



MM 4672:2-5

Nina Liebenberg

In the National Finnish Hunting Museum, there are four objects with accession numbers MM 4672:2-5.

Their official museum record in the national archival digital database, Finna, states the following:

Title: Rhino legs; Narrow-lipped rhinoceros, Spetsnoshörning, Black Rhinoceros, *Diceros bicornis*

Manufacturer: Esa Kemppainen, 1980 – 2009

Material type: Object

Organization: Finnish Hunting Museum

Identification: MM 4672:2-5 (number)

Dimensions: Approx. 19 x 22 cm

Manufacturing: 1980-2009; Natural product + handicraft + industrial preparation (jar); rubber; plastic; stainless steel; horn material; leather

Finland, Vähikkälä

Tanzania, Lake Burigi, Karega Region

Esa Kemppainen, Manufacturer

Subjects: rhinoceroses; trophies; Tanzania; smooth-lipped rhinoceros; Ojanperä's collection; decorative items

What follows here is an attempt by a South African curator (currently doing research in Finland about plant-human relationships) to grapple with and understand her encounter with these objects. Using various curatorial strategies such as visual suggestion, analogy, metaphor and juxtaposition, she combines image, text and objects to capture the affect that this chance meeting stirred in her. Stories of avian, marine, human and botanical tragedy are woven into a curation that hints at the wider resonance of these objects.

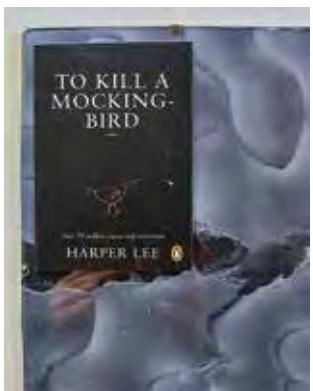


(For the full museum entry see:  
<https://www.finna.fi/Record/metsastysmuseo.knp/44248?sid=4854013186>).



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Detail from the museum entry, showing only two of the four objects.



On page 34 of *To kill a mockingbird*, the young protagonist, Scout, receives this advice from her father, Atticus Finch, a lawyer:

“First of all,” he [Atticus] said, “if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view [...] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

Set in the fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the 1930s, the story narrates racial injustices and the loss of innocence.



A detail of an illustration by Gustave Doré (1862) for *Les Contes de Perrault*, focussing on the glass slipper being fitted by the prince on Cinderella's foot.

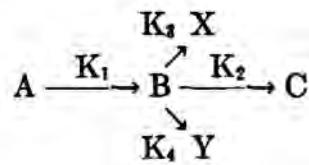


Glasses filled with different levels of Russian Bear vodka. When played with the triangle beater next to it, the last line of the chorus of Nancy Sinatra's *Bang bang (My baby shot me down)* (1966) can be heard:

*Bang-bang, he shot me down  
Bang-bang, I hit the ground  
Bang-bang, that awful sound  
Bang-bang, my baby shot me down*

An image of the late Rebecca Horn's performance *Unicorn* (1970) sits on top of a large print of a microscopy image of the model species *Arabidopsis thaliana* wildtype plant Col-0, created by University of Helsinki plant scientist Jasmin Kemppinen. The sample is an impression of the epidermal layer, showing the plant's stoma (its breathing cells). Next to *Unicorn* is a label with the *Bang bang (My baby shot me down)* chorus and a label with an equation depicting what complications in the respiration of a plant might look like.





An equation found in one of the chapters of the 1959 publication *Plant pathology: an advanced treatise*, formulated by two scientists, Ikuzo Uritani and Takashi Akazawa. It depicts a plant struggling with respiration.

