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PRESS FILE

NEW TO THE
PERMANENT EXHIBITION

AFRICA
museum

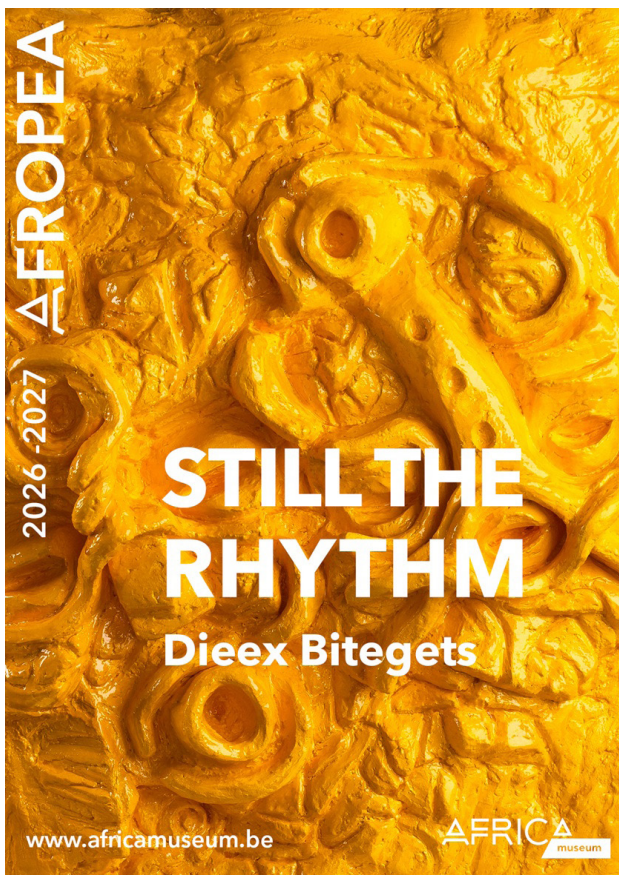
SUMMARY

The AfricaMuseum presents two innovations in its permanent display.

On 9 May, the museum will inaugurate CollectionsLAB, an open conservation studio in the permanent galleries where visitors can observe, up close, how museum objects are conserved, studied, and prepared for exhibitions. The collections management team will be present in the LAB during staffed sessions to speak with visitors about restoration and conservation. Many objects have a colonial history, so particular attention will be given to ethical questions concerning responsibility, respect, and context. CollectionsLAB aims to emerge as a place of transparency and reflection on the museum's collections.

On 2 June, the AFROPEA space will open Still the Rhythm by sculptor and word artist Dieex Bitegets (Goma, DR Congo, 1992), featuring in particular work developed through a research visit to the museum. AFROPEA is a space for dialogue and encounter within the permanent display of the AfricaMuseum, developed in close cooperation with members of the African diaspora in Belgium. It combines a permanent presentation on Afro descendant communities in Belgium with an annually changing installation by a maker, thinker, or artist. Still the Rhythm will run until 30 May 2027.

Both installations will be accompanied by events. Keep an eye on the website.



COLLECTIONSLAB



@MRAC-KMMA

process. Every intervention raises ethical questions. Many objects in the collection moreover have a colonial past, making cooperation with source communities essential. Together, they explore how these objects can be studied, preserved, and presented in a fair, respectful, and transparent manner.

In this context, inclusivity means actively creating space for multiple perspectives. This fosters shared stewardship of heritage and a multi-voiced approach to presentation and interpretation.

CollectionsLAB examines and treats groups of objects from the collection in editions or cycles of four to six weeks. The rhythm of these rotations is determined by the objects themselves and the duration of their conservation. Each edition highlights a specific challenge in collections management and develops a shared narrative around it. The programme opens with **CollectionsLAB #1. Kuba Culture: Raffia Textiles and Ethical Intersections**, a series of ten raffia textile pieces that raise various ethical questions concerning knowledge and agency.

CollectionsLAB offers a view of the scientific work that is normally carried out behind the scenes at the museum. In this space, the collections management team demonstrates how objects are conserved, studied, and prepared for exhibitions. When the team is working and the doors are open, visitors are welcome to step inside and ask questions.

Collections management is a continuous process of care, vision, and accessibility. Its aim is to pass the collection on to future generations in optimal condition and with thorough documentation. Visitors discover the techniques, materials, and scientific methods used to conserve objects, and how conservators combine craftsmanship with research and respect for the original material and the story behind each object.

The restoration and conservation of museum objects is a complex and carefully considered

KUBA CULTURE: RAFFIA TEXTILES

In the first edition of CollectionsLAB, from 19 May to June 2026, ten raffia textiles from the Kuba culture take centre stage. These fragile pieces are being carefully restored in preparation for the forthcoming temporary exhibition *Possession* (early 2027, AfricaMuseum). This exhibition critically examines how collections were formed and how these objects acquired new meanings in Europe. The Kuba textiles serve as the starting point for exploring four central themes: the production methods of raffia textiles, the social and royal meanings of patterns, the ways in which museums document and present these objects, and the contemporary continuation of this craft in a globalised context.



