

In his works, Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc researches into the history of colonial development, its effects on cultural identity and global contexts. Amongst others, he is very concerned to engage with film history and the decolonisation of African states in the 1960s. In all his videos, photographs, drawings, as well as through archival material, he investigates the causes of collective amnesia. In this way, the artist is not only looking for the historical reasons behind current conflicts, but makes it possible to realise the multiple relations between personal identity, community and nation. Cultural objects always carry a form of memory within themselves, which Abonnenc sets up to be negotiated all over again in his works.

The exhibition on the Kunstverein's first floor is presenting three groups of works in all. Among them, numerous new works are on view. The artist starts out from various objects and materials and makes connections between the three continents, Africa, South America and Europe. Abonnenc's latest film, »An Italian film (Africa Addio). First part: copper« (2012), confronts viewers with the problematic extraction of copper in Katanga province in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The second group of works in the exhibition originates with a ring originally belonging to Abonnenc's great grandfather from French Guyana. The third component of the exhibition is finally a collection (Inventaire des objets africain de la collection Émile Abonnenc, 1931/1933, Moyen Ogoué, Gabon), which is owned by Abonnenc's family and has been arranged by the artist into new, indexical photo displays.

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, born in 1977 in French Guyana, lives and works in Paris. In 2012, two institutions, the Serralves Foundation (Porto, Portugal) and the Pavilion (Leeds, England), have mounted solo exhibitions for the artist. Abonnenc recently took part in the Paris Triennial in the Palais de Tokyo and in group exhibitions (all in 2012) in the Fondation d'entreprise Ricard (Paris), as well as at the ICA – Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia, USA). The exhibition at the Bielefelder Kunstverein is the artist's first solo exhibition in Germany. Parallel to this event the Kunsthalle Basel is presenting a solo exhibition of the artist.

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