An extract from Fritha Langerman's *FREIGHTED* (Moment 79 in the display – the text below accompanies a folded army shirt, with a stitched label reading '32 Battalion'):

The 32 Battalion, or “the terrible ones”, was a light infantry battalion of the South African Defence Force, founded in 1975 and deployed in Angola as a counter-insurgency force to assist UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) against Communist forces. Colonel Jan Breytenbach commanded this force. In 1997 he published his memoirs *Eden's exiles: one soldier's fight for paradise*, in which he drew attention to the trafficking and mass slaughter of elephants and rhino during the Angolan war. He writes: “Savimbi considered his fight for his version of democracy to be of greater importance than the continued existence of elephant herds and black rhinos belonging to the scarce Chobiense sub-species. He started to shoot these two species on an organised basis. The tusks and rhino horn were stockpiled at Jamba, while a means was sought to export the loot to the Far East, particularly Hong Kong.”



Nina Liebenberg  
1975 (*Invasive species*)  
2018



*Invasive species* stems from historical and botanical enquiry.

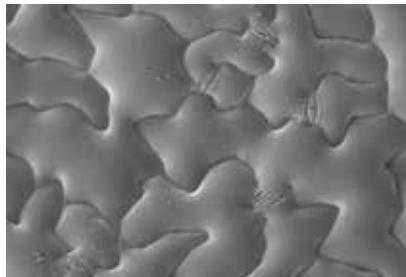
In 1975, after attaining independence from Portugal, civil war broke out in Angola. In that same year, the South African Defence Force, under the authorisation of Vorster, intervened in the war – an intervention that formed part of an ongoing period of conflict in South African history, known as the Border Wars. From a botanical point of departure, the cluster pine (or *Pinus pinaster*) is native to Portugal. In South Africa it is seen as invasive, competing with and replacing indigenous species.

1975 (*Invasive species*) consists of a cross section of cluster pine used as a target practice unit, into which the artist shot a ring of R4 assault rifle bullets – aiming at tree ring 1975.



Fragment of leaf margin of leafy liverwort cf. *Lophozia spp.*, found on a taxidermied great spotted woodpecker in the Finnish Museum of Natural History. The image belongs to University of Helsinki researcher Niko Johansson, who researches how woodpeckers can act as dispersal vectors for fungi, plants and microorganisms.

Cryo-SEM (frozen microscopic) image of an *Arabidopsis thaliana* leaf surface captured by University of Helsinki plant scientist Marina Leal Gavarrón.



(On 18 February 2023, I disembarked from a plane that flew from Cape Town to Helsinki. The temperature was -15 degrees outside.)

Two of 101 pigeons cast in concrete by Uniarts MFA in sculpture student Sanna Nissinen. Nissinen placed these sculptures throughout the Uniarts premises as part of her larger research project that explored more-than-human relationships by focusing on pigeons and highlighting our awareness (or lack) of them. The room in which the MM 4672:2-5 curation is set up was an old grain silo before it became the Uniarts facility. The pigeons nesting in its rafters were its only inhabitants.

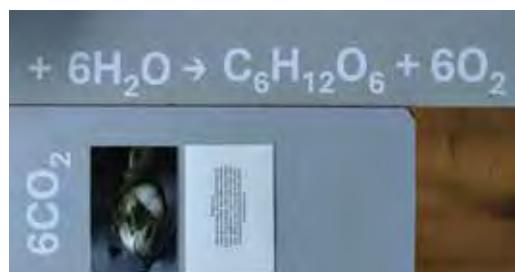


An anthology of the British sculptor Rachel Whiteread, published by the Serpentine Gallery, London, opened on a page that shows her iconic work, *House* (1993).

A moment of observation in the Natural History Museum, London, 2017. The label of this display reads: "When the pyroclastic flow enveloped Pompeii, its inhabitants were buried. Ash solidified around their bodies. These eventually rotted away leaving behind human and animal-shaped holes – found by archaeologists, mining down into the earth's core, more than 1 000 years later. These casts reveal the final positions people and animals took as they tried to protect themselves."



The chemical equation for photosynthesis.



Anne Yli-Ikkälä  
*Buutsit*  
2024  
Graniitti/Granite

A moment of observation at the Uniarts, Helsinki, BFA exhibition, 2024.



