

Hey Hamburg, do you know Duala Manga Bell?

The exhibition for young people

1. Aims of the exhibition

With this exhibition, MARKK would like to make a new offer to its important target audience of young people, children and families. Formerly successful education programs focused on "getting to know other peoples" through costuming and exoticism. Often characterized by stereotypical narratives, simplistic ideas of other cultures were repeated without questioning them in their colonial context. After the discontinuation of such programs in the context of the museum's repositioning, the exhibition is intended to make the colonial past accessible to its visitors through participatory approaches, media offerings and new approaches to exhibition design.

The entangled history of Douala and Hamburg is of particular relevance to the re-examination of colonialism, both for the MARKK, which has collections from this historical context, and for the port city of Hamburg, whose overseas merchants resolutely promoted German expansionist policies in Cameroon. The project, which will subsequently also be presented in Cameroon, is planned in collaboration with Princess Marilyn Bell, the great-granddaughter of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, and should also educate especially young people there about colonial history.

2. Curatorial statement

At a time when Europe is closing its doors to migrants and racist attacks on refugees and People of Colour are increasing, the active remembrance of and engagement with the colonial era and its ongoing legacy today is on the rise. Especially in Germany, which for a long time had not dealt with its colonial past, far-reaching disputes about colonial heritage, recognition and discrimination are taking place. Colonialism accelerated the construction of prejudices and prejudgements against everything ostensibly non-European, thus intensifying the foundation for racism that still effects society today. The increasing conflicts and victims of racist and sexist violence make it clear how important it is, especially now, to raise awareness of the origins of racial constructions.

The biographies of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell (1872-1914), resistance fighter and Cameroonian national hero his cousin Maria Mandessi Bell (1895-1990) – daughter of one of the most important economic entrepreneurs of his time David Mandessi Bell - and Ngoso Din (1882-1914), Maria Mandessi Bell's fiancé and one of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell's closest confidants, tell of this period of German colonialism in Cameroon. The life of these three people give insights into the decisions that they and their families and friends had to make on a daily basis in a colonial situation in which the conflicts between the Germans and the Duala became, over the decades, increasingly intense and racially motivated. Their biographies also highlight the complexities and contradictions of living in a time when one part of society denies another its humanity. It demonstrates how Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, Maria Mandessi Bell and Ngoso Din, supported by others both locally and in the

German Reich, actively resisted this blatant racism. Their lives tell of resistance, cooperation, allyship and solidarity and thus display astonishing parallels to today, as powerful constructions of race, class and gender continue to permeate and shape our world.

The exhibition brings together the Duala collection of the MARKK and important loans from other museums, historical photographs, archival files and contemporary works of art to pay tribute to the life stories of these personalities and to shed light on the cultural history of the Duala, which is characterised by a centuries-long history of transcontinental and transnational exchange. Among other things, it shows one of the earliest Duala canoe prows in a museum collection, which came to Hamburg via the company C. Woermann and depicts scenes from Duala cosmology.

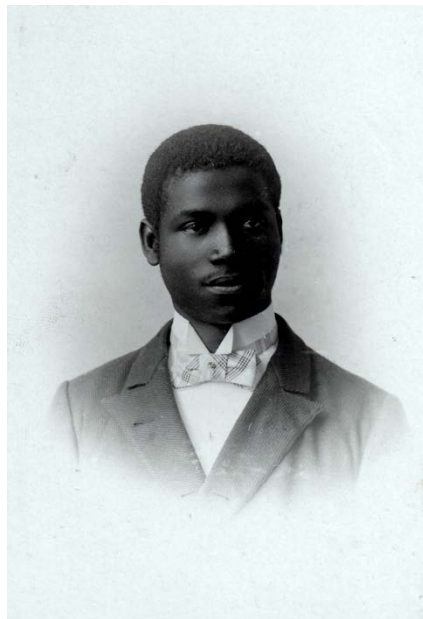
The objects in the exhibition are material evidence of this history of encounter and, as such, have their own biographies. They allow a wide range of stakeholders, interest groups and audiences to explore different perspectives in making and experiencing the exhibition and attributing meaning, and this participatory approach lies at the core of Hey Hamburg. In the light of the wider restitution debates, the Duala collection's presence here in Germany as well as their meaning and relevance for the German and Cameroonian public will be put up for discussion, for example through the works of the Cameroonian artist Hervé Youmbi. His artistic practice is concerned with the biographies of well-known resistance fighters as well as with throne stools and masks from Cameroon and West Africa, whose historical materials and functions he relates to the present. The artistic work of Nathalie Anguezomo Mba Bikoro, who lives in Berlin, on the other hand, gives space to women's stories by adding fiction to the oftentimes only sporadically available archive material on women. Further works by young Hamburgian artists from the sub-project DUALA.Ever.Lasting.ResiStance also critically examine the context of the collections, the necessity of a differentiated history and its relevance for their own lives.

