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Artistic Movements: Visual Arts and Cross-Border Exchange on the Central African Copperbelt

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The Central African Copperbelt has long provided fertile territory for new forms of creative endeavour. Its visual arts, however, developed along different timescales on the two sides of its border. Whereas the Congolese Copperbelt has been associated with a lively painting tradition since the 1940s, easel painting did not develop significantly in Zambian mining towns until the 1960s and 1970s. This article explains how the flourishing Congolese Copperbelt's visual arts movement was rooted in colonial and post-colonial patronage of, market demand for and intellectual analysis of 'authentic African art'. However, it also problematises the way in which an undue focus on notions of artistic 'authenticity' obscures the region's underlying history of flexible and diverse artistic production and exchange, including the little-known migration of Congolese artists to Zambia. It finds that Copperbelt artists on both sides of the border sought to access a variety of markets, changing the form and content of their art to address or manipulate the expectations of their audiences. By focusing on artists, their motivations, their life stories and their outputs, the article seeks to understand the painting traditions of the Copperbelt region as a cross-border regional artistic phenomenon, which, in many cases, transcended notions of 'popular', 'tourist' or 'academic' painting.

Keywords: Copperbelt; popular art; painting; migration; oral history; Zambia; Democratic Republic of Congo

Introduction

Africa's urban mining regions, marked by the rapid establishment and expansion of new multi-cultural urban centres, have long been known to have provided fertile ground for the development of new creative endeavours.[1] The Copperbelt, a copper-rich mining region that straddles the border between the Haut-Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Copperbelt province of Zambia, was no exception. It was the site of some of the best-known and most influential studies of 'popular culture' in the continent,

1 K. Barber, *A History of African Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 44–5.

including J. Clyde Mitchell's 1956 pioneering ethnography of the Kalela dance,[2] and studies of 'Katanga guitar style' music.[3] The Katangese Copperbelt also generated some of the most prominent and wide-ranging studies of African visual arts. From the 1970s, Katanga-based academics, notably Johannes Fabian, Ilona Szombati-Fabian and Bogumil Jewsiewicki, collected and produced in-depth studies of a new type of figurative painting, saturated with the daily lives of Congolese citizens, which became known as 'popular painting'.[4] This genre of painting, known for its bright colour palette and caustic social commentary, was ubiquitous in Congo's urban centres, particularly Haut-Katanga's mining towns, in the 1960s and 1970s. It has become intimately associated with Congo, and its contemporary iteration remains one of the DRC's most recognisable artistic exports. Yet, while guitar music and dance groups emerged contemporaneously in the rapidly growing urban centres on both the Zambian and the Congolese Copperbelt, there was an apparent stark difference between the two regions in the development of painting. Whereas paintings by Katanga-based artists were being marketed internationally by the 1950s, and a strong tradition of popular painting aimed at local urban markets developed in the 1960s, no equivalent visual arts practice developed in Zambian mining towns in the same period. Nor, with the significant exception of Bennetta Jules-Rosette's in-depth analyses of tourist art in Lusaka,[5] have visual arts in Zambia received significant academic attention.

This article will argue that an important reason for this discrepancy is that the Katangese artistic milieu developed out of a specific conjuncture of artistic, political and social factors, which created opportunities for curation and patronage and a diverse customer audience receptive to the aesthetics of painting presented and perceived as 'authentically' African or Congolese. This notion of authenticity has remained central through different phases of artistic curation: in colonial times, during the Mobutu era's policy of *authenticité* and through to the explosion of Congolese 'popular painting' on the global art market. More recent studies of African art have examined the impact of external forces, particularly the 'West', on the development of new forms of material culture. This literature has examined the impact of constructed notions of 'authenticity', central to the western market for African art, on artistic forms and movements supplying this market.[6] Other studies, such as that of Christopher B. Steiner, have emphasised the agency of local art producers in these transactions. Steiner has illustrated how Ivorian art traders learned to reproduce the physical markers of supposedly 'authentic' art in order to create objects with significant market value.[7] Yet, while the notion of authenticity has been central to the marketisation, production and analysis of Copperbelt art, an undue focus on art forms through the prism of

2 J.C. Mitchell, *The Kalela Dance: Aspects of Social Relationships among Urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1956).

3 G. Kubik, 'Neue Musikformen in Schwarzafrica', *Afrika heute*, 4 (1965), pp.1–15.

4 See, *inter alia*, B. Jewsiewicki (ed.), *Art pictural zaïrois* (Quebec City, Célat, 1992); B. Jewsiewicki, 'A Century of Painting in the Congo: Image, Memory, Experience, and Knowledge', in G. Salami and M. Blackmum Visonà (eds), *A Companion to Modern African Art* (Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 330–46; J. Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996); J. Fabian and I. Szombati-Fabian, 'Art, History, and Society: Popular Painting in Shaba, Zaire', *Studies in Visual Communication*, 3, 1 (1976), pp. 1–21; L. Verbeek (ed.), *Les arts plastiques de l'Afrique contemporaine – 60 ans d'histoire à Lubumbashi* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2008).

5 See, *inter alia*, B. Jules-Rosette, 'The Myth of Modernity in Popular African Art: Symbolic Representation in Popular Carving and Painting', *Qualitative Anthropology*, 1, 2 (1978), pp. 21–61; B. Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art: An African Semiotic System in Comparative Perspective* (New York, Plenum Press, 1984).

6 See, *inter alia*, J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1988); S.L. Kasfir, 'African Art and Authenticity, A Text with a Shadow', *African Arts*, 25, 2 (1992), pp. 40–53, 96–7; S. Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989).

7 C.B. Steiner, *African Art in Transit* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994).

authenticity limits understanding of the underlying reality of artistic production and cultural exchange in the region. It may not only obscure artistic forms and practices that operate outside preconceived notions of authenticity, I argue, but also neglect historical evidence that artists themselves commonly engaged with and moved across the constructed categories of 'gallery art', 'popular art' and 'tourist art' much more freely than may appear at first glance.

Jules-Rosette has provided important insights into this phenomenon through her study of the activities of a community of Congolese painters in Lusaka, known as the 'Kanyama Circle', who, in the 1970s and early 1980s, adapted to the new markets they found in Zambia by painting in contrasting genres.[8] This article builds on her work to reveal the contexts in which artists migrated to the Zambian Copperbelt, and further south, in search of new artistic markets, not only becoming important actors in existing local art movements in the process but also kick-starting new ones. It will historicise the phenomenon of what I term 'artistic surfing' by examining the social, political and economic contexts in which it emerged and by tracing the movements of Congolese artists on the Katangese and Zambian Copperbelt as they sought and adapted to existing art markets.

Historians and anthropologists have long recognised the importance to modern southern African history of long-distance, transnational migration to and between mining towns, including the Copperbelt. Yet the focus has generally been on the migration of mine workers, particularly in the early decades of the 20th century, and few studies have explored the full extent of this history. As Zoë Groves argued in her study of migration from Malawi to Salisbury (now Harare), 'the extent of inter-regional migration has been largely underestimated'.[9] In following artists' efforts at 'artistic surfing' in various settings, this article contributes to historical understanding of migration in southern Africa by revealing migratory flows that continued long after labour forces were 'stabilised' in the 1940s and 1950s, and existed outside formal labour recruitment. The movement of Congolese artists is part of a much larger history of migration in southern and central Africa and is illustrative of the fact that people migrate for a variety of reasons, survive in a variety of ways and affect the shape of the communities they join. Drawing from a range of sources, including 59 life-story interviews conducted in the region in 2018–19 with visual artists and other artistic practitioners active in the period under analysis, the article does not analyse their artistic production but rather examines its propagation and transformation across time and space, through a focus on artists, their motivations and their outputs, to understand the painting traditions of the wider Copperbelt region as a genuinely regional artistic phenomenon, encompassing 'high art', popular painting and much else besides.

Artistic Patronage and Authenticity in the Copperbelt

The Zambian and Katangese Copperbelts have much in common. Both experienced the sudden and rapid development of industrialised copper mining in the early 20th century. Both became highly urbanised and culturally diverse regions, connected by a web of labour migration routes. Both were known for the practice of wall painting, found in villages across the area. Both had, by the mid 20th century, a large urban population of miners with purchasing power and a comparatively large expatriate community around whom a 'souvenir' trade could potentially be built. Yet, by the time the two countries became independent in the early 1960s, only Katanga had emerged on the international scene as an important locus of artistic production. Similarly, while, in the early 1970s, President Mobutu

8 Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art*.
9 Z.R. Groves, *Malawian Migration to Zimbabwe, 1900–1965: Tracing Machona* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 3.

