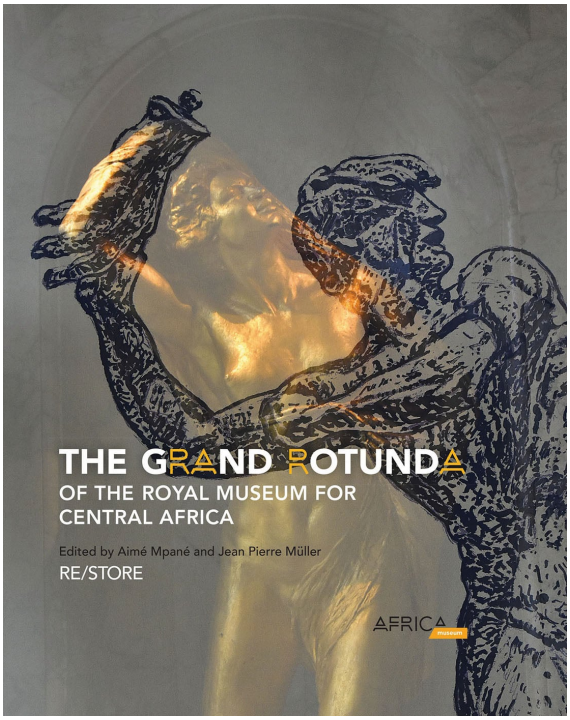
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The Grand Rotunda of the Royal Museum for Central Africa

RE/STORE

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- A richly illustrated book, compiling texts by renowned experts about the history of the rotunda of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium

The Royal Museum for Central Africa, in Tervuren, Belgium, was founded in 1898, but its current building was inaugurated in 1910 and is characterised by many symbols reflecting the colonial propaganda of the time. The grand rotunda, designed to serve as the museum entrance, plays host to a series of statues that are strong examples of such imagery, reflecting fundamentally racist stereotypes.

Between 2013 and 2018, the RMCA underwent a major renovation that saw a substantial redesign of the permanent exhibition, with the involvement of members of the African diaspora in Belgium. A major challenge of the renovation was to demonstrate the will to decolonise a listed building that is legally protected against changes. As removal of the colonial statues was not allowed, the museum was forced to find innovative solutions, notably by inviting contemporary African artists to create installations to dialogue, contrast, and discuss with colonial messages.

Congolese artist Aimé Mpané was chosen to make such an installation in the rotunda in 2018 with *New breath*, or *Burgeoning Congo*. Public reaction helped the AfricaMuseum realise that it needed to go further. Along with the creation of a second sculpture, Aimé Mpané, in co-creation with Belgian artist Jean Pierre Müller, proposed the *RE/STORE* project: a permanent installation of transparent veils, each bearing a contemporary message, hung in front of every statue in the rotunda. The themes addressed in this collection of veils interact with the viewer in a powerful and eloquent manner.

This richly illustrated book is a compilation of texts written by renowned experts about the history of the rotunda and its statues, as well as the semantic and artistic analysis of *RE/STORE*, providing a full catalogue of the installations, sculptures, and veils.

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