3. Exhibition chapters

3.1. Intro: Hey Hamburg, do you know Duala Manga Bell?

Entry situation

Gallery with portraits (photographs or drawings) hanging from the ceiling. Centrally placed are the portraits of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, Maria Mandessi Bell and Ngoso Din. The other portraits show important and well-known personalities who have fought against injustice and racism since the middle of the 19th century. Examples would be Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela or Rosa Parks. There is a balance between the sexes. In addition, although the majority of the portrayed personalities is Black, it is not exclusively so. The life histories of the selected individuals represent very different strategies of resistance in the fight against inequality, racism and colonialism. Their life stories can be heard when you step in front of the portraits, e.g. by means of sound.



Images from left to right: Maria Mandessi Bell, Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, Ngoso Din

Some of these people must be familiar to you. You have heard of their life stories or associate them with certain convictions. Other faces you might have never seen before, their biographies are completely unknown to you. What unites the people gathered here? All of them fought for justice and equality at different times and in different places in the world and became resistance fighters. They all depended on allies and support networks to denounce the social ills they faced and to fight for their vision of a better world. It is important that we do not forget them, because we can learn a lot from them today.

One of these people is Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, who rebelled against German colonial rule in Cameroon. He was accused of treason and hanged by the Germans in 1914. His cousin Maria Mandessi Bell and her fiancé Ngoso Din, who are pictured here along with him, were among his most important allies. Although all three of them spoke German, had contacts with the German ruling elite of the 19th century and represented their interests in the German Reich, they are hardly known here today. In Cameroon, Rudolf Duala Manga Bell has become a central figure in national history - but he was not alone. Shouldn't we remember many more people?

Setting the scene (suitable for children)



Proposal 1: on the ground an illustrated map of the estuary area illustrated by Karo Akpokiere. The map shows the settlements of the four big Duala trading families Bell, Akwa, Deido, Bonaberi (with illustration of the pagoda? Possibly also hulks in the harbour/trading stations on the coast and boats of the Duala? Pay attention to historic facts: it's either hulks or Pagoda, hulks not there anymore when Pagoda was built) Rivers towards the entrance, sea towards the exhibition room as a transition to the chapter "transatlantic trade".

Proposal 2: Map of the estuary illustrated by Karo on the wall

Rudolf Duala Manga Bell's family was one of the most important trading families of the Duala, who had settled in the coastal region of Cameroon in West Africa long ago. They lived where the river Wuri converges into the sea. In the beginning fishing was their main income. Therefore the proximity to the water was very central for them. From the 18th century onwards they changed their course of activities and gained substantial wealth and influence through trade with European merchants, who came in ships from far away countries. They knew the rivers very well and were best at transporting goods and raw materials in long boats from the hinterland to the coast, which they then sold to the foreign merchants at a profit.

In fact, the name of their area - "Cameroon" - goes back to these trade contacts. The Duala themselves called their place on the coast "Du Ewalé" or "Ewalé's mouth", after their ancestor "Ewalé", who had settled on the banks of the Wuri River and up on the plateau in the 16th century. However, when the Portuguese arrived there as the first European merchants, the river was teeming with crustaceans. So they called the river "Rio dos Camaroes" - river of shrimps. The English turned it into "Cameroons" and when German merchants also appeared on the coast in the 19th century, they called the area "Kamerun". In fact, it was pure coincidence that the Portuguese found the crustaceans, because they only appear in the estuary every three years at the river mouth. They also have something else that makes them special. Unlike other crustaceans, they run towards people who approach them instead of away. The Duala, therefore consider them a gift from the ancestors.