Figure 1. The 'Hangar' studio run by Pierre-Romain Desfossés, 1950s. (HP.1956.15.7679, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo C. Lamote [Inforcongo], s.d., © RMCA Tervuren.).

Sese Seko's government organised international conferences on Congolese *avant-gardisme*, only two Zambian visual artists had achieved high-profile status at the national level: Akwila Simpasa, who designed the 'Freedom Statue' erected in 1974 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Zambia's independence, and Henry Tayali, an influential sculptor, painter and printmaker and one of Zambia's best-known visual artists. When asked about this contrast, informants on both sides of the border pointed to differences in patronage, curation and training opportunities. Most emphasised that Katanga was equipped with art schools much earlier than Zambia. In the early 1950s, Katanga's capital city, Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi), was home to two formal art-learning institutions: the *Académie d'art populaire indigène* (also known under the nickname 'Le Hangar'), founded by French artist Pierre-Romain Desfossés, which functioned from 1946 until Desfossés' death in 1954 (see Figure 1), and a school created in 1951 by Belgian artist Laurent Moonens, which was integrated into the official education system as Elisabethville's *Académie des Beaux-Arts* in 1957. By contrast, Zambia did not have a formal art school until 1971, when Evelyn Hone College, a technical higher education institution in Lusaka, added visual arts courses to its curriculum.[10] These discrepancies in timing were symptomatic of a wider phenomenon. In the mid 20th century, not only was Zambia still burdened by a deeply segregationist political system but it also occupied a peripheral position within the Central African Federation (CAF), which also included present day Malawi and Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, 'African art' had become a marketable and profitable commodity in the French-speaking world, arguably as the result of two developments. The first was the 'discovery' of African art in the early decades of the 20th century by western artists and intellectuals, particularly by the influential Paris-based 'Cubists'. The second was the fact that 'African art' became increasingly imbued with political significance in the late colonial period.

10 From 1958, there was also the Mindolo Ecumenical Centre in Kitwe, which offered a one-year course in fine arts, though this was centred on religious themes.

In the early 20th century, the aesthetics of traditional African sculpture were a powerful influence on European artists such as Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Maurice de Vlaminck. Their interest in African forms not only helped to define early modernism in European painting, with its vivid colour palette and fragmented cubist shapes, but it also stimulated a lively market for African art in Europe, particularly in the interwar period.[11] Crucially, as Sidney Kasfir argues, this market in African arts was, from the outset, articulated around the notion of the 'authenticity' of African cultures, unspoiled by 'modernity' or 'Western' influences, a notion that owed 'as much to nineteenth-century Romanticism and the social–evolutionary notion of disappearing cultures as to any reality found in Africa itself'.[12] Importantly, this market emerged at the same time as a change in the official narrative in both France and Belgium regarding their colonies. In the interwar period, a growing anxiety developed in the francophone world about the impact of modernity on the colonies and the 'death' of 'traditional' cultures. In France, this fed and helped to justify a narrative of 'colonial humanism' that could 'preserve' indigenous cultures.[13] A similar narrative of 'welfare colonialism' developed in Belgium, coinciding with, as Sarah Van Beurden argues, 'the maturation of a scientific discourse about Congolese art'.[14] Between 1947 and 1958, the 250,000 'objects' and 'artefacts' housed by the Royal Museum of the Belgian Congo were, under director Frans Olbrechts, reconceived as 'Congolese art', and a new canon of their stylistic characteristics was developed.[15] This, as Van Beurden shows, provided Belgium with a useful framework through which to renew its commitment to its Congolese colony. Before the Second World War, Belgium's colonial enterprise had been largely presented as a 'civilising mission'. By the late 1950s, this had been replaced with the notion of 'cultural guardianship' – that is, the idea that the colonial state should act as the 'custodian' of the colony's cultural resources, which were portrayed as exceptional and in danger of disappearing.[16] The belief that indigenous cultures were on the brink of disappearing bolstered the concept of 'cultural authenticity' and added market value and political significance to the objects that circulated in art trade networks and museums.

In this political and artistic context, expressing concern about the erosion of indigenous art became a common occurrence in some circles of the Belgian intelligentsia. Fernand Demany, for example, a prominent Belgian journalist and politician, urged in 1955:

> *[w]e must save indigenous art, save it from bad copying, from turning into cheap junk, from commercialisation … [Congolese artists] are reduced to always copying and remaking the same things, and to go sell their works, transformed into garish daubs, at the terraces of cafés where Europeans try to keep cool.*[17]

It was, in part, as a reaction to this perceived threat that Katanga's two art schools were established. Moonens established his experimental 'school' of painting and drawing after he was struck by the trade in cheap paintings and curios that he found in Léopoldville (now Kinshasa).[18] Both his and Desfossés' schools claimed to be protecting and fostering

11 Steiner, *African Art in Transit*, p. 5.
12 Kasfir, 'African Art and Authenticity', p. 41.
13 D.J. Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945–1975* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011); G. Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005).
14 S. Van Beurden, *Authentically African: Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2015), p. 15.
15 *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 14; F.M. Olbrechts, *Plastiek van Kongo* (Antwerp, Standaard Boekhandel, 1946).
16 S. Van Beurden, 'The Value of Culture: Congolese Art and the Promotion of Belgian Colonialism (1945–1959)', *History and Anthropology*, 24, 4 (2013), pp. 472–3.
17 F. Demany, 'Coup d'oeil sur l'art nègre', *Germinal*, Brussels, 5 June 1955.
18 H. Kerels, 'Laurent Moonens, peintre colonial', *La lanterne*, Brussels, 24 February 1951.

Figure 2. View of the 'Art room' of the 'Palais du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi' of 1958's Brussels World Fair. Works by members of both Desfossés' *Hangar* and Moonens' *Beaux-Arts* can be seen hanging on the walls. (Photo R. Stalin – Inforcongo – Source: Fondation Moonens.).

authentic African expression, though the concept was sufficiently vague to leave room for personal interpretation. Desfossés presented himself as the midwife of a genuinely indigenous popular art, which made use of western techniques and materials, but which was African in its expression and content.[19] The works that emerged from his *Académie d'art populaire* were characterised by recognisably 'African' subjects and forms, with a predominance of pastoral subjects and intentionally distorted figures, understood by many, even at the time, to reflect western expectations of African art.[20] Moonens took the view that it was too late to put African artists 'back on the true path of Bantu art'.[21] Instead, he encouraged his students to paint without models or restrictions on subjects: authenticity would result from non-interference with the artist's spontaneous creativity. Former pupil Francois Amisi recalls Moonens' methods in similar terms: '[w]e were looking for originality, … something that came from us … Over there [in the Desfossés School], they learned life-drawing, perspective, and this and that. Here we were told to look for what is in you and work from there'.[22] The envisaged result was a true modern Congolese painting, or, as Moonens put it on the occasion of the first exhibition of his pupils' work, 'a link in the new authentic Congolese painting'.[23] (See Figure 2)

19 Desfossés' foreword to P.R. Desfossés, J. de Deken and L. Moonens, *Hommage à Pierre Romain Desfossés* (Elisabethville, CEPSI, 1955).

20 For example, a delegation sent by the Belgian government to Congo in 1954 concluded that Desfossés' students had become 'prisoners of a genre'. See 'La réforme de l'enseignement au Congo belge: mission pédagogique Coulon-Deheyn-Renson' (Brussels, Ministère des colonies, 1954).

21 'L'académie des Beaux-Arts et des Métiers d'art d'Elisabethville', *Nouvelle gazette*, Brussels, 14 April 1956.

22 Interview with François Amisi, Lubumbashi, 3 July 2018. All interviews for this article were conducted by the author.

23 L. Moonens, '1ère Exposition. Académie Officielle Des Beaux-Arts', 15 November 1958. Available at https://moonens.com/Archives/The%20Congo%20years/The%20Academy/About%20the%20Academy.htm, retrieved 10 December 2020.

