list that described illustrations meant to accompany the text of *Simuda Nyuma*. Because these illustrations were, as far as we knew, not made, the best translation for *ekifananyi* in this case seemed to be an image, a picture that exists in one's head.

I was embarrassed that I, as a photographer, had not come across the ambiguities in the translation of photographs into Luganda before. English was the default language I used to communicate in Uganda and there had not been a necessity to ask which word is used for photograph in Luganda. Only now that I knew the answer, the question seemed to be both urgent and fundamental.

Ekifananyi was not the only word in the list that was hard to translate. The Luganda was considered to be old fashioned, and I was told that the list included outdated cultural practices. I started to show the list, both the original and the translation, to artists in Uganda who generally saw it as a rare and much desired opportunity to work with a source that connected their present with various moments in Buganda's past - the ones described by you, and the one in which you wrote the descriptions. Seven professional artists took up the opportunity and produced pictures based on your images. One of the artists, Eria Nsubuga also teaches art, just like me. He suggested to extend the invitation to work with your descriptions to students and we then went on to both teach courses based on this idea. Eria Nsubuga did this at Uganda Christian University (UCU) in Mukono, which I considered to be particularly wonderful because this institute developed from Bishop Tucker Theological College that was built on your land.[213] I involved students from Minerva Art Academy in Groningen, in the north of the Netherlands. There were significant differences in the procedures in the respective schools, and in the approaches the Dutch and the Ugandan students used in making the pictures that could only become apparent in the way they did, thanks to this experience.[214]

In the Netherlands the course was elective. I heard colleagues complain about a general lack of engagement with 'the world' by students and was afraid nobody would enrol. But the class filled up quickly, and there was a genuine interest to hear about and connect with the students in Uganda. There were young Dutch people

211 Rowe (1969), p. 17
212 Hamu Mukasa (1938), *Simuda Nyuma: Ebiro bya Mutesa*, and *Simuda Nyuma: Ebya Mwanga*, both SPCK, London. I have only seen the first volume in the collection of Makerere University.
213 Ham Mukasa donated land to the church of Uganda for this purpose.
214 See http://www.andreastultiens.nl/exhibition/simuda-nyuma_ucuminerva/ for documentation of the exhibitions at UCU and Minerva Art Academy and the process that led up to them at UCU.

in the course, but also students who were American, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish and Chinese. They were in the Netherlands for a semester long exchange program between their respective art schools and the one in Groningen. All the students knew that Uganda was a country in Africa, but none of them could locate it and they were not familiar with Ugandan history. Each student chose three images from the list and worked on the pictures individually.

All the students at UCU were Ugandan, but they came from different parts of the country and therefore they did not all speak Luganda. For Eria Nsubuga's students the course was obligatory. The library on the UCU grounds is named after you, so even if students did not know your accomplishments, they did know your name. They also knew of the past existence of the *Kabakas* mentioned in Simuda Nyuma and were familiar with the story of the Uganda Martyrs; a history that a substantial part of your list is devoted to.[215]

Eria Nsubuga feared that the task we wanted to give his students might be too unusual for them. They were normally, he said, given assignments that were more straightforward and did not involve the research or critical thinking that this task required. We therefore started the course with a discussion of the list, and an afternoon in which students worked in groups on one image of their choice. Once the groups started to make the picture it looked as though it already existed collectively among the members of the group. Their mode of making was collective, involved almost no discussion and seemed to be as natural to them as it was alien to me or to the students in the Netherlands. Based on this experience, I decided to explore more intentionally what this Collective Making could bring to the individuality of making I was used to.

An anecdote from the Netherlands forms a sharp contrast with this experience in Uganda. A colleague, who teaches illustration, told me that he would not want to teach a course like this because it could only lead to exoticising of a past. When I told Eria Nsubuga about this response he said: "Our past is just as exotic to us as it is to you". He referred to the limited availability of resources on Ugandan history in everyday life, and to the ideological twisting of the past that he considers to have taken place during colonial times as well as during the various regimes that governed Uganda since.[216]

My colleague saw a limited understanding of the past, which your descriptions refer to, as a reason not to engage. Eria Nsubuga and I considered the limited knowledge of that past to be an opportunity to explore it. My colleague preferred to leave the interpretation and translation of a past up to 'others' who might be better prepared for the task. I chose to generate correspondences with that past and invited others to become part of them by translating of your words into pictures. My colleague created an open category of people different from himself, whereas I chose to accept and engage with these differences. This created a space where it became possible to bridge the gap between us. We started to interact with each other as individuals with the shared mission to produce your illustrations. We all contributed to an open ended and collective construction of a particular past. I think of this construction as performances of pasts in pictures. These performances do not make truth claims about these pasts but are an invitation to think about history as a translated, interpreted

