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Press release

DECOLONIZE MÜNCHEN **freedom roads! | Vestiges Views Revisions | Georges Adéagbo**

October 25, 2013 – February 23, 2014

An exhibition at the Münchner Stadtmuseum accompanied by a rich cultural program.

The urban landscapes of Europe are imprinted with vestiges of colonialism. To this day, street names hark back to former colonies and honor protagonists from the colonial era. In recent years, however, more and more grass-roots initiatives have engaged in a critique of this legacy and the issue has been the subject of debate in Munich for some time now. As a result, the Münchner Stadtmuseum has decided to address Munich's colonial past and present from a variety of new perspectives.

The DECOLONIZE MÜNCHEN project was launched by a broad partnership of social actors and features three separate parts:

- freedom roads! colonial street names • post-colonial culture of remembrance. History, art and participation
- Vestiges Views Revisions • decolonializing.munich | decolonializing.museum
- “L’Allemagne avant la Guerre et l’Allemagne après la Guerre” (Germany before and after the War) – an artistic installation by Georges Adéagbo

The project aims to address the following questions:

How have colonialism and racism been written into Munich's urban environment? What is the city's attitude towards the vestiges of its colonial past? Which places and areas are the main focus of post-colonial critiques? Which topics are debated and which ones are suppressed and swept under the carpet? Who is allowed to talk about the city's colonial past? Whose lives do we still see traces of, whose stories are heard? What does decolonization mean in today's world?

The interactive touring exhibition “freedom roads!” charts the long journey of Germany's former “protectorates” in Africa, from colonization, through the resistance movements and right up to the time of their liberation. A critical look is taken at the colonial protagonists who gave their names to some of Munich's geography, while Africans involved in the anti-colonial resistance movements and black German citizens are suggested as alternatives. freedom roads! focuses on the perspectives of the people who were colonized, providing a platform for their views on the past, the present and the future. The public are invited to actively engage by making their own contributions to the touring exhibition.

Running in parallel to “freedom roads!”, “Vestiges Views Revisions” investigates the vestiges of colonialism to be found both in the city and in the museum itself. “decolonializing.munich” sheds light on the traces of colonialism that are still visible in Munich as well as other parts of the past that are more notable by their absence. While Hamburg and Berlin were at the center of Germany's colonial endeavors – the former as the gateway to the seas and the latter as the capital of Imperial Germany – Munich's role was more modest. Nevertheless, colonialism is also deeply ingrained in Munich's civic society, having shaped it on a sustained basis through the ages. The

numerous remnants and vestiges of colonialism that can be found to this day inside Munich testify to the history and continuing presence of post/colonial realities. At the same time there are a number of traces and places whose colonial associations are no longer, or only very obliquely, evident today. Despite being unseen and unspoken, these frequently tell us more about our present dealings with the colonial past than the supposedly obvious ones. Tracing their history, inquiring into the historical contexts of their rises and declines, and articulating the frequently unspoken forces they represent, will change the way we see the city - and the museum itself. "decolonializing.museum" takes a critical look at the Münchner Stadtmuseum itself, both in its capacity as a museum and as part of the city's cultural memory. Selected items from the museum's collections are used to ask questions about the origins of the objects themselves and contemporary ways of exhibiting them.

The installation by Benin's Georges Adéagbo provides a decolonization perspective on our treatment of different objects. Georges Adéagbo, who was already one of Africa's best-known artists, came to prominence in Europe through his involvement in the documenta 11 exhibition that was held in Kassel in 2002 under the artistic directorship of Okwui Enwezor. He sees himself as an archaeologist who collects objects and places them in different contexts, allowing us to see them in a new light. His arrangements connect objects with extremely diverse origins with everyday objects from the place where the exhibition is currently being held, constantly forcing the observer to grapple with the complex question of what really belongs to their 'own' culture and what is 'foreign'.

The content and debate surrounding DECOLONIZE MÜNCHEN will be complemented and enhanced by a rich program of accompanying events: www.muenchner-stadtmuseum.de

The accompanying program for the entire exhibition project will be organized by the Department of Art and Culture, City of Munich in cooperation with the Münchner Stadtmuseum and a partnership of different groups and associations that instigated the exhibition: AMIGRA, the City of Munich's Antidiscrimination Office for Persons with Migration Background and Coordinating Office for The European Coalition of Cities against Racism for the City of Munich; ADEFRA, AK Panafrikanismus, Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (Initiative of Black People in Germany), mapping.postkolonial.net, [muc] münchen postkolonial, Nord Süd Forum München, Ökumenisches Büro für Frieden und Gerechtigkeit (Ecumenical Office for Peace and Justice).

The following people were instrumental in bringing this project together:

- freedom roads! colonial street names • post-colonial culture of remembrance.
History, art and participation
Concept & design: Berlin Postkolonial and HMJokinen, afrika-hamburg.de
- Vestiges Views Revisions • decolonializing.munich | decolonializing.museum
Concept & text: Zara Pfeiffer, Dr. Martin W. Rühlemann; Design: Tahir Della, Barbara Mugalu
- Artistic installation by Georges Adéagbo, Curated by Stephan Köhler and Patricia Müller
- Planning and organization of accompanying program: Sarah Bergh

Opening hours of Münchner Stadtmuseum

Tue – Sun 10.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.

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