There were four powerful trading families among the Duala, each ruled by a leader: the Bell, Akwa, Deido and Bonaberi, of which the Bell and Akwa families were the most influential. They all traded and negotiated with the European merchants who came to Douala in search of raw materials and new markets. The four families saw

how especially the English and German trading houses tried to expand their contacts on the West African coast in order to secure the right to trade over other European merchants. In Douala, two companies from Hamburg were particularly committed to gaining control of the trade, the land and the people of Cameroon for the German Empire: the trading houses C. Woermann and Jantzen & Thormählen. They wanted to make Cameroon a German colony. But the Duala families - and especially the Bell family - had their own plans to consolidate their position in the transatlantic trade. Then ruling king Ndumb'a Lobe Bell, the grandfather of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, was convinced that an agreement with the Germans would be beneficial.

Central questions and messages

Hey Hamburg, do you know Duala Manga Bell? Why don't you know him? Why don't you know his friends? Why should you know him?

- RDMB is an important figure in the history of resistance against racism and exploitation, injustice and despotism
- There are not only heros, but also s/heros
- There are different places from where people speak and act and therefore different ways to defend oneself (class, gender, race → RDMB, MMB, ND)
- Resistance can be offered in different ways - there is no ultimate way
- The beginning of the history of RDMB, MMB and ND (Setting the scene)

Objects



Images clockwise: Coat of arms Douala, MARKK o.Nr., seated figure, MARKK C 662, canoe prow from Woermann

3.2. Trade, colonialism and education

Proposal: Sketch of visual impression when entering the first chapter with fishnet installation on the right and photos of Maria Mandessi Bell, Rudolf Duala Manga Bell and Ngoso Din on the left



Mansour Ciss, part of the installation „DeBerlinization“

Contracts and misunderstandings were the beginning of colonial rule in Cameroon. On July 12, 1884, King Ndumb'a Lobe Bell, King Akwa and other important Duala merchants signed a contract with representatives of the Hamburg trading companies C. Woermann and Jantzen & Thormälen. With this contract they ceded the administration and legislation in the coastal area to the Germans. But why did the Duala trading elites voluntarily agree to such an arrangement? What goals did they pursue? Did all Duala support this "deal" with the Germans?

The influential Duala families followed international developments in politics and economy very closely. In Nigeria (Calabar and Lagos), in Gabon and Fernando Po, they had seen the Germans strengthening their power by claiming land and direct access to trade contacts in the hinterland. To secure their rights, they agreed on the "Wishes of the Cameroonian people", which were countersigned by the Germans. While the two treaties were equivalent for the Duala, for the German contracting parties, the signing of the "wishes" was a mere concession that could be withdrawn again at any time. The seed for the later conflict was already planted here.

At the same time, the Duala elites had excellent international networks. Like many other West African elites, the Duala had sent their children to Europe for

education since the 18th century and long before the colonial efforts of the German Empire. For example, Ngand'a Kwa, **the great-great-grandfather of King Dika Akwa**, had already been in England in 1832. And the son of the undersigned King Ndumbe Lobe Bell, August Ndumbe Bell, had been trained in England from 1867 to 1872.

Maria Mandessi Bell and Rudolf Duala Manga Bell again belonged to the first generation of Duala, who already attended German schools in Douala. The Germans had built them to convert the Duala to Christianity and to train reliable, German-speaking workers who could be employed in colonial administration, trade and agriculture. They taught the superiority of German culture and questioned the Duala's way of life or banned it altogether. The Duala had their own idea of these schools. Even though they were viewed with suspicion, the Duala elites accepted these schools or even supported them, as they promised their children opportunities for advancement. At the same time, however, they ensured that their children continued to be taught their own histories and systems of knowledge. Against the will of the Germans, they continued to be passed on through the extended family and so-called closed societies. Prominent families such as the Bells sent their children to the German Reich for further education. As teenagers, Maria Mandessi Bell and Rudolf Duala Manga Bell took on the 19-day journey on the Woermann steamer from Duala to Hamburg, where they lived with host families for several years, attended school and became better acquainted with German society. During this time, they made many friends, but also had formative experiences with racism and exclusion.

Central questions and messages

Why do the Duala sign the "protection treaty"? What has enabled them to achieve their strong position?