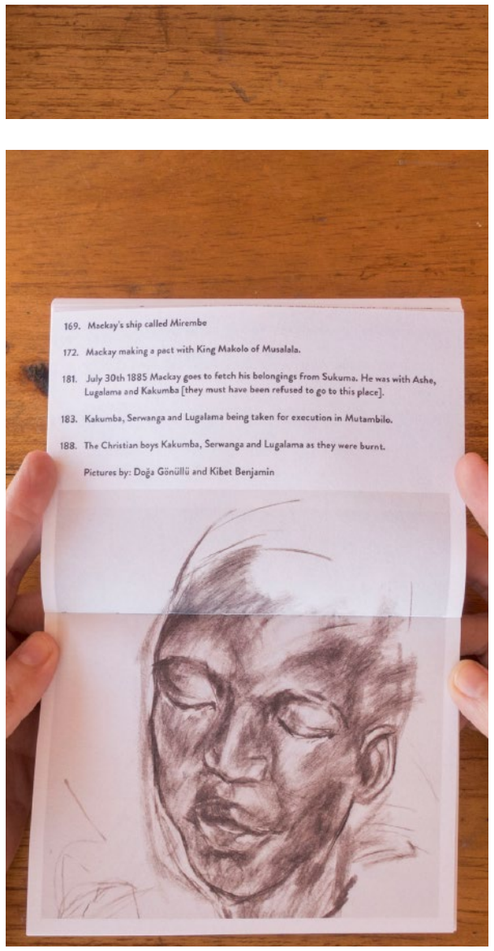
[215] **http://www.andreastultiens.nl/ebifananyi/4-simuda-nyuma-forward-ever-backward-never-based-images-ham-mukasa/100/ and following pages.**

[216] **Examples of this are given in the other letter in this chapter with *Ebifananyi* #8, and in the letter with *Ebifananyi* #3 in chapter 3.**

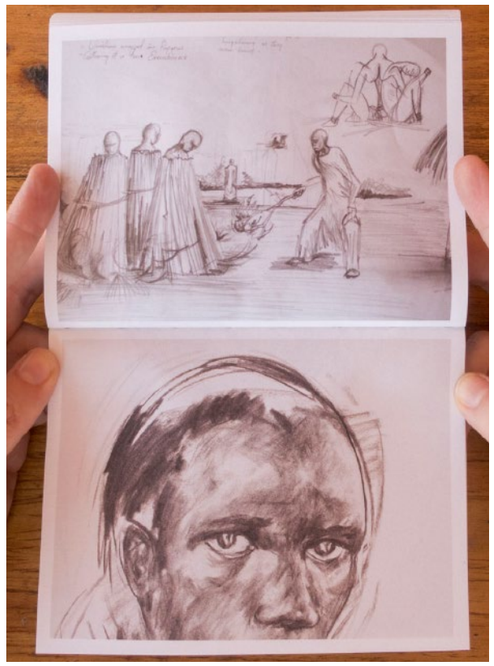
version of the past. Eria Nsubuga and I are now pursuing our own research projects, but intend to continue our engagement with your images. He would like produce all of them, while I hope to continue the search for existing pictures that you responded to in your images. It looks like the past you described will stay with us while we live towards engaging with it once again.