The press, in both Congo and Belgium, explained the works of Moonens' pupils in precisely these terms. Their first exhibitions were heralded as personifying a new form of 'authentic' African expression and as the embodiment of a 'new living primitive art'.[24] Though the outputs of colonial Congo's art schools were relatively modest, their significance was magnified by the imperative of late colonial legitimation. Not only did they receive significant media coverage, but students' work was exhibited in major international events. In 1958, for example, Moonens' school was showcased at the Brussels World Fair to promote, as the exhibition's magazine put it, '… the value of Belgium's work in Africa in general, … and more particularly [the value] of our artistic teaching which has the double objective of promoting advancement and of preserving the sources of inspiration of the native artists, in order to ensure their survival'.[25]

Congo's growing reputation as a hive of artistic talent made the visual arts valuable as diplomatic currency, an advantage that the independent government of President Mobutu successfully built upon. Inspired by Senegalese President Senghor's contemporaneous policy of placing the arts at the centre of his nationalist narrative,[26] President Mobutu launched a new state ideology known as *Authenticité* in 1971. Its avowed goal was to launch a cultural revolution, out of which the new nation, freed from its colonial legacy and built on 'authentic' indigenous values and traditions, would be born. To promote this new nation, renamed *Zaïre*, Mobutu's state supported many domestic artistic ventures, including the *Académies*, and sponsored major international exhibitions of 'national treasures' – mostly masks and wooden sculptures – throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Though the general focus of *Authenticité* was on 'traditional art', it also provided the foundation for a new brand of post-colonial modernism, rooted in 'Zairian' aesthetics and traditions, championed by a group of artists known as the *avant-gardistes zaïrois*. Their work was often included in international exhibitions, such as at the First Pan-African Youth Festival in Tunis in 1973 and at 'Festac 1977', a major international art festival held in Lagos in January–February 1977.[27]

By contrast, independent Zambia did not have a ready-made and internationally recognised artistic tradition that could be easily re-appropriated for nationalist ends. While there were initiatives similar to those of Desfossés and Moonens during the CAF period, these emerged in Southern Rhodesia, the federation's political and economic centre. Among these initiatives were the school at Cyrene Mission (30 kilometres west of Bulawayo), established in 1939 by Anglican missionary Ned Paterson. There, inspired by the British arts and crafts movement, painting and sculpture were taught alongside skills such as carpentry and animal husbandry, combining spiritual enlightenment and practical education. This was part of a trend in the decorative and fine arts that first developed both as a reaction to the perceived loss of traditional craftmanship in the face of industrial modernisation and as a form of gainful employment. This approach was also popular in South Africa, where the apartheid government established arts and crafts, or 'handiwork', as a subject suitable for African schools within its 'Bantu Education' policy.[28] In Salisbury, the first Rhodesian National Gallery and its attached workshop were founded in 1957 by British artist Frank McEwen. McEwen, like Moonens, despaired that 'an infinite potential of natural creativity' was being 'debased and adulterated beyond repair by the mechanical mass production of

24 'L'académie des Beaux-Arts et des Métiers d'art d'Elisabethville', *Nouvelle gazette*, Brussels, 14 April 1956.

25 'Les artistes congolais à L'Exposition Universelle', *Expo Chronique*, Brussels, 1958, p. 27.

26 E. Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2004).

27 Van Beurden, *Authentically African*, p. 193; see also C. Badi-Banga Ne-Mwine, *Contribution à l'étude historique de l'art plastique zaïrois moderne* (Kinshasa, Éditions Malayika, 1977).

28 D. Magaziner, *The Art of Life in South Africa* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2016).

objects for the tourist trash trade'.[29] Like Paterson, he aimed to foster a spontaneous, untutored style and encouraged artists to derive their inspiration entirely from Africa and remain uncorrupted by the techniques of western art schools. Yet these efforts were hampered by the segregation of Rhodesian society.[30]

When South Africa-born painter Cynthia Zukas arrived in Zambia in 1964, she found the art scene 'was really a hangover from the federation': 'there was something called the "Lusaka Arts Society" but we were all white artists … There were no Zambian artists at all'.[31] In the early years of Zambian independence, the Kaunda government did fund a series of artistic ventures such as an 'annual National Arts Festival' and bursaries to study abroad, through which Henry Tayali was able to study at Makerere University in Uganda from 1967 to 1970. Similarly, the mining company Anglo American funded an annual nationwide children's painting competition and converted part of its Lusaka headquarters into an art gallery.[32] However, in the mid 1970s, following the crash in copper prices, government and corporate sponsorship of the visual arts ended abruptly. As a result, independent Zambia's 'official' visual arts scene remained narrow, overwhelmingly Lusaka-based and dependent on individual initiatives. Among these were the Lusaka Artists Group (1976–81), an artists' co-operative founded by Bert Witkamp;[33] the Lechwe Trust, founded as a charitable trust in 1986 by Zukas, Henry Tayali and the ceramicist Bente Lorenz;[34] and the Mpapa gallery, Lusaka's first stand-alone gallery, opened by Joan Pilcher and Heather Montgomerie, which functioned from the late 1970s until 1996. Thus, while the Katanga–Zambia border was an artificially created by-product of the colonial era, which people on the ground continually crossed, it had genuine significance when it came to macro-level structures and colonial dynamics. The artistic and political conjuncture of the late 1950s in the francophone sphere gave Congolese 'modern art' a global prominence and market that had parallels in Zimbabwe but did not exist in Zambia in the same period.

By independence, Congolese art had been fully commercialised both inside and outside the country. Paintings by Katangese painters were being exhibited internationally in cities across Europe and the USA – a hundred works from the Desfossés studio were bought by the Rockefeller family for New York's Museum of Modern Art.[35] These exhibitions, François Amisi stresses, were very important, as they provided 'a "bridge" to market our work internationally. That is why the Lubumbashi school is well-known'.[36] In this way, painting became intimately associated with Congo, just as stone and wood sculpture, popular with customers, became associated with Zimbabwe and was increasingly marketed as a modern revival of Shona stone culture of the type found at Great Zimbabwe.[37] The *Beaux-Arts*' commercial activities were not limited to the international gallery trade, however. Its purpose was also to teach unemployed young men 'European techniques to enable them to integrate themselves into the current economic system'.[38] Moonens believed that, once they had achieved financial stability, possessed technical skills and achieved gainful employment,

29 F. McEwen, 'Return to Origins: New Directions for African Arts', *African Arts*, 1, 2 (1968), p. 22.
30 E.A. Morton, 'Patron and Artist in the Shaping of Zimbabwean Art', in G. Salami and M. Blackmum Visonà (eds), *A Companion to Modern African Art* (Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 237–54.
31 Interview with Cynthia Zukas, Lusaka, 30 August 2018.
32 See A. Mukuka Kulenga, 'Contemporary Zambian Art, Conceptualism and the "Global" Art World' (MA dissertation, Rhodes University, 2016), and G. Ellison, *Art in Zambia* (Lusaka, Bookworld Publishers, 2004).
33 Interview with Bert Witkamp, Choma, 29 June 2019.
34 Interview with Cynthia Zukas, Lusaka, 30 August 2018.
35 M. De Plaen, *Mode Muntu* (Bruxelles, Prismes Editions, 2015), p. 25.
36 Interview with François Amisi, Lubumbashi, 3 July 2018.
37 E.A. Morton, 'Frank McEwen and Joram Mariga: Patron and Artist in the Rhodesian Workshop School Setting, Zimbabwe', in S. Kafir and T. Forster (eds), *African Art and Agency in the Workshop* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 276–83.
38 'L'école artistique du peintre Moonens à Elisabethville', *Le courrier d'Afrique*, Léopoldville, 18 February 1952.