- Criticism of capitalism and balance of power in trade relations (globally operating companies like Woermann and local big players/trading families like Bell, Akwa, Deido and Priso)
- Effects of global interdependencies (material culture, society, politics → establish a reference to the present here?)
- Strategies of trading elites: politics, education, economy, religion, etc.

Objects



Images from left to righth.: MARKK C1310, mask, MARKK 12.48:2, stool





Images from top left to bottom right: MARKK C 2016, Boat, MARKK 3043:07, male figure with padlock, Linden Museum xxx bottle, MARKK 48.3:52 und 48.3:53 ivory cuffs

3.3. The conflict

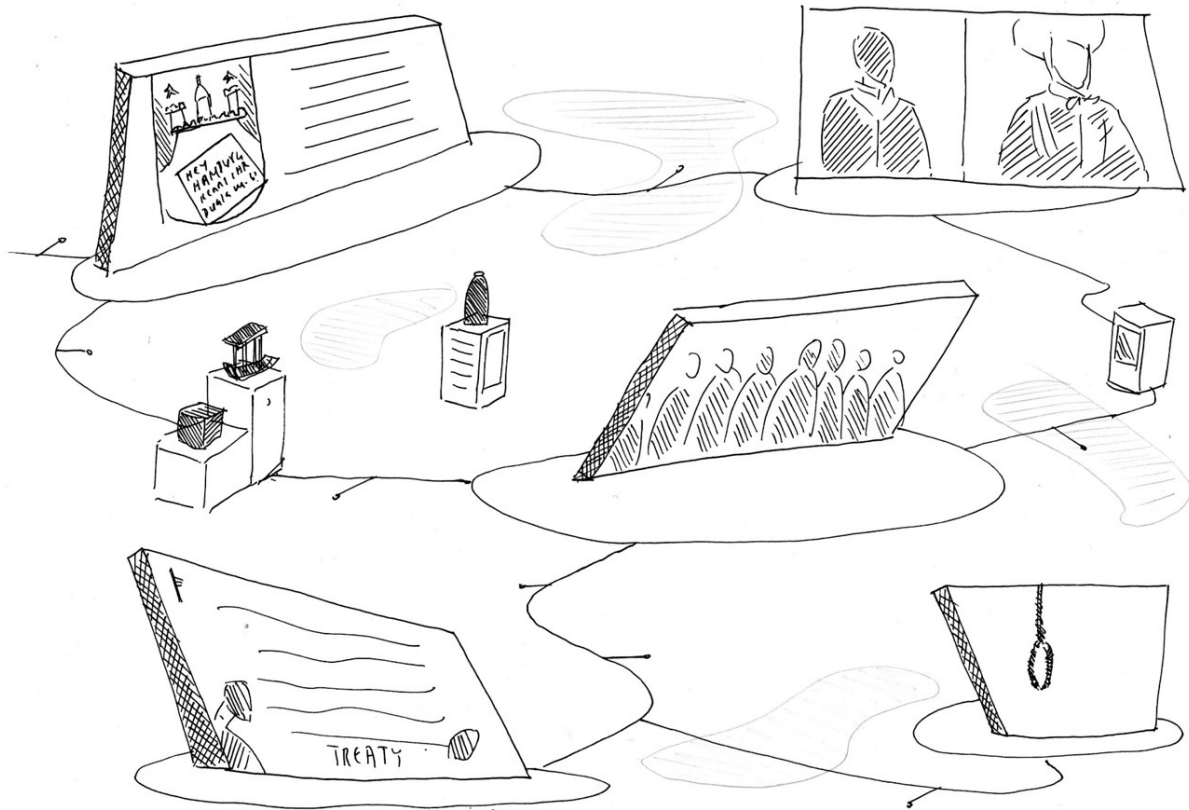


Image: Sketch Karo Akpokiere, visual impression of the room, first draft, March 2020

Power on both sides - the Germans and the Duala - depended on access to resources. Two of the main resources were access to water and control over land. Over the years the Germans had repeatedly violated the treaties and the wishes of the Duala. The conflict escalated when the Germans decided to expropriate the Duala's land and divide the city into two parts: one part for the white Germans and one part for the Black population. But what exactly happened? Why did the Germans want to divide the city and how could they convince the people in the German Reich that it is right to treat other people unjustly for their own benefit?