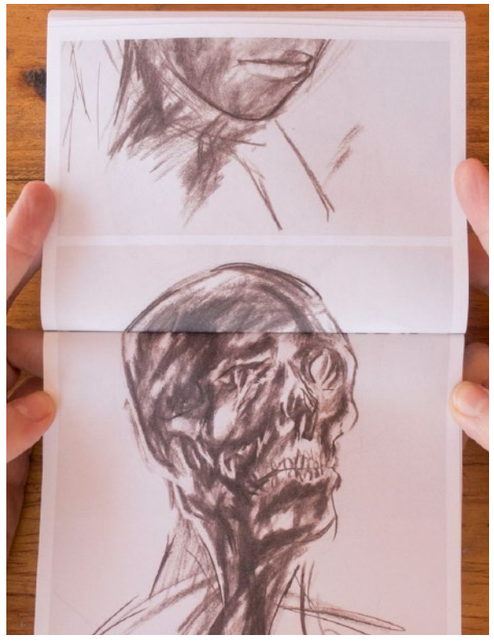
Yours truly,
Andrea

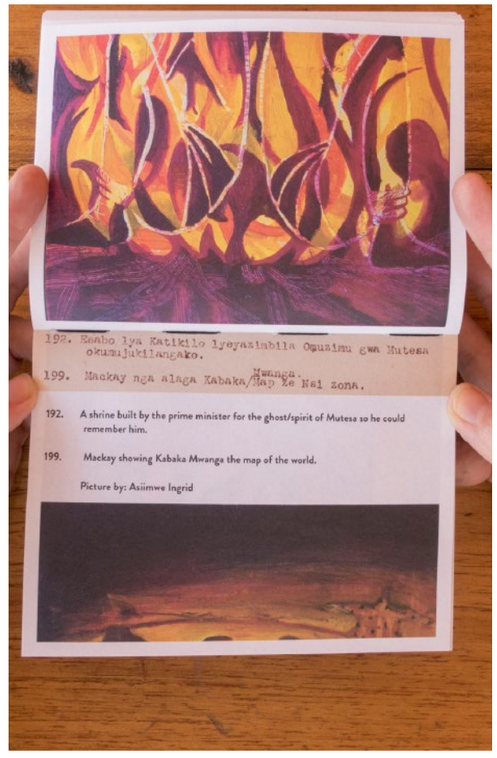
P.S. One of the risks of something being found is that it gets lost. This is, for now, the fate of your list of images. Your son George told the family librarian to give it to a translator who was working on the English translation of Simuda Nyuma. But the librarian fell ill and died. The document was, up to now, not seen again. I am very sorry about this, and hope that the activation of the list in *Ebifananyi* #4 compensates for it because the book at least preserves its content.

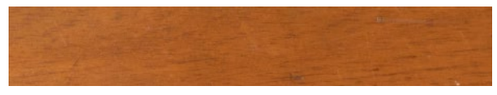


169. Mackay's ship called Mirembe
172. Mackay making a pact with King Makolo of Musalala.
181. July 30th 1885 Mackay goes to fetch his belongings from Sukuma. He was with Ashe, Lugalama and Kakumba [they must have been refused to go to this place].
183. Kakumba, Serwanga and Lugalama being taken for execution in Mutambilo.
188. The Christian boys Kakumba, Serwanga and Lugalama as they were burnt.
Pictures by: Doğa Gönüllü and Kibet Benjamin






192. Ssabo lya Katikilo lyeyazimbilla Omuzimu gwa Mutesa okumujukilangako.
199. Mackay nga alaga Kabaka Mwanga. Map ze Nsi zona.
192. A shrine built by the prime minister for the ghost/spirit of Mutesa so he could remember him.
199. Mackay showing Kabaka Mwanga the map of the world.
Picture by: Asiimwe Ingrid



Published October 2017

Merge of several portraits of Kabaka Muteesa encountered and produced for this research project

Introducing the photograph Henry Morton Stanley produced of Kabaka Muteesa I

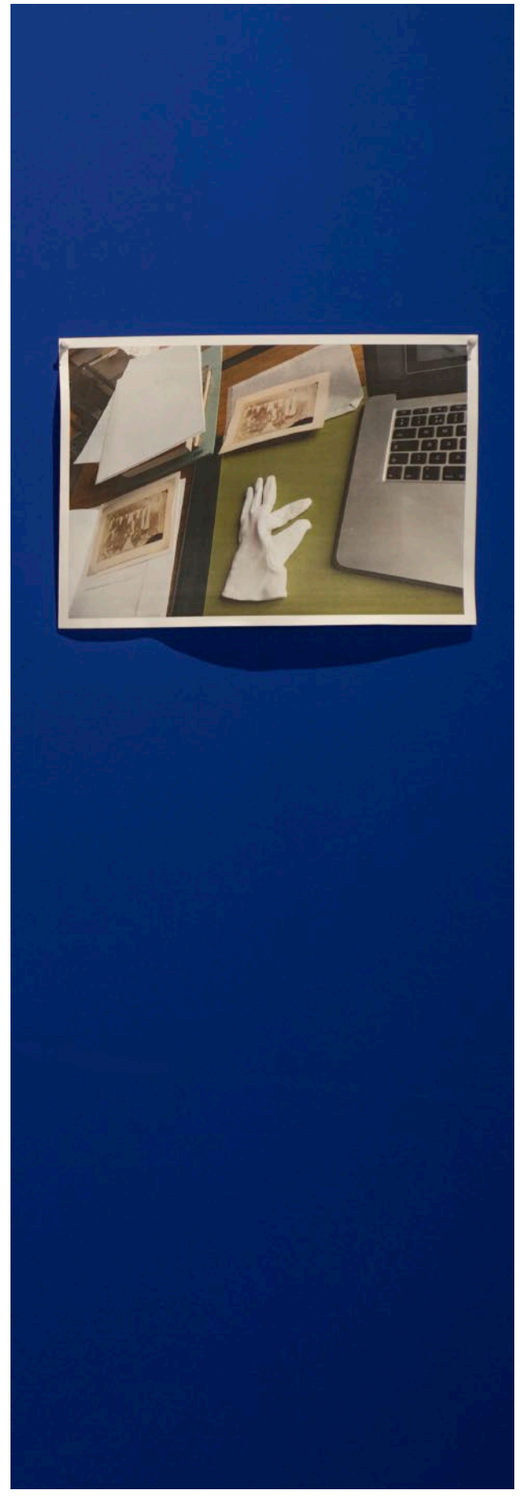
142 years ago, explorer Henry Morton Stanley takes a photograph of Kabaka (King) Muteesa (1837-1885) and his chiefs.
Muteesa's land lies on the northern shore of a body of water that we now call Lake Victoria, in a country that would later be named after his kingdom.
The three known vernacular prints of Stanley's photograph are part of a larger collection that was acquired by the King Baudouin Foundation. They are now in the collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium.