'true artists' would reveal themselves.[39] Other institutions in Katanga followed a similar approach, including the all-powerful mining company *Gécamines* and the Salesian missionaries of Don Bosco, who sponsored and organised professional studios to train young men in manual skills such as woodwork, copper carving and other craftwork. Thus there existed several routes through which to gain access to artistic careers and markets. Interviews with former pupils of Desfossés by Johannes Fabian show that they came to Desfossés' atelier not because their 'natural talent' had been 'discovered' by him but because they were anxious to access a new clientele and ready to adapt their painting styles accordingly. Mwenze Kibwanga, for example, started out as a self-taught artist, specialising in portraits and the landscapes that he saw for sale on the roadside. However, he gave up this style after he was advised that Desfossés would not like it. When Kibwanga saw that the artist Pili Pili, who had already been recruited by Desfossés, was using little dots to fill his backgrounds, he developed a '*traits*' ('lines') design, which he used to draw plants, animals and people and to fill the backgrounds.[40] Thus Desfossés' instruction served, as Jewsiewicki argues, as 'initiations to a new technology of painting as well as lessons on how to adapt one's work to the taste of foreign clients'.[41] This is a paradox inherent in an art movement driven by western consumption which none the less insisted on presenting African art as 'natural' and 'authentic'. Yet it also helped to create a class of skilled, market-oriented artisans who knew how to respond to and manipulate notions of authenticity. This trait was to prove useful in the economically unstable decades that followed independence.

Artists in Post-Independence Katanga: Tapping Different Markets

After 1960, things changed dramatically for Katangese artists. During the secession (1960–63), the pool of well-off expatriate customers temporarily decreased, and opportunities to exhibit became scarce. This created profound difficulties for many of the artists who had emerged in late colonial art circuits. Mode Muntu, for example, one of Moonens' former star students, worked sporadically between 1960 and his death in 1985, and only when he had a patron.[42] However, the relative peace and prosperity of the early Mobutu period saw the emergence of a new style, which Fabian and Szombati-Fabian termed 'Popular Art' or 'Popular Painting'.[43] 'Popular paintings' usually portrayed scenes of urban or village life, or events in the country's tumultuous history depicted in a cartoonish style. They were inexpensive and could be found hanging on the walls of taverns, shops and workers' living rooms. According to Fabian, the production and sale of these paintings soared between *c.*1966 and 1977, the period of relative calm and affluence from the consolidation of Mobutu's regime to the Shaba wars of the late 1970s.[44] Because there seemed to be a considerable difference between this art and the art of the colonial period, it was interpreted as a clear break in Katanga's painting tradition. Fabian and Szombati-Fabian have interpreted the 'explosive development' of popular painting as indicative of 'the formation of a new kind of historical consciousness among the masses' in the context of the increasingly authoritarian Mobutu regime.[45] In turn, Célestin Badi-Banga ne Mwine, head of

39 *Ibid.*
40 See transcripts of conversations between Mwenze Kibwanga, Pili Pili and Johannes Fabian, available at http://www.lpca.socsci.uva.nl/aps/vol13/intro.html, retrieved 9 December 2020.
41 Jewsiewicki, 'A Century of Painting', p. 336.
42 De Plaen, *Mode Muntu*, pp. 44, 48.
43 Fabian and Szombati-Fabian, 'Art, History and Society'.
44 Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, p. 196. This refers to a series of incursions on Katangese mining centres, carried out in 1977 and 1978 by Angola-based Congolese guerrillas. See E. Kennes and M. Larmer, *The Katangese Gendarmes and War in Central Africa: Fighting Their Way Home* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2016).
45 Fabian and Szombati-Fabian, 'Art, History and Society', p. 2.

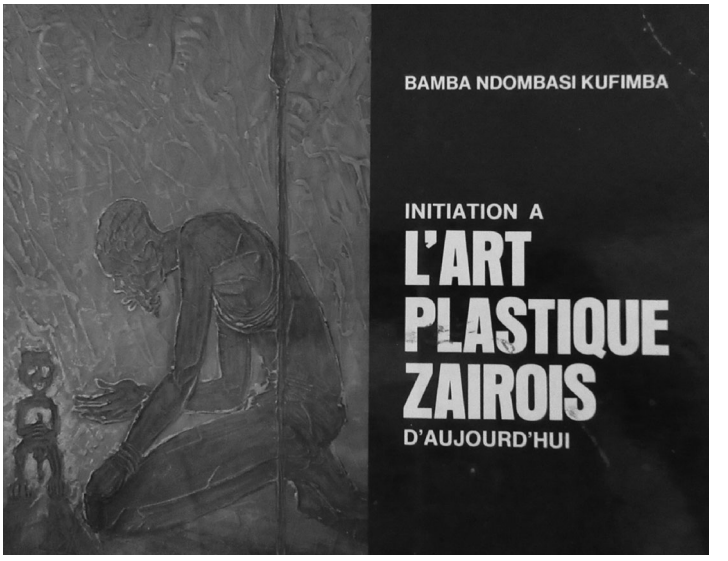

Figure 3. Front cover of *Initiation à l'art plastique zaïrois d'aujourd'hui*, published for the AICA modern art exhibition, 1973.

the Zairian International Association of Art Critics (AICA), defined 'popular painters' as artists who did not attend art school, used cheap material and peddled their art on the streets,[46] thus establishing a clear distinction from 'academic painters', who received formal artistic education and displayed their art in galleries. Yet, for the painters themselves, the line was more blurred. The testimonies of artists active during the Mobutu period suggest that artists of all kinds often attempted to access different markets – for gallery art and 'popular painting' – simultaneously, albeit with varying degrees of success.

First, some of the more established 'academic' painters of the colonial period took advantage of the opportunities provided by Mobutu's *Authenticité* campaign. Perhaps most successful were the Chenge brothers, Baruti and Kanuto. Born in Katanga but educated at the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* of Kinshasa in the mid 1950s, they ran a successful artists' studio in Lubumbashi but also maintained a gallery in the capital, where Mobutu and others in his circle were frequent clients.[47] Tapping into the market provided by *Authenticité* was facilitated by the relative vagueness of its message and aesthetics. As Safi Mwanza, an artist who worked in the Chenges' studio from 1972, recalled, 'it all had to be African … it had to represent an authentic Congo'.[48] Yet what this 'authentic Congo' or 'Zaire' looked like could be freely interpreted by aspiring *avant-gardistes*. *Avant-gardisme zaïrois* did none the less have its recurring aesthetic and thematic trends. Most such works were heavily figurative and often featured generic 'traditional' elements such as men holding spears or women pounding grain. Human bodies were often portrayed with a distinctive angular or elongated quality.[49] The Chenges used some of these stylistic characteristics in the artworks that they exhibited at the modern art conference organised by AICA in Kinshasa in 1973

46 C. Badi-Banga ne Mwine, 'Peinture populaire zaïroise', in C. Mathey, M. Mollard, M. Phalippou and J. Cornet (eds), *Sura Dji, Visages et racines du Zaïre* (Paris, Musée des arts décoratifs, 1982), pp. 151–64.
47 Interview with Kanuto Chenge, Lubumbashi, 30 July 2019.
48 Interview with Safi Mwanza, Lubumbashi, 20 August 2019.
49 S. Van Beurden, 'The Zairian Avant-Garde: Modes of African Modernism', *Radical History Review*, 131 (2018), pp. 151–8.

(see Figure 3). Its exhibition catalogue features two paintings by Chenge Baruti. One depicts an African man holding a spear and kneeling beside a statue, the other a man and woman dancing around a fire. Both are expressionistically depicted in red and brown hues with slightly distorted, elongated limbs, thus encapsulating the artistic spirit of *Authenticité*: an authentic modern art grounded in the traditional yet vague enough in its expression to transcend regional cultural boundaries. For many Katangese artists, particularly those who had attended the *Beaux-Arts*, responding to such a stylistic framework was not too difficult a task. Most were used to making art to satisfy patrons and respond to markets based on notions of authenticity, and Mobutu's *Authenticité* was only the latest iteration of this. What is more, artists like the Chenge brothers could easily recycle the themes they developed for the 'authentic' Zairean art market, such as the illustration of tales or proverbs, or generic depictions of 'traditional' ceremonies, for their Katanga-based expatriate clients. This was because the latter, as Kanuto Chenge candidly admits, 'did not know much about the specificities [of the rituals depicted]' anyway.[50]

When asked from which pool he drew his clients in Katanga, Kanuto Chenge answered: 'almost all of them were Europeans!'[51] In the 1970s, many Europeans still worked for companies such as *Gécamines*. In fact, informants consistently cited *Gécamines* venues, such as the *Centre de Loisirs de Panda* (CLP) in Likasi, and the *Cercle Manika* in Kolwezi, as among their favourite places to exhibit. As Valérien Kongolo wa Nkulu, another painter who worked at the Chenge studio, recalled:

> there were people [working for *Gécamines*] who were in charge of social affairs. When you went to ask about organising an exhibition, they would tell you to come on such or such a date, because that is when people get paid and will buy … especially around the time that people were starting to plan their holidays.[52]

The content of the paintings was influenced by this market. Kazadi Katembwe, a Lubumbashi-based painter who started work in the 1970s, notes that most of the expatriates who lived in Katanga were not art collectors or connoisseurs but rather people with a middle-class income who wanted to buy souvenirs rather than works of art. As a result, you would '… find landscapes, bush fires, jacarandas, and acacias. All of this, for them, was a nostalgic type of painting, something that reminded them of the time they lived in the Congo. It is like someone who goes to Paris and gets photographed in front of the Eiffel Tower'.[53]

Similarly, painter Georges Kahilu recalls that his clients frequently asked him for specific subjects: 'they would say: "could you draw such and such avenue with the flamboyants or the jacarandas?".'[54] Safi Mwanza also recalls that she and other artists who worked under Baruti Chenge's instruction produced paintings and copper panels that would appeal to a European clientele: 'we did a lot of women, mothers who carried babies. I was not very much into landscapes but I did a lot of animals and birds, day in, day out'.[55] This market provided the mainstay of the Chenge studio, and probably that of many similar studios across Katanga's urban centres. Safi Mwanza noted, 'it was thanks to the [European expatriates] who lived here that artists were able to live'. She added, however, that it also 'put artists in a bit of a rut because they had to keep on producing the same clichés'.[56] Yet,

50 Interview with Kanuto Chenge, Lubumbashi, 30 July 2019.
51 *Ibid.*
52 Interview with Kongolo Nkulu wa Pemba Valérien, Lubumbashi, 30 July 2019.
53 Interview with Kazadi Katembwe, Lubumbashi, 21 August 2019.
54 Interview with George Kahilu, Lubumbashi, 16 July 2018.
55 Interview with Safi Mwanza, Lubumbashi, 20 August 2019.
56 *Ibid.*

Figure 4. Living room with a landscape painting hanging on the wall in Lubumbashi, *c.*1990. (Bogumil Jewsiewicki's private collection. All rights reserved.).

in the same way that certain themes were easily transposed from the market provided by *Authenticité* to the 'souvenir' one, the latter was not entirely detached from the images that artists produced for a 'popular' Congolese clientele.

Szombati-Fabian and Fabian, who produced several detailed studies of popular painting's styles and content, isolated three basic themes: 'things ancestral', which included naturalistic renditions of idyllic landscapes, village scenes, waterscapes, flora and fauna; 'things past', depictions of historical events such as the imprisonment of Patrice Lumumba in 1959 or scenes from the Katangese secession; and 'things present and future', consisting of portraiture and images of modern cities.[57] By all accounts, two subjects sold particularly well in Katanga's mining towns. One was a symbolic mermaid figure known as *Mamba Muntu* in Katanga and *Mami Wata* in Africa more generally: a contract with her assures material or professional success but also threatens eternal bondage. Depicted as an attractive woman with a snake into which she transforms when a contract with her is broken, she symbolised the allure and dangers of wealth and consumerism.[58] The second was *Colonie belge*, which generally depicted an open plaza where a prisoner is being flogged by an African policeman while a European administrator looks on. Fabian speculated that the popularity of *Mami Wata* might have derived from the fact that it served as a 'totalising symbol' of urban existence, while *Colonie belge* was interpreted as a political genre, providing a way to criticise both past and present injustices. Because these themes were highly specific to the Congolese experience, they were completely absent from the 'souvenir' trade.[59] In contrast, the 'idyllic landscape' was ubiquitous in both (see Figure 4). In fact, out of the more than 5,000 popular paintings collected by Léon Verbeek, a Salesian father based in Lubumbashi since 1966, a total of 3,386 paintings depicted landscapes,

57 Fabian and Szombati Fabian, 'Art, History and Society', pp. 1–21.
58 B. Jewsiewicki, *Mami wata : La peinture urbaine au Congo* (Paris, Gallimard, 2003).
59 Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, p. 197.

village scenes or river scenes, with or without wildlife.[60] Landscapes were easy and fast to produce and also often formed the background of other subjects. One of Katanga's best-known popular painters, Tshibumba Kanda-Matulu (also known as 'TKM'), could produce three *Colonie belge* paintings a day and two of Lumumba, but, if he worked hard, he could produce up to ten landscapes a day.[61] They could also be easily transposed across several markets. Such landscapes, as noted by Fabian, were capable of creating a nostalgic mood, and this, according to Jean Sangwa, was their attraction for his clients: 'many said that they had lost their culture, that is why they wanted to keep at least some memories of the village'.[62] Yet such 'idyllic landscapes' were equally attractive for the expatriate and middle-class market, which liked these generic evocations of an 'authentic' Africa.[63]

In the first two decades after Congolese independence, there were at least three significant markets available to Katangese artists: that for 'authentic Zairian art'; the 'souvenir' market, primarily bolstered by the comparatively large expatriate population of Katanga; the indigenous local market, particularly the salaried employees of companies such as *Gécamines*. As post-colonial Congo/Zaire experienced waves of political and economic upheaval, it proved important for these artists to diversify their work and to 'surf' between multiple markets. The Chenge brothers, for example, were successful in supplying the Zairean elite with striking 'modern' African art – painting, sculpture or copper-beaten panel – at the same time as they built on similar themes for their expatriate clientele in Lubumbashi. According to informants, another important studio in the early 1970s was that of former Kinshasa-based artist Moussa Diouf, who, despite having achieved recognition in Kinshasa, had grown weary of what he considered state artistic censorship. Some of his paintings, signed 'Moussa Diouf' and preserved in Léon Verbeek's collection, show the angular depictions of the human body associated with the Kinshasa school. Yet, as Jules-Rosette found when she met him in Zambia in the late 1970s, Diouf produced several ranges of paintings, which, though all sharing the same angular brushstrokes, were signed with different names depending on their intended audiences. His popular painting range was signed 'Muntu', meaning 'man' in Swahili.[64] TKM is another important example of a painter who adapted his 'popular paintings' to appeal to a new class of customers, namely academics who took an interest in his historical paintings. In 1974, he painted over 100 paintings depicting Congolese history for Johannes Fabian; he soon found other customers and thus created a demand for topics that were not usually part of the generic canon.[65] Furthermore, the Fabians encountered a number of painters who (probably) did not train with Desfossés yet adopted his school's style, and at least one other who turned to 'popular' genre painting but kept exhibiting landscapes aimed at tourists at Lubumbashi airport.[66] Some artists reacted to the economic slump of the late 1970s by producing comic strips. An artist named Kika recalled that, in the 1980s, while he and other artists continued to produce paintings and copper-beaten panels, comics were 'what paid best' because *Gécamines* and the railway company, SNCC, bought them for their company magazines.[67] As for Dominique Bwalya, a self-described popular painter who became a professional artist in the

60 Interview with Léon Verbeek, Lubumbashi, 26 June 2018.
61 Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, p. 6.
62 Interview with Jean Sangwa, Lubumbashi, 21 August 2019.
63 Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, p. 209.
64 According to fellow Congolese painter Lusengu (Raphaël) Kalala, who worked alongside him in Lusaka from 1976, Diouf also signed 'Muntu' the paintings that he could not sell in formal exhibitions and subsequently peddled on the streets. Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art*, p. 144; B. Jules-Rosette and J.R. Osborn, *African Art Reframed: Reflections and Dialogues on Museum Culture* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2020), pp. 196–9.
65 Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, p. 216.
66 *Ibid.*, pp. 210–11.
67 Interview with Kika, Lubumbashi, 21 August 2019.