Rudolf, who had been made king in 1910, did everything in his power to resist the German breaches of treaty. And so the formerly competing Duala trading families came together to develop a common strategy against the Germans. He contacted groups in the hinterland of Cameroon to win their support. Ngoso Din secretly travelled to the German Reich to activate old friendships and contacts in Berlin and to make the injustices in Duala known to the German public and politics. Maria Mandessi Bell, his fiancée, who had followed the events from the capital, was already waiting for him there.

Well-known German lawyers such as Paul Levi and the journalist Hellmut von Gerlach, who both had important connections in German politics, supported the Duala struggle. For a brief moment they even managed to interrupt the expropriation project in Cameroon. But shortly afterwards the news arrived that Rudolf Duala Manga Bell and Ngoso Din had been arrested for their resistance and charged with high treason. Before their lawyers could make it to Cameroon to

defend them, they were sentenced to death by the colonial government in Cameroon.

Image and text for are suitable for children: Wasserkosmologien

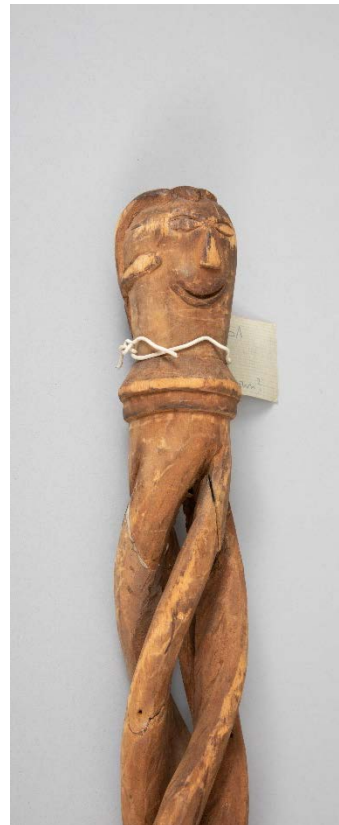
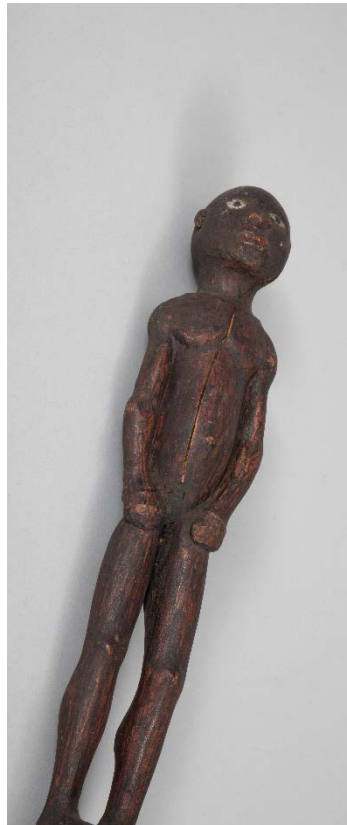
Storytelling atmosphere with objects such as canoe prow, paddles and fish mask

Central questions and messages

When is enough enough?

- The Germans change their argumentation strategy in order to shift the balance of power further in their favour - in the global context, arguments of scientific racism are introduced - which still have consequences today.
- "Together we are less alone" - the importance of solidarity and joint (strategic) action across identities for another society
- Ideologies of inequality and their consequences
- The meaning of "positionality" and "taking a stance" / there is no neutral position - Centre Party, missionaries
- Identities OR The Power of Stories (Water Cosmologies)

Objects





Images from top to bottom: MARKK 33.235:05 Sceptre Akwa, MARKK C560 Sceptre Miss Woermann, MARKK 3031 Stick



Images from left to right: Petition 1902, King Akwa und Prince Deido 1902 in Hamburg

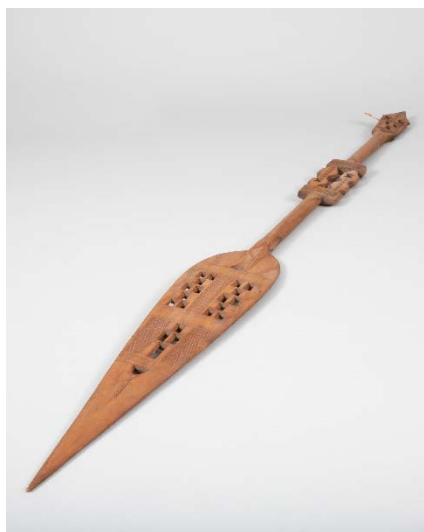


Images from left to right: Lovestory Maria Mandessi Bell, Ngoso Din



Images from left to right: Hellmut von Gerlach, Paul Levi, Hugo Haase, Kurt Rosenfeld