When, in Uganda, I broached the subject of this photograph, almost no one seemed to know about it. I considered this photograph to be relevant because of its age and its subject matter. While the photograph was unknown, everyone had seen pictures that interpreted it. I went in search of the stories attached to these interpretations and composed a sort of visual biography of Stanley's picture.

An engraving based on the photograph of Kabaka Muteesa and his chiefs can be found in a book about Stanley's journey through East Africa in 1875. Here, the faces of the men have been changed. They no longer look like Baganda (subjects of the king of Buganda), but instead resemble Arabs or Europeans. I believe that the reason is related to the image of Muteesa that Stanley wished to convey. The king was, he thought, the light of Africa: a man one could depend on to develop the continent. So, if my contention is correct, the men in the photograph were made to appear not so different from white British men: the latter would then be able to identify with Muteesa and his chiefs.

I invited Ugandan artists to make their own interpretations. The visual responses to my request vary from formal explorations of the photograph to sharp critiques of the way in which colonialism and globalism manifested themselves in the period when Muteesa received Stanley as a guest at his court.

Ebifananyi, Fomu Antwerp, October 2017 / February 2018



"We would have prefered to show one of the prints that are located in Belgium. However, various loan requests were not successful."

A letter about the use of Collective Making to investigate a historical photograph

Dear Prince Joseph Walugembe Musanje,
With this letter I humbly ask for another moment of your time and attention to take into account my attempts to understand photographs in Uganda.

For several years you existed for me simply as a man named "Prince Joseph", who was famous among the Baganda for his drawing of a portrait of Kabaka Muteesa I. Last year this superficial 'acquaintance' was extended when one of your descendants invited me to visit his family and add a portrait **of** you to the famous royal portrait produced **by** you.[217] I would like to share a hypothesis with you that I developed as a result of an investigation on the photograph that was produced by British explorer Henry Morton Stanley of Kabaka Muteesa I and his chiefs in 1875. The outcome of this investigation is presented in the last book in the *Ebifananyi* series, and your portrait of Kabaka Muteesa I has a prominent place in it.

The first half of the book traces the origin of the photograph and the pictures that were derived from it. In the second half of the book contemporary producers of pictures respond to the photograph and, in some cases, the historical interpretations of it that were familiar to them. I will come back to this collection of pictures and the place your portrait has among them, but first would like to give you more context for my investigation and the hypothesis that I think you might be able to shed some light on.
Towards the middle of the book, fragments of notes and memories tell the reader how my surprise about the initial lack of interest in the photograph by Ugandans led from one picture to another, slowly weaving a web of likenesses of Muteesa that relates to this one photograph. I draw this conclusion based on the light on Muteesa's face. The direction of the light produces a particular play of white spots and dark shadows that is repeated in all of the pictures.

Stanley's photograph does not carry details. The figures of the chiefs and the *Kabaka* in the picture consist of blurry shades of grey. Some of the chiefs are barely visible, either because they are behind their neighbours or because the photograph is badly damaged. All the interpretations that are shown in the book added detail to what the photograph shows.

Next to your drawing two other interpretations need to be mentioned. The first one is the engraving that appeared in Stanley's travel account. It fills part of the picture that is obscured by the damaged photograph, and adds details where the photograph has none.[218] Stanley's wife Dorothy, who was a Victorian artist, made the second one. The book does not only show the portrait Mrs Stanley made, but also a portrait her sister made of Stanley, his wife and their houseboy Sali. Despite the different angles on the faces it seems to me like Mrs Stanley took some inspiration from Sali's appearance and blended it with her interpretation of her husband's portrait of Kabaka Muteesa I.[219] The watercolour Mrs Stanley made shows a remarkable similarity to the drawing produced by you.[220]

217 See http://www.andreastultiens.nl/ebifananyi/8-ekifananyi-kya-muteesa-king-pictured-many/71/
218 http://www.andreastultiens.nl/ebifananyi/8-ekifananyi-kya-muteesa-king-pictured-many/29/
219 http://www.andreastultiens.nl/ebifananyi/8-ekifananyi-kya-muteesa-king-pictured-many/31/
220 The drawing appears several times in the book, this is one of them:
http://www.andreastultiens.nl/ebifananyi/8-ekifananyi-kya-muteesa-king-pictured-many/30/

In your drawing, and in Mrs Stanley's watercolour, Kabaka Muteesa I wears a richly decorated robe with a fez that has a tassel on the left side of the picture. The background of the reed fence and banana leaf in Mrs Stanley's picture is not there in yours. Kabaka Muteesa I's face is slightly wider in your picture and the tassels on the robe that are on the left in Mrs Stanley's picture, are on two sides in yours. Could it be the case that the drawing you made is a response to at least two, and maybe three existing pictures; Stanley's photograph, Mrs Stanley's watercolour and the engraving?