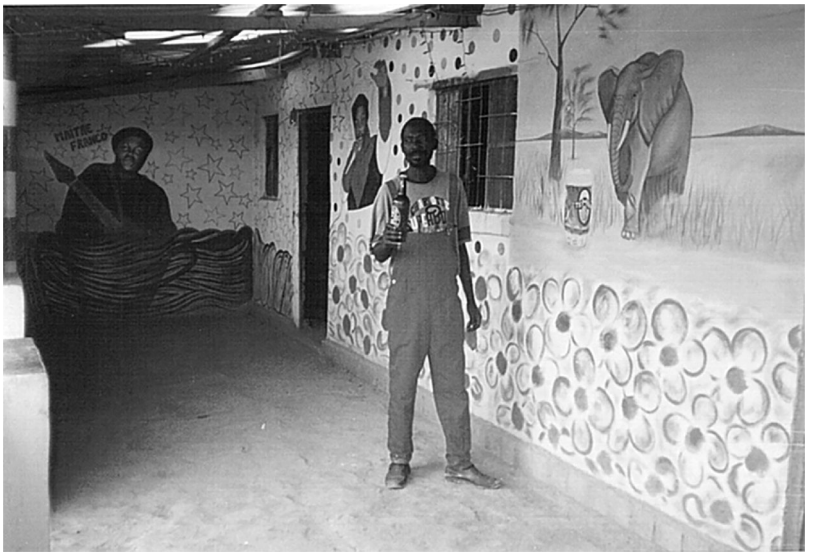

Figure 5. Tavern with wall paintings in Lubumbashi, 1990s. (Bogumil Jewsiewicki's private collection. All rights reserved.).

mid 1980s, he started his career by producing street advertisements and company logos, decorating the walls of restaurants and painting caricatures, portraits, still lifes and street scenes for individual clients. As he himself put it: 'customers were varied'.[68] These interviews suggest that artists habitually attempted to tap several markets simultaneously or moved from one to another, playing with media, and adapting their styles and subject matter accordingly (see Figure 5).

Not every artist was able to navigate successfully the complicated and precarious art scene of the post-independence era, as the example of Mode Muntu (cited above) illustrates, but this market diversification helped to sustain professional artists, particularly those organised in studios, in uncertain economic and political times. These studios also provided important spaces of learning for a new generation of aspiring artists. Kazadi Katembwe, for example, attended Moussa Diouf's workshop and that of Baleko, an autodidact painter from Kisangani known for his paintings of houses on stilts.[69] Jean Sangwa likewise learned the craft of painting in studios, including that of François Amisi in Likasi and George Kahilu in Lubumbashi. This allowed him, he recalls, 'to have a good command of art … without ever attending *Beaux-Arts*'.[70] Similarly, Valérien Kongolo became interested in art through the workshop of Baruti Chenge, who encouraged him to study at *Beaux-Arts*: 'in the mornings I was in *Beaux-Arts* and in the evenings I was in his studio. That is what made me love what he did and to imitate it too'.[71] Ultimately, as the economic crisis deepened following the fall in copper prices of 1974–75 and the aftermath of the Shaba wars, the business of painting in Katanga was increasingly adversely affected. TKM disappeared and is presumed to have died during the Shaba wars of 1977 and 1978. Interviews show that many artists chose to try their luck further south. As a neighbouring country with a porous border, which people had been crossing for decades, Zambia provided a familiar, accessible market. There appears to

68 Interview with Dominique Bwalya, Lubumbashi, 17 July 2018.
69 Interview with Kazadi Katembwe, Lubumbashi, 21 August 2019.
70 Interview with Jean Sangwa, Lubumbashi, 21 August 2019.
71 Interview with Kongolo Nkulu wa Pemba Valérien, Lubumbashi, 30 July 2019.

have been major waves of departures in the 1970s and 1980s.[72] As Kazadi Katembwe explains:

> Lubumbashi is really the gateway to southern Africa. Lubumbashi has enabled artists to exhibit in Zambia, even those who came from Kinshasa. There was a whole wave of artists who left to Zambia – Fwande, Nampande, Falu, Dongala, Moro, Kasongo … – and never came back. Some even went further afield, to Zimbabwe and Malawi … Because Lubumbashi was really a doorway … more of an exit than [a] return doorway [laughs].[73]

As will be shown in the next section, this migration had a major impact on the Zambian artistic scene and provides the opportunity to observe another variation of the artistic 'surfing' that artists practised in Katanga.

Congolese Artists in Zambia: New Markets, New Authenticities

By all accounts, Congolese artists were a significant presence in Zambian towns from the 1970s to the 1990s. The Zambian mining towns offered a similar setting to the Congolese Copperbelt, in that they were inhabited by a large expatriate community and a large population of mine workers (and others) whose income might allow them to buy affordable art for their homes. Zambia had additional advantages: it was relatively free of political conflict and home to a growing tourist market. Long a regional tourism hotspot, thanks to the Victoria Falls, Zambia had, from the 1970s, with the arrival of commercial tour operators and the growth of air travel, attracted a growing market of European and American tourists eager for new cultural experiences.[74] It was therefore no stranger to the tourist trade in curios. Jules-Rosette, who carried out research among communities of artists and craftspeople in Lusaka in the 1970s, observed that, in this period, 'carving cooperatives and painting studios mushroomed across urban centres'.[75] In these studios, 'individuals mechanised their own work by the repetitive production of the painted landscapes, backdrops, and carved templates that glut the tourist art market'.[76] The producers of 'commercial' painting in Lusaka, Livingstone and the Copperbelt were overwhelmingly of Congolese origin. According to Bert Witkamp, the vast majority of artists operating in Lusaka when he first arrived in Zambia in the late 1970s were 'Zaireans'.[77] Similarly, Matthew Mudenda, a Zambian painter who grew up in Lusaka in the 1960s and 1970s, remembers that 'they [Congolese artists] used to sell their paintings on the streets. Sometimes they would just line them by the street side and other times they would be moving around with them'.[78] Congolese artists probably accessed this market because they were, as unregistered immigrants, excluded from the formal wage-labour sector. There was at the same time a distinct lack of official regulation of the tourist art market. In addition, as Enock Ilunga, a Zambian auto-didact painter with family in Congo, pointed out, the Congolese 'were better-trained artists' and therefore 'had an advantage'.[79] They brought with them the training, styles and entrepreneurial skills honed in their experiences of Katanga's art academies, professional studios and the popular painting market.

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72 Interview with Kazadi Katembwe, Lubumbashi, 21 August 2019.
73 *Ibid.*
74 C.M. Rogerson, 'The Emergence of Tourism-Led Local Development: The Example of Livingstone, Zambia', *Africa Insight*, 35, 4 (2005), pp. 114–15; V.B. Teye, 'Liberation Wars and Tourism Development in Africa: The Case of Zambia', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 13, 4 (1986), pp. 594, 598, 604.
75 Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art*, pp. 232–3.
76 *Ibid.*
77 Interview with Bert Witkamp, Choma, 29 June 2019.
78 Interview with Matthew Mudenda, Kitwe, 17 August 2018.
79 Interview with Enock Ilunga, Lusaka, 30 August 2018.

Just as they had done in Congo, artists who travelled to Zambia tapped a range of markets. Communities of Congolese artists formed across several major Zambian cities, including in the townships of Bulangililo in Kitwe and Kanyama in Lusaka, both of which were also centres of curio production. In Lusaka, as Enock Ilunga recalls, artists would either sell their work 'within Kanyama' or in town, especially along the city's main business avenue, Cairo Road.[80] David Chibwe, an artist who trained at the *Beaux-Arts* of Lubumbashi and moved to Zambia in 1970, recalls that, for him and others, European expatriates working for the mining companies were the prime target audience: 'we would tell each other, "there, in that house lives a European" [laughs]'.[81] Pephias Mbewe, director of the Copperbelt museum in Ndola (1975–93), recalls that Congolese painters in Twapya, a curio market located by the road connecting Kitwe to Ndola, usually used 'black velvet material … and then they would paint on that: very stylistic – very long persons, a man with a long pipe or some woman carrying a child on her back and so on'.[82] Such 'curio' paintings, however, whether painted on black velvet or on hardboard canvas, were not marketed exclusively to expatriates. In the early 1970s, Jan B. Deregowski found that there was 'a very active African group stemming from the Congo' in Zambia who produced hardboard pictures 'available to two distinct sections of the population: to Europeans as "curios" and to the local population as decorations in bars and dance halls, both in rural areas and in high-density urban residential areas'.[83] Indeed, William Miko, an artist who grew up on the Copperbelt, remembers that 'most of the people in the mining settlement were earning an income. So, you entered people's houses and you would find these velvet paintings'.[84] Mudenda makes a similar statement for Lusaka:

> [a]lmost in each and every household I visited, I found a Congolese painting on the wall. I hardly ever saw a Zambian piece of art. Zambian artists were found in the so-called elite classes in Zambia … The Congolese made art just to get a meal. They made art which was so cheap that anyone could buy it in the townships.[85]

Thus, just as they had in Katanga, Congolese artists sought to appeal to a varied range of clients in the Zambian population. In order to do so, however, they had to adapt their artistic content, styles and materials to their new circumstances (see Figure 6).