Images from left to right.: MARKK C 3219, canoe prow, MARKK 46.27:1 paddle carved, Museum der Kulturen Basel 583, fish mask, MARKK 49.77:4 paddle painted

3.4. Memories for the future



Hervé Youmbi, 2013, Cameroonian Heroes

Rudolf Duala Manga Bell is today revered as a national hero in Cameroon. In 1929, the song *Tet'Ekombo* (Father of the Nation), which is still popular today, was written in his honor. In Germany his person and the history he has lived through and helped shape are known to very few people. We know even less about Maria Mandessi Bell and Ngoso Din. Why should we remember them and what can we learn from them? Why do we forget some people and remember others?

There are many reasons why their stories should be shared and their contribution to a more just world should be recognized. People in Cameroon and Germany have been working for many years to ensure that we do not forget them and pursue different strategies to do so: Some try to remember them through music, pictures or books, others try to name streets after them or build a monument in their honor. Every year on August 8, 1914, a commemoration ceremony for Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, is organized by the Douala's people. This exhibition also wants to commemorate Rudolf, Maria and Ngoso Din. Only by acknowledging what has happened can we work towards healing.

Image and text area suitable for children: music

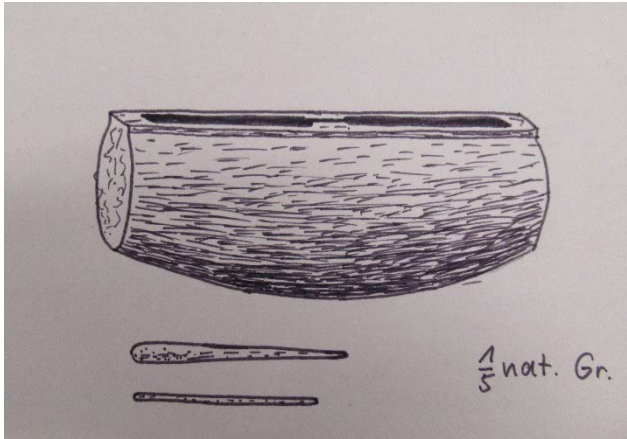
Music as resistance strategy, music, musical instruments, Tet' Ekombo

Central questions and messages

Why is it important today to remember Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, Maria Mandessi Bell and Ngoso Din? What do their life stories have to do with us and what can we learn from them? Why do we (not) remember them? And which "we" do we mean?

- Recognition is the first important step to healing
- There are very different ways to claim recognition
- Recognition is manifested in very different ways
- Public remembrance takes different forms

Objekte



MARKK, C 90, drum





Images from top to bottom: dresses with Ngondo prints, commemoration Rudolf Duala Manga Bell in Douala, Kamerun, project „colonial street names“, Hamburg