On 7 November, 1940, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, a suspension bridge in the US state of Washington, behaved somewhat differently to other bridges. Nicknamed Galloping Gertie after its completion, it tended to vibrate whenever a little wind blew, and it became quite a popular pastime to drive across on the days it was 'acting up'. On 7 November, a day of high winds, these vibrations took on a more dramatic appearance, however. The bridge – this monument of steel girders and tonnes of concrete and stone – started a 30-hertz transverse vibration with an amplitude of 1.5 feet, acting as if it was a mere piece of string flapping in the wind.

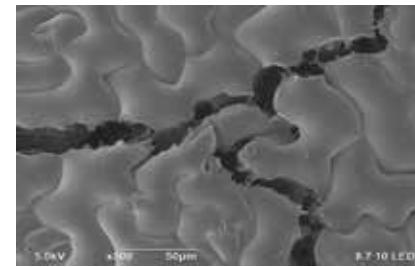
Side-A label of the US seven-inch, 45-RPM vinyl single release (#0432) featuring *These boots are made for walkin'*, (#HX3865) by Nancy Sinatra, placed on 1975 (*Invasive species*). In 1966 and 1967, Sinatra travelled to Vietnam to perform to the US troops. This song was adapted as their anthem and later featured in Pierre Schoendoerffer's documentary *The Anderson platoon* (1967) and again in a scene in Stanley Kubrick's *Full metal jacket* (1987). (#HX3865) by Nancy Sinatra.



An image showing Giuseppe Penone sculpting one of his *Trees* (a series of sculptures created by carving out the younger trees nestled inside older tree bark segments), accompanied by a label of an extract from Derek Jarman's *Modern nature* (1991): *The day of our death is sealed up. I do not wish to die... yet. I would love to see my garden through several summers.*



Cryo-SEM (frozen microscopic) image of an *Arabidopsis thaliana* leaf, showing a tear in its surface due to a protein deficiency necessary for the proper development of the plant cell walls and their adhesion to each other. Created by University of Helsinki researcher Marina Leal Gavarrón.





The Tacoma Narrows Bridge tearing apart on 7 November 1940. The only casualty of the disaster was a three-legged cocker spaniel named Tubby, who was left in the back seat of a lone car abandoned on the bridge.