Jules-Rosette, as noted in the introduction, observed the activities of a Lusaka-based community of Congolese painters known as the 'Kanyama circle' in the 1970s. It was led by Moussa Diouf, who had moved to Lusaka in 1974. She details the ways in which members of the circle transposed and modified the basic genres of Congolese popular painting identified by Szombati-Fabian and Fabian, to make them 'work' in a Zambian context. The *Colonie belge* subgenre, for example, was not produced in Zambia since it was too specific to the Katangese context. Instead, Congolese artists in Zambia relied on double entendres and more abstract, universal symbols, such as the 'mermaid' or the 'idyllic landscape'.[86] Dominique Bwalya, who started travelling regularly to Zambia from 1991, explains: 'often such themes, for example, those connected to colonisation, were not well understood on the other side, because they did not fit [the Zambian experience].

80 *Ibid.*
81 Interview with David Chibwe, Lusaka, 19 August 2018.
82 Interview with Pephias Mbewe, Ndola, 17 July 2019.
83 J.B. Deregowski, 'Pictorial Art in Zambia', *African Arts*, 4, 2 (1971), p. 37.
84 Interview with William Miko, Lusaka, 4 August 2018.
85 *Ibid.*
86 Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art*, pp. 55, 144, 159; B. Jules-Rosette, 'What is "Popular"? The Relationship Between Zairian Popular and Tourist Paintings', in Jewsiewicki (ed.), *Art pictural zaïrois*, pp. 45–6.

Figure 6. Tavern with wall paintings in the Lusaka region, *c.*1970. (Source: Jan B. Deregowski [photographer]. Originally published in J.B. Deregowski, 'Pictorial Art in Zambia', *African Arts*, 4, 2 (1971), p. 38. All rights reserved.).

But mermaids, artists did produce … Why? Because these are themes we have in common'.[87]

When asked about Congolese painting, Zambian informants usually mentioned 'landscapes' first, suggesting that they were as important a part of Congolese pictorial production in Zambia as they had been in Congo. Landscapes found a ready local market and are generally uncontroversial. Their intentional ambiguity meant that they appealed to diverse consumers, whether they be international or local, middle- or lower-income, African or European, Congolese or Zambian. Some stylistic innovations were dictated by purely practical considerations. In order to respond to the frequent shortages of basic tools such as paintbrushes, tube paints and canvas, alternative equipment was needed. Black velvet, for example, was a cheap and widely available material in Zambia, and its use also made it possible to use colour minimally. Another tool associated with Congolese artists in Zambia was the palette knife, the use of which helped to avoid reliance on brushes but also encouraged aesthetic approaches and themes that made the most of the straight lines produced by the palette knife: for example, waterscapes or figures with exaggerated, elongated limbs.[88] Through the means of such adjustments, it did not take long for Congolese artists to develop and expand the 'popular' side of the painting market see Figure 7).

Some even succeeded in penetrating the gallery trade. For those hoping to break into the formal art scene, Lusaka offered the greatest opportunities. This, at least, is why Enock Ilunga decided to leave the Copperbelt in 1978, because he felt that 'most people there were miners and they do not have interest in art'.[89] This meant adapting styles again, as

87 Interview with Dominique Bwalya, Lubumbashi, 17 July 2018.
88 Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art*, pp. 186–8.
89 Interview with Enock Ilunga, Lusaka, 30 August 2018.

Figure 7. Joseph Mpinda, member of the Kanyama Circle, paints a Mami Wata, 1970s. (Source: Bennetta Jules-Rosette [photographer]. Originally published in B. Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art: An African Semiotic System in Comparative Perspective* [New York, Plenum Press, 1984], p. 148. All rights reserved.).

'Congolese-type' paintings were consistently turned away from galleries like Mpapa. As Zukas comments, 'quite a few artists would come to a prestige exhibition with these typical Zairean type street artworks and it was quite hard … to explain that was not really the sort of work we were after'.[90] In order to tap into both markets, members of the Kanyama circle produced a line of low-cost paintings for street hawking or door-to-door sales, painted under pseudonyms or anonymously, but also a series of paintings to be sold at higher prices for exhibitions and art galleries. For this market, as described by Jules-Rosette, Diouf introduced a new type of aesthetics that he called 'new figuratism', which deployed techniques of bodily and facial distortion and elongation reminiscent of *avant-gardisme zaïrois*.[91] Another Congolese artist who successfully accessed Zambia's formal art scene was Bondo Kahila, usually referred to as 'Bondo'. His naturalistic work was often exhibited in the Copperbelt Museum and in the Mpapa gallery and was noted for its level of detail.[92] Pephias Mbewe recalls that 'it was straight village life, portraits of people and marketplaces. He did wildlife [as well] … he would paint lions and zebras'.[93] Just as in Congo, several artists interviewed by Jules-Rosette in the 1970s emphasised that, in order to save time, landscapes were produced for both the gallery and the tourist trade, since this was a genre accepted by both.[94] Yet works by Bondo preserved today in Chaminuka Lodge consist of more straightforward abstract art, of which there was an established tradition in Zambian art circles, thanks to Tayali's influence. His later work was almost entirely abstract. In this way, by studying the aesthetic preferences of the tourist, local and gallery audiences, Congolese

90 Interview with Cynthia Zukas, Lusaka, 30 August 2018.
91 Jules-Rosette, 'The Myth of Modernity', p. 27; Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art*, pp. 74–5, 146–9, 152; Jules-Rosette, 'What is "Popular"?', p. 42.
92 Interviews with Pephias Mbewe, Ndola, 17 July 2019; David Chibwe, Lusaka, 19 August 2018; William Miko, Lusaka, 4 August 2018.
93 Interview with Pephias Mbewe, Ndola, 17 July 2019.
94 Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art*, pp. 75–6.

painters based in Zambia were able to create a demand for their work. As Bert Witkamp recalled,

> I think in the Copperbelt there was simply people with money who wanted something that appealed to them now. Now the Zairians are very good at responding to those things … Their pseudo-cubism, these velvets … They did so many different things. It was really for offering everybody something.[95]

Most of the Congolese painters who settled in Zambia have now either passed away or moved on, many further south to Zimbabwe or South Africa. Yet they left a strong mark on the Zambian artistic scene.[96] Most of the Zambian artists who emerged from the 1980s onwards grew up or lived at one point on the Copperbelt or in Lusaka, where they first encountered Congolese artists: all cite them as important influences. Many learned artistic techniques from them, particularly at their workshops. Enock Ilunga recalls that he worked in Bondo's studio and 'learnt a lot from him'.[97] Lawrence Yombwe was another Zambian painter who began his career learning 'mainly from the street from people from Zaire':

> each weekend I used to go to a place called Top Hat. It was a drinking place and behind there were artists and one of them was from Zaire called Muzembe … I would go and look at an artist and look at how he is mixing the colours or notice how he would start with the sky and then paint another thing, and then I would go home and try to do what he was doing. Sometimes I would also be there painting and he would be helping me out.[98]

These artists were comparatively accessible. While artists such as Tayali trained followers in a largely abstract art style, a gulf existed between them and grassroots artists operating in the local context.[99] Mudenda became aware only later in life of 'Zambian artists like Akwila Simpasa and Tayali', noting that his 'first impressions about art and what goes on in the art world was from Congolese artists, the ones I used to see do their paintings in bars, pubs and taverns and Bondo in the market'.[100] He also noted how they contributed to popularising certain subjects, such as landscapes and market scenes, and the use of a distinctive form of social commentary in painting.[101] Most valuable, however, was the professionalisation of painting, for example by working together in a studio, the use of several media and playing on people's expectations. As Yombwe points out, 'it was important to see that you can actually make a living from art'.[102] He continued, 'you look for themes that your clients would want … For example, I always go back to landscapes because I like landscapes and most people like my landscapes … Very few people would do art just for art'.[103]

Zambian artists observed and learned from their Congolese counterparts' marketing strategies, techniques and tricks and increasingly started to imitate them, to meet demand for the types of art that they had developed. Mbewe remembers that Zambian artists increasingly brought to his museum pieces of art painted in the 'Congolese style', because that what was selling as 'African art'.[104] Similarly, Mudenda recalls that 'the bar owners would say that they wanted some landscape painting, people paddling canoes and so on.