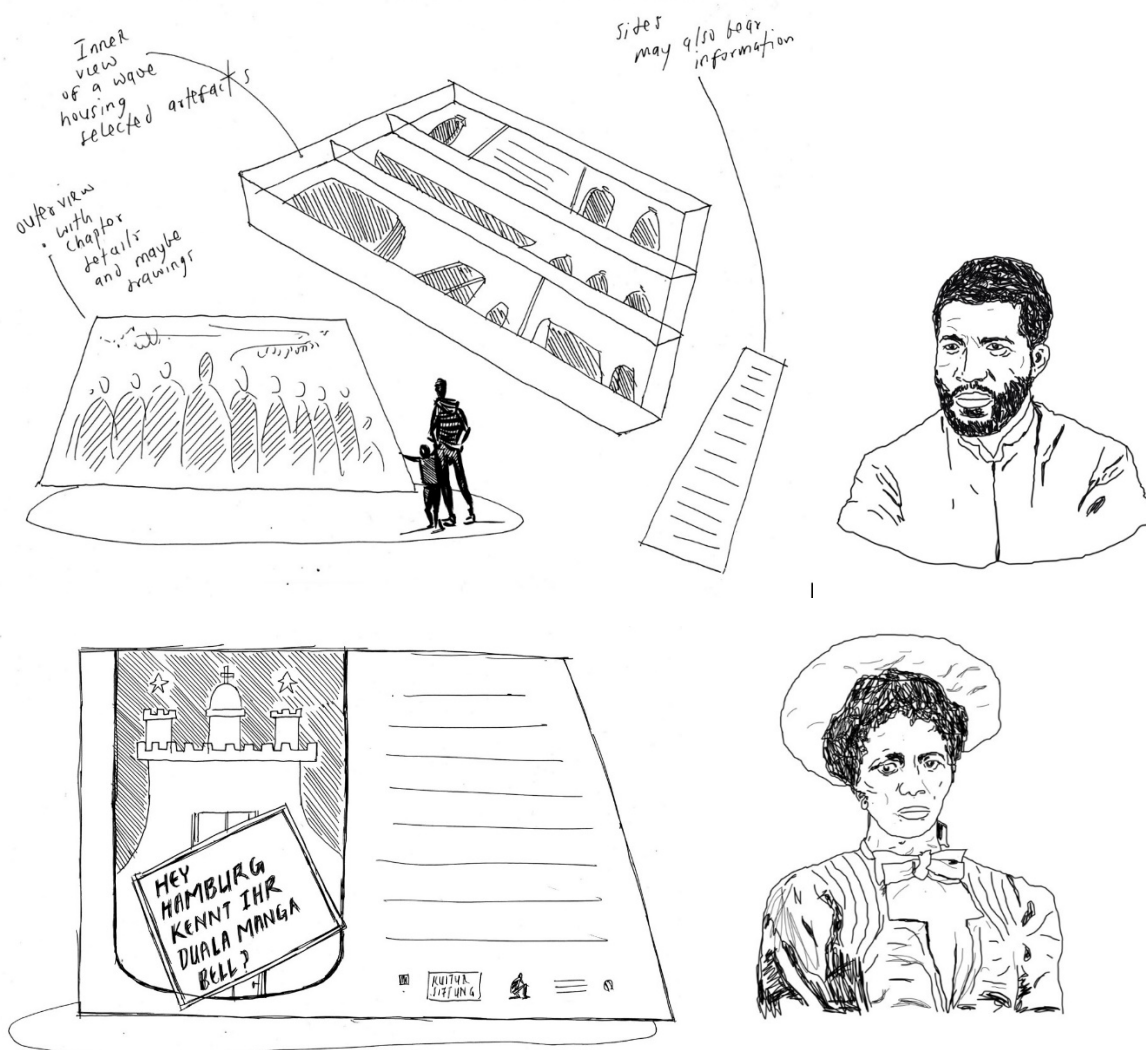
3.5. Dramaturgy



Image: Hopmann & Wild, Skizze zur Dramaturgie (incomplete), April 2nd, 2020

4. Layout and design

The design and catalogue concept will be developed by Karo Apokiere, a Nigerian artist from Hamburg, who works in the stylistic language of Graphic Novels. His ideas will be implemented in close cooperation with the design agency of Hanne Rung. The interplay of image and text, which is typical of Graphic Novels, corresponds to the aesthetics and logic of our young target audience. It is intended to provide individual access to the different levels of complexity of the content and to favour the narrative-biographical narrative style of the exhibition. Key scenes of the story from the perspective of the main protagonists are to be transferred into the space as large-format graphic novel narratives and give structure to the chapters of the exhibition.



Karo Apokiere, concept „waves“ I & II, sketches of August Manga Bell and Emily Engome Days, March 2020

