

Presseinformation

Museum am Rothenbaum

Rothenbaumchaussee 64 | 20148 Hamburg Germany | markk-hamburg.de

Amani.

Tracing the past of a colonial research centre

Press call: Thursday 19 September | 11 am

Opening: Thursday 19 September | 7 pm

Exhibition: 20 September 2019 until 19 April 2020

A century after the end of German colonial occupation in Tanzania, MARKK sets out to research the traces of this history. The temporary exhibition *Amani. Tracing the past of a colonial research centre* investigates the afterlife of the former German-colonial research centre Amani in the Usambara Mountains and of colonial remainders in the Tanzanian and German present. The project directs its gaze towards historical and contemporary links between scientific research, collections and colonialism. Offering an alternative to a purely historical understanding of the colonial past, the exhibition encourages visitors to engage with the heritage of German colonial research in Tanzania and Germany on an emotional and intellectual level. The exhibition is organized on the occasion of the University of Hamburg's centennial anniversary.

The German colonial occupation of former 'German East Africa' lasted from 1885 until 1919 and left its mark on the intimate and at the same time violent historical relationship between Germany and Tanzania that yet begs to be processed. Amani, founded in 1902, is a scientific research centre in Tanzania. Passing through different conditions of colonial occupation and later under Tanzanian management, the centre was dedicated to the study of tropical medicine, flora and fauna of the rainforest and agriculture. Today, the centre is largely inactive. The few remaining employees struggle to preserve the remainders of what once was a leading research project in East Africa.

The exhibition combines personal and scientific finds. A century of research and scientific activities is represented in the form of natural history collections, historical inventory and photographs, all of which are directly linked to Hamburg. There is for example the journey of a popular house plant, the African Violet (*saintpaulia*), which can be found on window sills around the world. Or the story of a funerary marionette which Franz Stuhlmann, founding director of Amani and co-founder of the Hamburg Colonial Institute, brought back to Germany in 1893. Through him, Amani and colonial research activities in East Africa more generally, are closely linked to the history of the University of Hamburg and of the MARKK collection. There are also family heirlooms from Amani's former employees that feature in the exhibition. These traces of a colonial heritage are displayed alongside contemporary artistic positions, such as new works by Evgenia Arbugaeva, Rehema Chachage, Syowia Kyambi and Mariele Neudecker. The artistic works address the connections between Amani's past and its present. The exhibition also features objects that found their way into the MARKK collection as donations from scientists formerly working at the German research centre and which can now be seen for the first time.

The history of Amani highlights a continuum of global entanglements between Europe and Africa. The remainders of the station come back to life and tell the stories of complex relationships, travelling researchers, Tanzanian scientists and their desires and projections with regards to the centre. The exhibition gives insight into experimental research methods from social and cultural anthropology which

Weitere Medieninformationen und Bildmaterial:

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are inspired by historical re-enactments and conceptual art. In this case, they allow for a direct experience of the colonial and post-colonial past.

The exhibition is based on the research project *Memorials and Remains of Medical Science in Africa*. Social anthropologist Paul Wenzel Geißler and an international research team investigated the afterlife of colonial research in different African locations. What remains of those who worked at the Amani research centre and of their output? How to deal with the remaining colonial architecture and the material traces of scientific research? What is the current state of the research centre and in what way has colonial research influenced contemporary research in Tanzania? Can a collaboration with artists help to understand the ambiguities of the traces that remain?

The exhibition and its additional programming are supported by the Kröber Foundation, the National Institute for Medical Research Tanzania, National Museums of Tanzania, Goethe-Institutes Kenya and Tanzania, Freunde des Museums am Rothenbaum MARKK e.V., University of Oslo, Department of Social Anthropology and University of Amsterdam, Centre for Social Science and Global Health and Economic and Social Research Council.

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Directorial management: Barbara Plankensteiner

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Quotes from the exhibition

Prof. Dr. Barbara Plankensteiner, Director:

'The exhibition analyses the intimate historical connection between science and colonialism and traces its remainders in the present. We show that artistic contemporary perspectives and social anthropological research broaden our understanding of this heritage on an emotional and intellectual level.'

Prof. Dr. Paul Wenzel Geißler:

'Material remainders of scientific practice from the past century form the common heritage of a violently shared modernity. As traces, they point towards continued violence and ongoing struggles in the present. At the same time, they also reveal what we call 'past futures': the overlapping, often failed, contradictory and conflicting visions for radical change which have formed (post)colonies and metropolises in the 20th century. As such, these objects can initiate a shared reflection on our postcolonial situation.'

Mareike Späth, curator:

'All contributors to the Amani project reflect on different aspects of the research centre's history and present from their individual perspectives which are shaped by their life circumstances and personal experience, knowledge and interests. The exhibition presents these views alongside one another, sometimes completing a picture, sometimes contradicting each other and often closely intertwined. We also invite visitors to find their own position in a world full of entanglements.'