British journalist and writer of children's books Barbara Kimenye lived in Uganda in the 1950s. In her memoir she writes that you consulted old princesses who had known Kabaka Muteesa I to produce your portrait.
I have been wondering, would it be possible that they described a picture rather than a memory?[221] This has led me to question if your response to those pictures was an indirect one? But in any case you effectively re-appropriated a detail of the picture that Stanley made, that was then misinterpreted in the engraving in his book, and, if my assumption is right, blended with the appearance of a *mukopi*, a simply household help.[222]

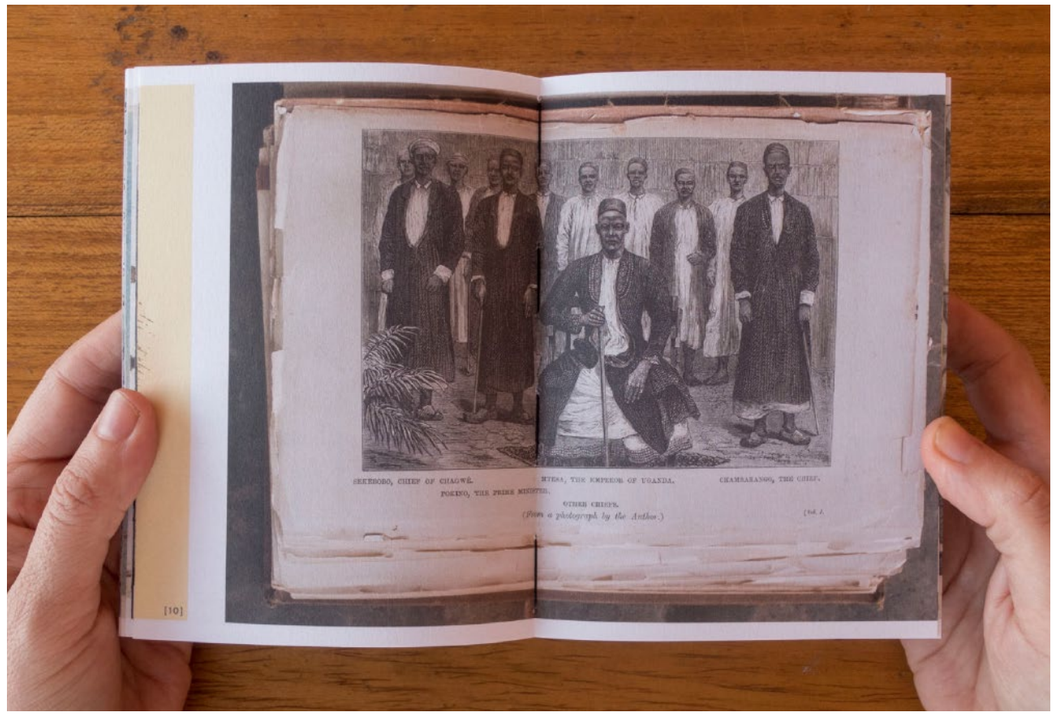
This reasoning reminds me of a letter that is up on the walls of the tourist information centre in The Lubiri.[223] The letter is attributed to and signed by Kabaka Muteesa I, and is said to have been written on the 14th of April 1875.[224] Your picture is added to the letter, and so is a photograph of Queen Victoria, who is its addressee. For two reasons I highly doubt that it was Kabaka Muteesa I who wrote this letter. Firstly the choice of words and tone of voice do not come across as originating from the 19th century, or from a man who had only started to acquaint himself with writing and with the English language. Secondly Stanley also wrote a letter on the same day and with a similar message, not mentioning a letter written by Kabaka Muteesa I. I would then argue that this document in The Lubiri is a newer statement, written in the form of a letter. It is based on the letter that Stanley wrote and other letters that are attributed to Kabaka Muteesa I and were published in a book with other important documents on the history of Buganda.[225] These letters have similarities in content: the former was written by Stanley, the man whose presence is generally thought of as the starting point of the colonisation of Buganda, and the latter includes crude phrases such as "I wish to be the friend of the white men, Therefore, hear my words which I say" [sic].[216] I imagine that neither of these phrases were a reflection of the identity being developed by the *Kabaka* of Bugunda at the time. It is as though this letter comments on the crudeness of the other letter and almost apologises for it in the following statement: "I write to you to prove our competence to communicate to you in all faith and confidence by which my country is judged to be on the same level with European countries."[227]

I would love to hear from you whether there or not there is some sense to my reasoning. If there is, then the portrait you made is simply the oldest interpretation of Stanley's photograph in the book that re-appropriates a Western gaze.