95 Interview with Bert Witkamp, Choma, 29 June 2019.
96 Interviews with Matthew Mudenda, Kitwe, 17 August 2018; Enock Ilunga, Lusaka, 30 August 2018.
97 Interview with Enock Ilunga, Lusaka, 30 August 2018.
98 Interview with Lawrence Yombwe, Livingstone, 29 July 2018.
99 Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art* , pp. 142–3, 232–3ff.
100 Interview with Matthew Mudenda, Kitwe, 17 August 2018.
101 *Ibid.*
102 Interview with Lawrence Yombwe, Livingstone, 29 July 2018.
103 *Ibid.*
104 Interview with Pephias Mbewe, Ndola, 17 July 2019.

Since the subject was dictated you had to follow suit and do that'.[105] Thus the migration of Congolese artists into Zambia not only paved the way for the creation of new, amended versions of art forms born across the border but also helped to shape the Zambian painting scene, which received a significant boost in the 1990s.

While the immigration of Congolese painters was far from the only factor that influenced the development of the visual arts in Zambia, its impact is undeniable yet little documented. The presence and activities of these Congolese painters in Zambia helped to democratise an art form that had previously been the purview of middle- and upper-class elites. It created a demand for certain content and styles that either did not previously exist or did not exist in these specific forms. Above all, it provided an entire generation of young Zambian artists with valuable lessons in artistic entrepreneurship and how to adapt to evolving markets. This new generation of Zambian artists came into its own at a time when important economic, political and cultural changes shaped the art market. In 1989, the Visual Arts Council, a government-level association, was formed by a group of Zambian artists led by Martin Phiri with the aim of promoting the interest of artists in Zambia. This provided an organised body overseeing the art market, leading, among other things, to co-operation with institutions like the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD). This was followed by political and economic liberalisation, enabled by the return of a multi-party system in 1991, which led to a massive surge in tourism and increased access to international buyers. Thus, despite the collapse of the mining industry in the 1990s resolutely shifting the field of artistic endeavour from the Copperbelt to the capital and Livingstone, this was a period of pluralisation and expansion for Zambian painting. This was also a time during which avant-garde themes and aesthetics expanded, not least in the context of a series of prominent cross-national workshops held in the southern African region,[106] though contemporary painters on both sides continued commonly to include reflections on the past or elements of contemporary society in their work.[107]

Meanwhile, in Katanga, the parallel collapse of its mining industry was accompanied by the almost complete disappearance of 'popular painting' from the local market and, as Jewsiewicki has identified, its increased reliance on international demand.[108] This transition of 'popular art' from people's homes to the international art world had already begun in the late 1970s. At the same time as its popularity on the ground was starting to suffer from the economic crash of the late 1970s, the exhibition *Art Partout*, presented in 1978 in Kinshasa, made household names of 'popular painters' such as Chéri Samba, Chéri Chérin and Moke, who went on to become some of Congo's best-known contemporary artists. By the 1980s, helped by intellectual analyses that gave it visibility and validity as a genuinely 'Congolese' art form, 'popular painting' was increasingly hailed as the true 'authentic Congolese painting'. Since then, paintings labelled 'popular' have been increasingly displayed in exhibitions, art festivals and museums around the world. One result has been that the work of TKM has come to epitomise 'Katanga painting' globally. In this way, 'popular painting', which had once been the exclusive domain of the low-income population of Congo, became fully commercialised as 'authentic' Congolese painting as the result of a process of

105 Interview with Matthew Mudenda, Kitwe, 17 August 2018.

106 For example, the Triangle-funded Mbile workshops in Zambia, Pachimpamwe in Zimbabwe, Thapong in Botswana and Tulimpamwe in Namibia, organised throughout the 1980s and 1990s. See, for example, E. Court, 'The Avant Garde in Africa?', *African Arts*, 25, 1 (1992), pp. 38–49, 98.

107 An exhibition of works by contemporary Zambian artists held in Tel Aviv in 2018 described the exhibited works as manifestations of 'African Modernism' involving 'the scars of colonialism' and 'the story of the triumphant post-independence period and the disenchantment that followed the collapse of Zambia's copper economy'. 'Zambia: Contemporary Art in the Making, January–June 2018', available at https://www.africanstudiesgallery.org/exhibitions/zambia-the-making-of-contemporary-art, retrieved 4 December 2020.

108 B. Jewsiewicki, 'Introduction', in Jewsiewicki, *Art pictural zaïrois*, p. 16.

negotiation between academics, the artists themselves, governmental institutions and the international art market.

Conclusion

The history of Copperbelt visual arts shows that conceptualisations of art as 'authentic' or 'popular' cannot be divorced from the political and social context in which art forms labelled as such emerged. It also shows that these are deeply malleable and constantly evolving notions. The tourist art market that emerged in Congo in the 1930s and 1940s, enabled by new urban settings and the presence of an expatriate population keen to buy souvenirs, intersected with an international art market focused on 'authentic African art'. This provided the backdrop for the growth of distinct 'academic' painting styles in Katanga. In turn, Congolese 'popular painting', which emerged in the context of the Mobutu era, would not exist in its current form without the steady reconsideration and manipulation of the notion of 'authenticity' paired with innovative strategies of commercialisation and skilled exploitation of evolving and differentiated markets. Yet, while the relationship between the African artist and the international art market, still largely centred around notions of authenticity, has been central to the development of hybrid art forms across much of the African continent, this is far from the whole picture. Artists in the Copperbelt certainly manipulated notions of 'authenticity' or the 'exotic', particularly when the interlocutor was European, but this was by no means limited to this category of clients, nor was 'authenticity' the only field of semiotic action. These processes happened at other levels with clients who may not have used the language of 'authenticity' but still wanted art that 'talked' to them.

The history of painting and artistic movement in the Central African Copperbelt provides many examples of the ways in which artists sought to anticipate the expectations of all sorts of clients, often making use of symbols or themes flexible enough to appeal to several categories of them. Having had to develop their artistry in unstable economic contexts, Copperbelt artists have had to be flexible and adaptable. From the 1950s onwards, Katanga-based artists routinely 'surfed' between diverse artistic markets, from 'high art' to 'popular'. Their success in doing so depended on a series of factors, including the quality of their networks, their artistic abilities and backgrounds and, above all, their ability to anticipate and manipulate the expectations of the target audience. In turn, the case of the migration of Congolese artists in Zambia provides an example of such 'surfing' techniques being transposed to a new social context. When Congolese artists migrated to Zambia, they found there a gallery trade with a growing emphasis on abstract aesthetics, a lively tourist trade and an underexploited market for wall painting and cheap easel paintings. As they had in Congo, they penetrated these various markets with varying degrees of skill and success, developing aesthetic and semiotic canons adapted to the audience and the materials available.

Thus the case of the Copperbelt provides a particularly striking example of the fact that, more than a dialogue between the African artist and a (mostly) European and North American international market, artistic transactions can be best understood as multi-level conversations involving a range of interlocutors. These 'conversations' have involved art connoisseurs, tourists and grass-roots audiences across national and international spaces and different social strata, each with their own expectations and traditions with regard to art. Out of these complex dynamics and points of intersection, art forms emerged, evolved and were transformed. In turn, the way that art travelled and changed across the Katangese and Zambian map is further testimony to the extent and significance of the movements and interactions that continued across the Copperbelt border, long after the better-known cross-border migrations that defined the region's earlier history. While this article has focused on artistic migration in the Copperbelt region, it is likely that studies of artistic practices across

southern Africa would uncover similar stories of migration and artistic development. Elizabeth Morton, for example, identifies stories of migration and adaptations by Zimbabwean artists to the constraints imposed by school directors, clients and the socio-economic contexts in which they operated that are comparable to those described here.[109] This is symptomatic of a region whose history has been defined by extensive and diverse migration and cross-cultural exchange.

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109 E.A. Morton, 'Mission and Modern Art in Southern Africa' (PhD thesis, Emory University, 2003); Morton, 'Frank McEwen and Joram Mariga'.