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Photographs:Nina Liebenberg







Photograph: Fritha Langeman



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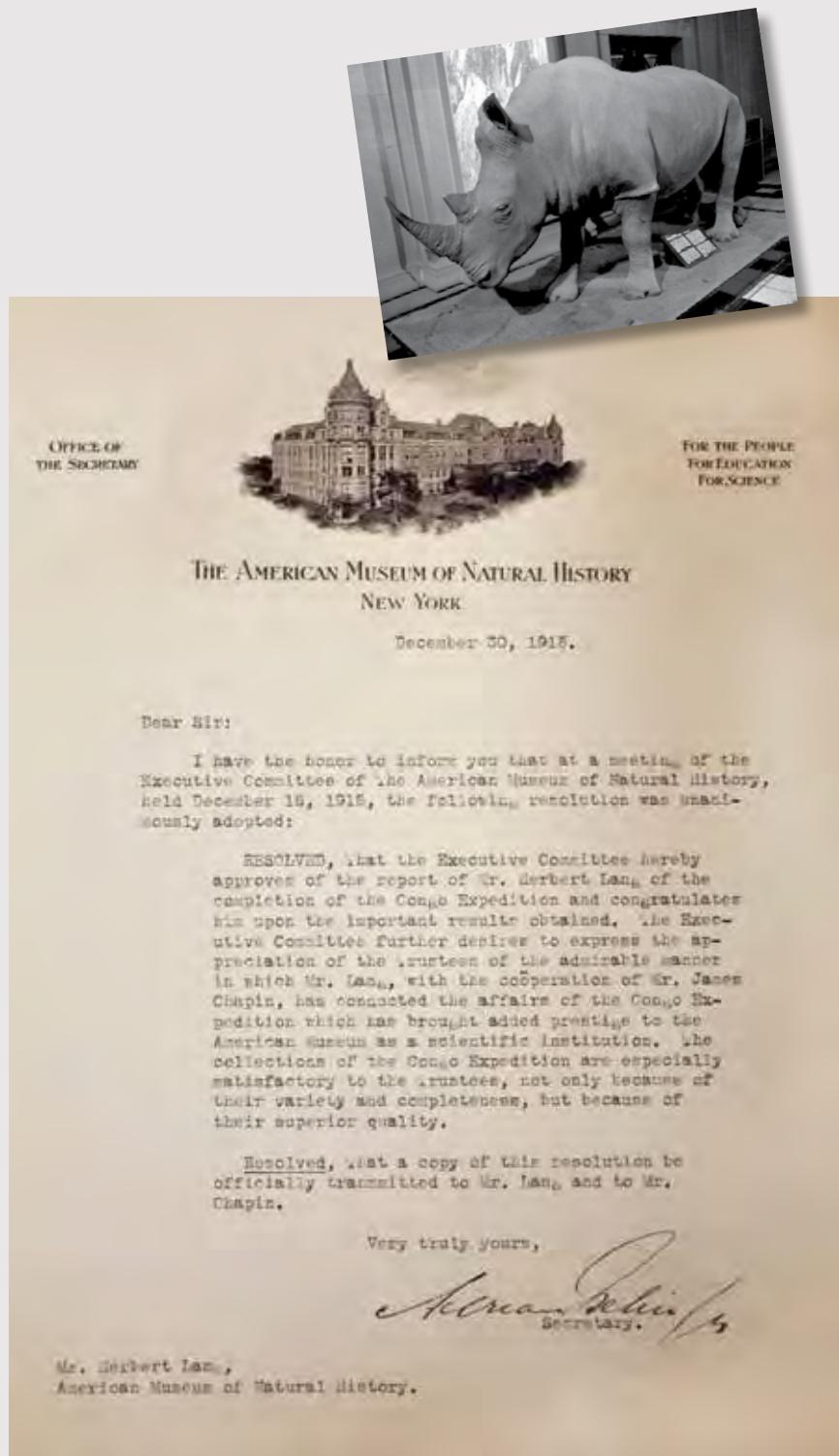
BRUSSELS  
BELGIUM  
April - September 2023



Exhibition detail.

In 2003 it was reported that only 22 northern white rhino remained in the Congo, as they were being killed by rebel troops for their horns. These were sold for £4,500 a pair to Yemeni craftsmen who used them to make traditional daggers.

Nailed nkondi primarily come from the northern part of the Congo region. Nkondi translates as 'hunter' and they are often invoked to search out and punish criminals. Each individual insertion represents either an agreement between two parties, a pledge to provide protection against enemies, or a vow of vengeance.



Herbert Lang joined the taxidermy department at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in 1903. In 1906, he accompanied game hunter Richard Tjader on an expedition to Kenya, returning with 178 mammal specimens for the museum. In 1909, he led the Congo Expedition alongside James Chapin, during which they collected 5,800 mammal specimens including the white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*), now displayed in the Carl Akeley Hall of African Mammals at the AMNH. Lang eventually settled in South Africa, working at the Transvaal Museum, now known as the Ditsong National Museum of Natural History.

White rhinoceros, Ditsong National Museum of Natural History.

Correspondence between Herbert Lang the American Museum of Natural History in relation to the Lang-Chapin Expedition to the Congo (1909-15)

Photograph of Herbert Lang posing with the northern white rhinoceros that now occupies the AMNH diorama.

Photographs: Fritha Langerman





*James Perry Wilson began painting the background for the white rhinoceros diorama in December 1936 and completed it seven months later. It is staged in the Upper Uele River, Congo, just below the Sudanese border. To sustain the illusion of the endless vista and prevent the rhino forms from casting shadows on the background, they were painted white on the side invisible to the viewer. The rhinoceroses, one of which was collected by Herbert Lang between 1911-15, were taxidermied by James L. Clark in 1934.*

Faradje April 10/1911

6.692. Skull of legbone.  
Was killed by natives when  
preying on a chicken shortly  
before hunting.  
*Herpestes* <sup>1594</sup> ~~leucurus~~  
♀ juv. Tl. 840. LT. 52. CH. 116.  
L2. 38.