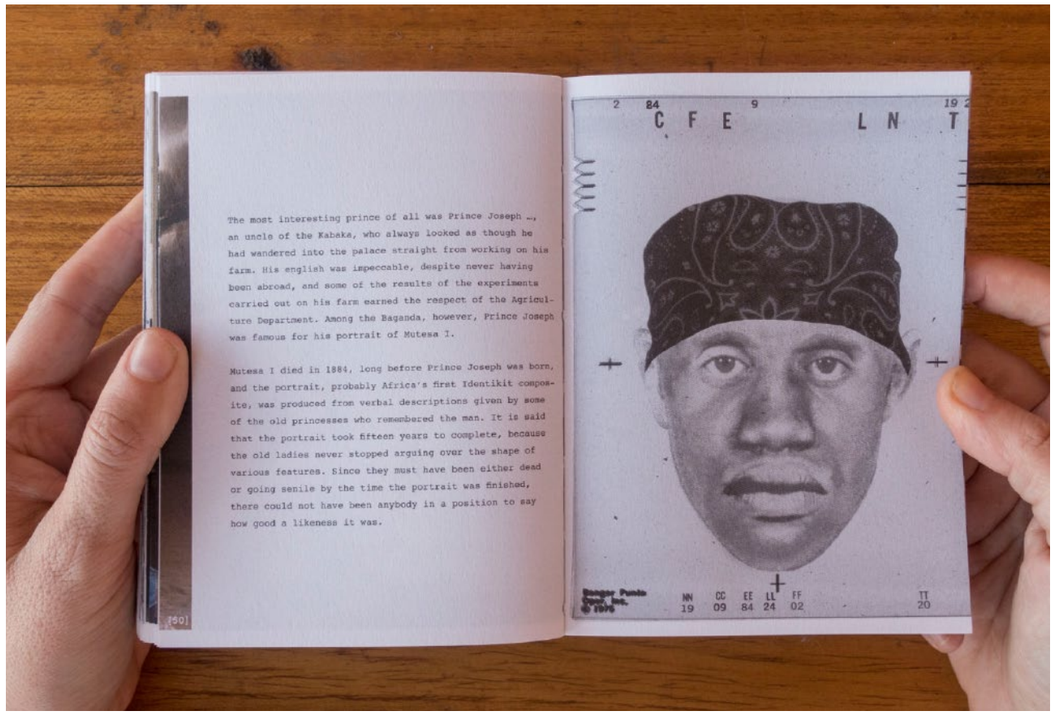
221 Kimenye, undated manuscript, p. 50. This and other fragment from the manuscript were published in the Ugandan newspaper the Monitor, October 2015. In *Ebifananyi* #8 the fragment can be found here:
http://www.andreastultiens.nl/ebifananyi/8-ekifananyi-kya-muteesa-king-pictured-many/124/
222 See the section of the discussion between Nathan Omiel and Robinah Nansubuga in *Ebifananyi* #4 on Bakopi (plural of Mukopi):
http://www.andreastultiens.nl/ebifananyi/4-simuda-nyuma-forward-ever-backward-never-based-images-ham-mukasa/73/
223 The Lubiri, generally referred to with the article 'the', is the royal enclosure in Mengo. It was established by Kabaka Muteesa I, and is still in use.
224 See p. 56 of this dissertation
225 Stanley (1875) and Low (1971). For the latter see p. 57 of this dissertation
226 Low (1971), p. 5 and p. 57 of this dissertation
227 See p. 55 of this dissertation

Ebifananyi #8 shows how likenesses can depict one subject, but speak about many different things. The pictures in the book are all responses to, and in most cases likenesses of, the photograph Stanley produced. Some of the pictures place Kabaka Muteesa I in the company of other powerful figures from past and present, whereas others play with and respond to its form. Within the context of the book they all critique the way history has been made accessible, and provide alternatives to pictures made by non-Ugandans. If I am along the right lines with my hypothesis, this is something you already did long ago - for which you cannot be thanked enough.

With best regards,
Andrea



***Ebifananyi* #8 spreads referenced in footnotes with the letter to Prince Walugembe Musanje**



See http://www.andreastultiens.nl/ebifananyi/8-ekifananyi-kya-muteesa-king-pictured-many/ for full version

Epilogue to chapter 4: Collective Making and the origins of *ebifananyi* / pictures in Buganda