Kuba textile. EO.1980.2.2779 @ MRAC - KMMA

ETHICAL INTERSECTIONS

The textiles connect everyday museum practices with broader societal and ethical questions. Criticism of museums assembling costumes from unrelated pieces, for example, directly touches on issues of presentation and labelling.

Fundamental questions remain pressing today: How do you display these objects in a respectful and accurate way? Who determines how they are described and interpreted? Who holds the authority of knowledge over a collection? And why do outdated Western publications continue to serve as reference works for this heritage, even for the source communities themselves?

The launch of CollectionsLAB coincides with the Belgian Museum Week. From 19 to 24 May, the museum's collections management experts will be on hand to answer questions from the general public about heritage care, knowledge transmission, restoration, and the contemporary challenges surrounding African heritage in museums.

What: CollectionsLAB, open conservation studio

Where: In the permanent galleries of the AfricaMuseum

When: From 19 May 2026



Kuba textile. EO.1980.2.2787 © MRAC - KMMA

AFROPEA : STILL THE RHYTHM



Artist Dieex Bitegets in his artist studio.
Bilal Arty @ MRAC - KMMA

“My sculptures breathe an explicitly post-decolonial spirit: They act not only as witnesses of a past, but also as active bearers of meaning, oriented towards connection and a shared future.” Dieex Bitegets

The AfricaMuseum presents in the AFROPEA space Still the Rhythm, a solo exhibition by sculptor and word artist Dieex Bitegets, running from 2 June 2026 to 30 May 2027. The exhibition brings together two bodies of work: A Cycle Game (2024-2025) and Expressies door het ondergrondse heen (2021-2023).

Together, they trace a trajectory of introspection, encounter, and connection. Under the title Still the Rhythm, the works form a single continuous narrative in which rhythm stands for repetition, memory, transformation, and continuity.

A Cycle Game comprises three brightly coloured plaster sculptures created following a research visit to the AfricaMuseum in 2024. The encounter with the collections and archives left a profound mark: sorrow and mistrust mingle with discovery and hope.

The works reflect on how the colonial past continues to resonate today, and question how this legacy can be rethought and transformed.

The second part, Expressies door het ondergrondse heen (Expressions through Meditations), consists of ten bronze sculptures emerging from intuition and inner movement. The titles of the works as well as the accompanying poetry collection appear in Dutch, English, Lingala, and Swahili. This multilingualism reflects the layered world in which the artist moves, and the continual shaping of his multiple identities.



Sculpture «Horizontality of Things» from the series Expressies door het ondergrondse heen, by Dieex Bitegets.
@ Hans Borg

THE MASK AS POINT OF ENCOUNTER

A recurring motif in Bitegets' work is his fascination with the mask. What was once a taboo gradually became a source of enduring curiosity after he happened upon a chance example at a tourist market.

This sense of wonder arises from both the expressive power and the charged history of the object. By continuing this encounter within the AfricaMuseum's collections, Bitegets exposes the tension between estrangement and reinterpretation – a heritage that is at once familiar and alienated.

THE AFROPEA SPACE

AFROPEA is a space for dialogue and encounter within the AfricaMuseum's permanent display, developed in close cooperation with members of the African diaspora in Belgium. It combines a permanent presentation on Afro descendant communities in Belgium with an annually changing installation by a maker, thinker, or artist. The permanent display tells the story of people of African origin from the sub-Saharan region and Afro descendant communities in Belgium since the sixteenth century - their presence, contributions, and role in society. The name of the gallery pays tribute to the album *Adventures in Afropea 1* by the Belgian-Congolese group Zap Mama.

Dieex Bitegets is the third artist to take up the rotating platform, following Rachel Hansoul in 2023 and Sankara Mutoni in 2025.



View on the AFROPEA space @ MRAC - KMMA

ACTIVITIES AND ARTIST WALKABOUTS

On Sunday 7 June, the AfricaMuseum will host a walkabout with Dieex Bitegets. Additional activities with the artist will be scheduled throughout the exhibition period. Further information will be available at www.africamuseum.be

What: Still the Rhythm, Dieex Bitegets, 2026

Where: AFROPEA space, in the permanent galleries of the AfricaMuseum

When: walkabout on 7 June 2026, exhibition until 30 May 2027



Sculpture «Chaotic Symphony» from the series Expressies door het ondergrondse heen, by Dieex Bitegets. @ Hans Borg



Sculpture «Time and Motion» from the series A Cycle Game, by Dieex Bitegets. Bilal Arty @ MRAC - KMMA