May 15 5 AM. Skull of legbone.  
6.694. *Herpestes* <sup>1594</sup> ~~leucurus~~  
♂ Tl. 960. LT. 400. CH. 110.  
L2. 40. HS. 190. CH. 350.  
HP. 210. Iris med. brown.  
Skull cont. remains of a bottle  
and a few pieces of glass, leather  
were found in the intestine.  
Skin & skeleton  
was shot in a swamp at evening.  
*Rhinoceros simus*  
♀ Tl. 3930 LT. 690. CH. 490. HS. 1500.  
L2. 275. There is a space of 15 mm.  
between the two horns.  
One pair of horns. maxilla.  
Skin & complete skeleton  
Plastercast of mouth including

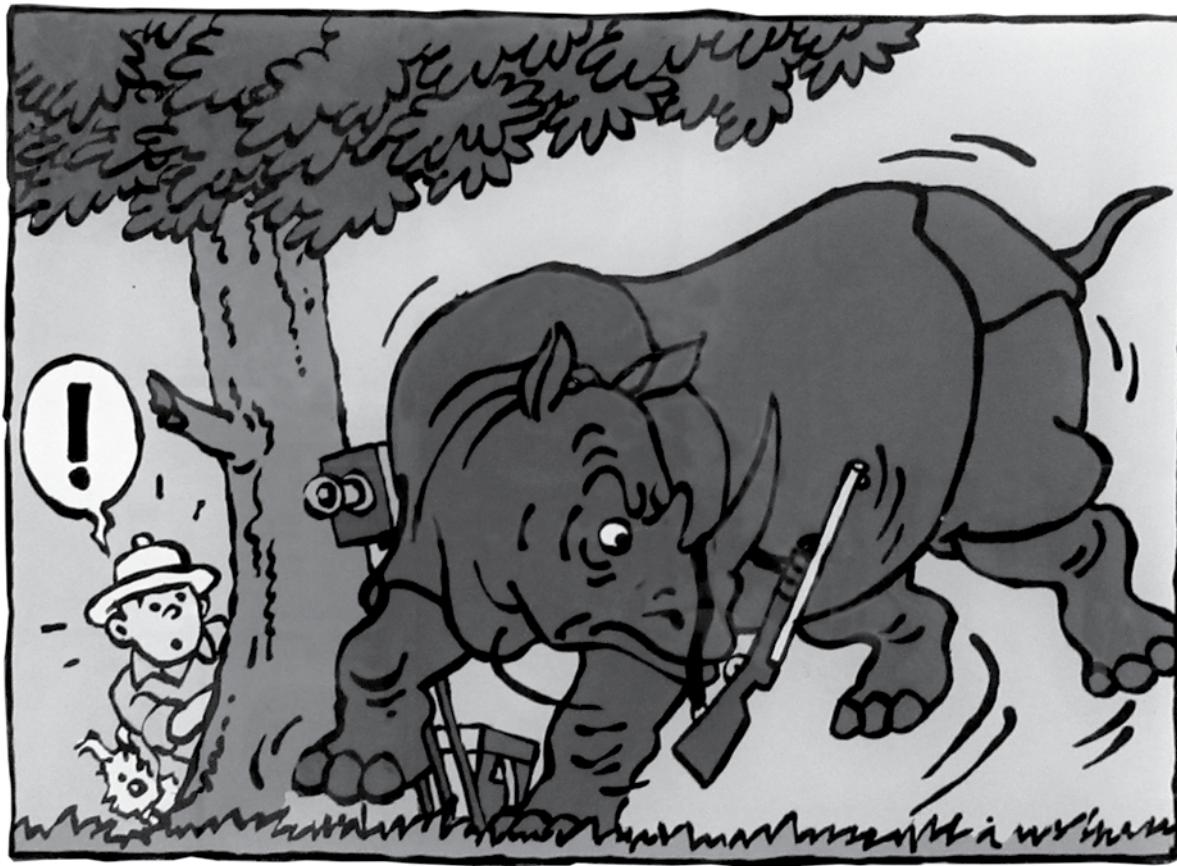
At the Berlin Conference of 1885, King Leopold II of Belgium acquired rights to the territory that is the present Democratic Republic of Congo. Under his rule, a brutal system of forced labour was imposed on the local population, primarily to extract rubber. His private army, the Force Publique, used extreme methods of coercion, including mass executions and mutilations. In 1908, the Belgian Parliament officially annexed the territory, making it a Belgian colony and ending Leopold's personal rule. However, exploitation and repression continued under colonial administration.