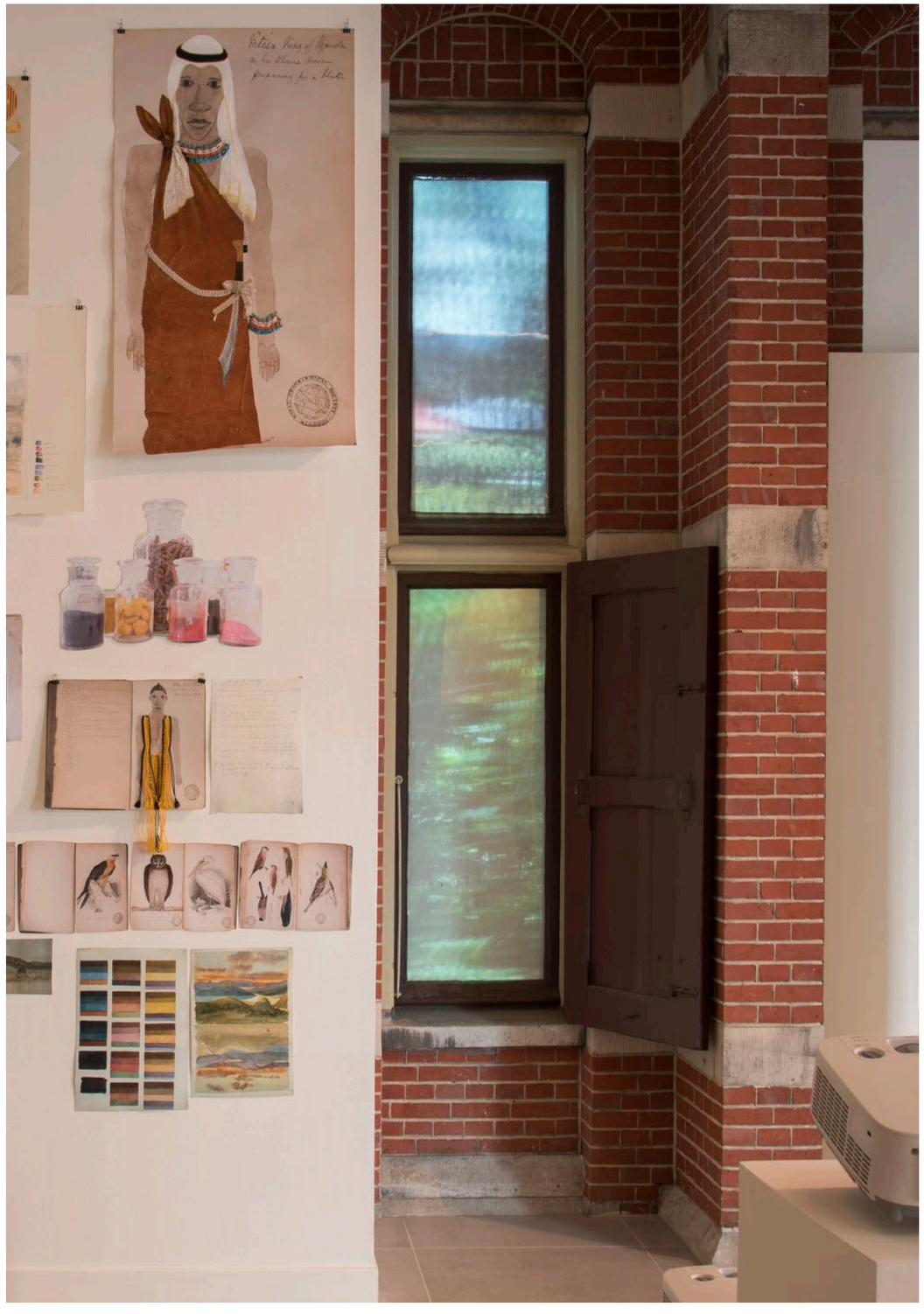
From the onset of the research project I wanted to work **with** photographs, rather than do research **about** them. Thinking of photographs as encounters made the people who own, or have an interest in them part of my artistic practice. While working with the collections of pictures that formed the basis of *Ebifananyi* #4 and #8 a research method was developed that builds on the idea of multivocality discussed in the previous chapter. Here, in addition to historical pictures and responses to them, numerous picture makers were invited to engage with and respond to existing images and pictures. I consider this to be a useful method to investigate historical documents that I have started to call Collective Making.

Translations from Luganda into English, interpretations from text into pictures and responses to one picture in another were produced through this method. These translations, interpretations and responses, although reflected through text as three separate categories, are by no means mutually exclusive concepts. They became connecting factors from which different cultural practices were brought into contact with one another. This can be seen, for instance, through the combination of Ham Mukasa's practice of historiography and the production and use of bark cloth (a material used by several of the artists in their response to *Ekifananyi Kya Muteesa*). As a result of this fusion between translations, interpretations and responses, each picture that was produced contributed to an understanding of the way in which the historical documents are understood in the present.

The correspondences presented in *Ebifananyi* #8 led to an awareness of the absence of pictures in Buganda until explorers and missionaries brought their photographs and illustrated bibles along with their sketchbooks and cameras.[228] The simultaneous introduction of intentionally produced referential visualities, which made their appearance elsewhere in distinct and documented moments in time (such as drawings and photographs) explains why there is only one linguistic concept for them.[229] The absence of pictures in 19th century Buganda, which is touched upon in *Ebifananyi* #4 and more explicitly brought forward in *Ebifananyi* #8, needs further study and this historical factor should be taken into account when thinking about present day visual culture and artistic practices in Uganda.