Concept / Floor plan

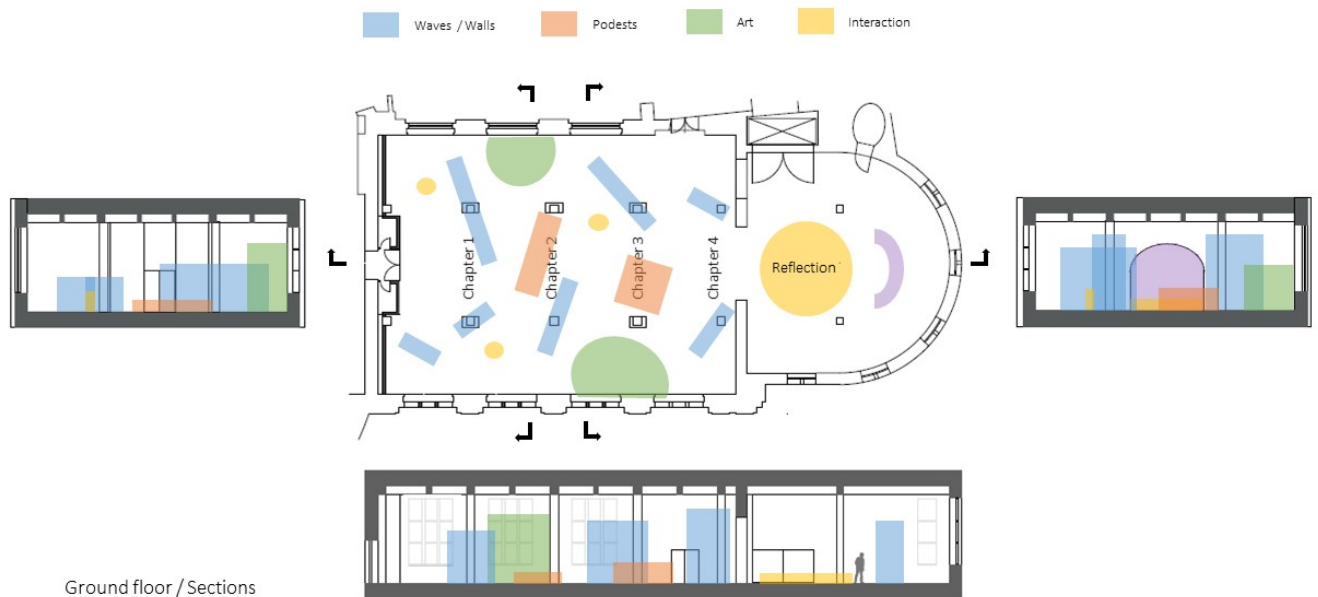


Image: Hanne Rung, floor plan, draft March 2020

5. Participating parties

The exhibition is a cooperation between Barbara Plankensteiner, director of Museum am Rothenbaum, Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK) and Princess Marilyn Duala Manga Bell, doual'art, Douala, Cameroon. The curatorial team of MARKK comprises (in alphabetical order) Richard Tsogang Fossi, Curatorial Research Fellow, Malika Kraamer, Curator for the African Collections, Gabriel Schimmeroth, Curatorial Project Coordinator MARKK in Motion and Johanna Wild, assistant to the Director and Curator for Contemporary Art, project management by Suy Lan Hopmann, Curator for Outreach.

The project is supported by the programs *Initiative for Ethnological Collections* and *360° - Fund for New City Cultures* of the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the ZEIT Foundation - Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius.

5.1. Concept workshop

The foundation stone for the concept was laid in a workshop in June 2019 together with Princess Marilyn Duala Manga Bell and (in alphabetical order) Nathalie Anguezomo Mba Bikoro, artist, Jean-Pierre Félix-Eyoum, teacher and member of the Bell family, Francette Nollmann, supervisory board Challenge Camerounais e.V., Mabel Preach, board of directors Lukulule e.V. and the curatorial team.

5.2. Advisory board

The exhibition's advisory board meets three times during the project period. Its members are (in alphabetical order) Princess Marilyn Duala Manga Bell, LaToya Manly-Spain, artist and activist, Elisabeth Menasse, former director of ZOOM Children's Museum, Stefanie Michels, professor of global history, Heinrich Heine

University Düsseldorf, Bonaventure Sojung Ndikung, director SAVVY Contemporary, Mabel Preach, board of directors Lukulule e.V., and the curatorial team of MARKK.

5.3. Subproject DUALA.Ever.Lasting.ResiStance

The subproject DUALA.Ever.Lasting.ResiStance is led by Mabel Preach, board of directors Lukulule e.V. and the two young curators Tamika Odhiambo and Naomi Odhiambo. Artistic directors are Nathalie Anguezomo Mba Bikoro, artist and Joan Funnah, freelance project coordinator and instructor.