Faradje April 16/1911

6.695. He base of the two horns.  
Shot & presented by Mr. Bony.  
Had one large umbra to.  
*Rhinoceros simus* ♀  
fetal specimen of no. 695.  
Tl. 1310. LT. 240. CH. 225. HS. 650.  
L2. 152.  
The color was dark purplish  
brown. Fingers long closed  
except closed with the claws  
opened, the claws not closed by  
any membrane.  
Skin of antice & clitoris.  
*Rhinoceros simus*  
♀ skull of two horns - or  
maxilla, very probably the  
young of no. 695, as it was always  
in company of it. They fell shooting  
on the sand flats and the animals  
immediately  
specimens to  
but we no  
greater pro-  
blems to

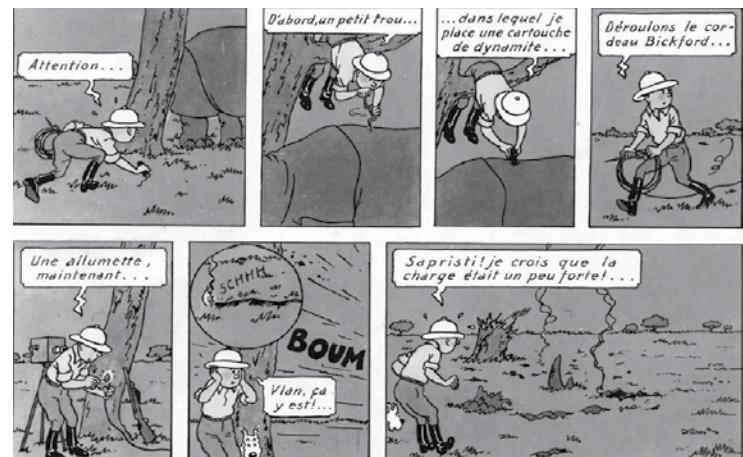


Collection of female rhinoceros toes from the AMNH collection with pages from Herbert Lang's field notebooks. M-51854. *Ceratotherium simum cottoni*. Collected 16 April 1911, Faradje, DRC. Photographs: Fritha Langerman



Exhibition detail. Painting on perspex of a comic frame from *Tintin in the Congo*.

Belgian cartoonist, Georges Remi, known as Hergé, first published *The Adventures of Tintin* in 1929 as a serialised comic strip for *Le Petit Vingtième*. At the suggestion of his editor, he set his second book, *Tintin in the Congo* (1930), in the Belgian Congo (now DRC) with an explicit colonial propaganda agenda, to encourage children's enthusiasm for Belgian colonial rule. While researching, he visited the Tervuren Museum's ethnographic collection of Congolese artefacts. The original comic, published in black and white, contained a violent scene where Tintin explodes a rhino with dynamite. When the book was republished in Scandinavia (1975), this scene was replaced with less graphic imagery due to public objections. The comic has since faced significant criticism for its racist depictions of the Congolese. In 2007, Bienvenu Mbutu Mondondo launched a legal case in Brussels, arguing that *Tintin in the Congo* justified colonialism and white supremacy. However, in 2012, a civil court ruled that the book would not be banned.





Exhibition details. During the South African Border War rhinos were virtually wiped out over nearly 20 years of fighting in Namibia and Angola. Thousands of elephants and rhinos were slaughtered to support the apartheid government's initiatives to destabilise neighbouring countries in the 1970s and 1980s.





Photograph: Fritha Langerman