228 **Kakande (2008), p. 45**

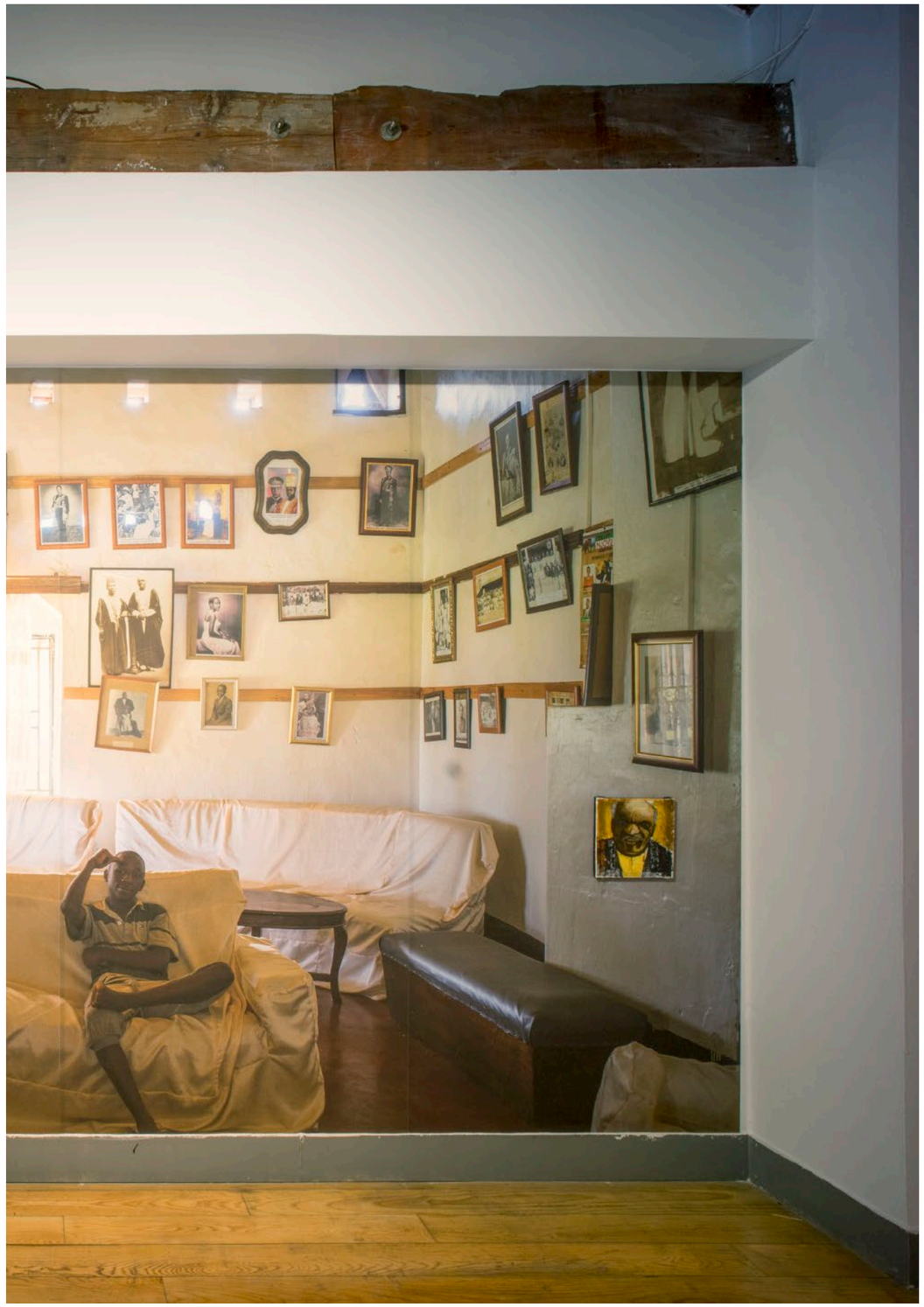
229 **For ideas on the relationship between the invention of photography and the development of the gaze through painting see Galassi, (1981), Batchen (2000), pp. 3-24. See Behrend (2013), p. 65 and chapters 4 and 10 for a discussion of relationships between photographs and other media prevalent on the East-African coast in an attempt to decentre Western versions of media history.**



Presentation of ‘My Guide Through Africa’, on the ‘prehistory’ of the photograph Henry Morton Stanley made of Kabaka Muteesa I

Groningen, December 2017

Detail of *Ebifananyi*, Politics of Presentation



Thessaloniki Photobiennale, Capitalist Realistm - Past continuous, October 2018