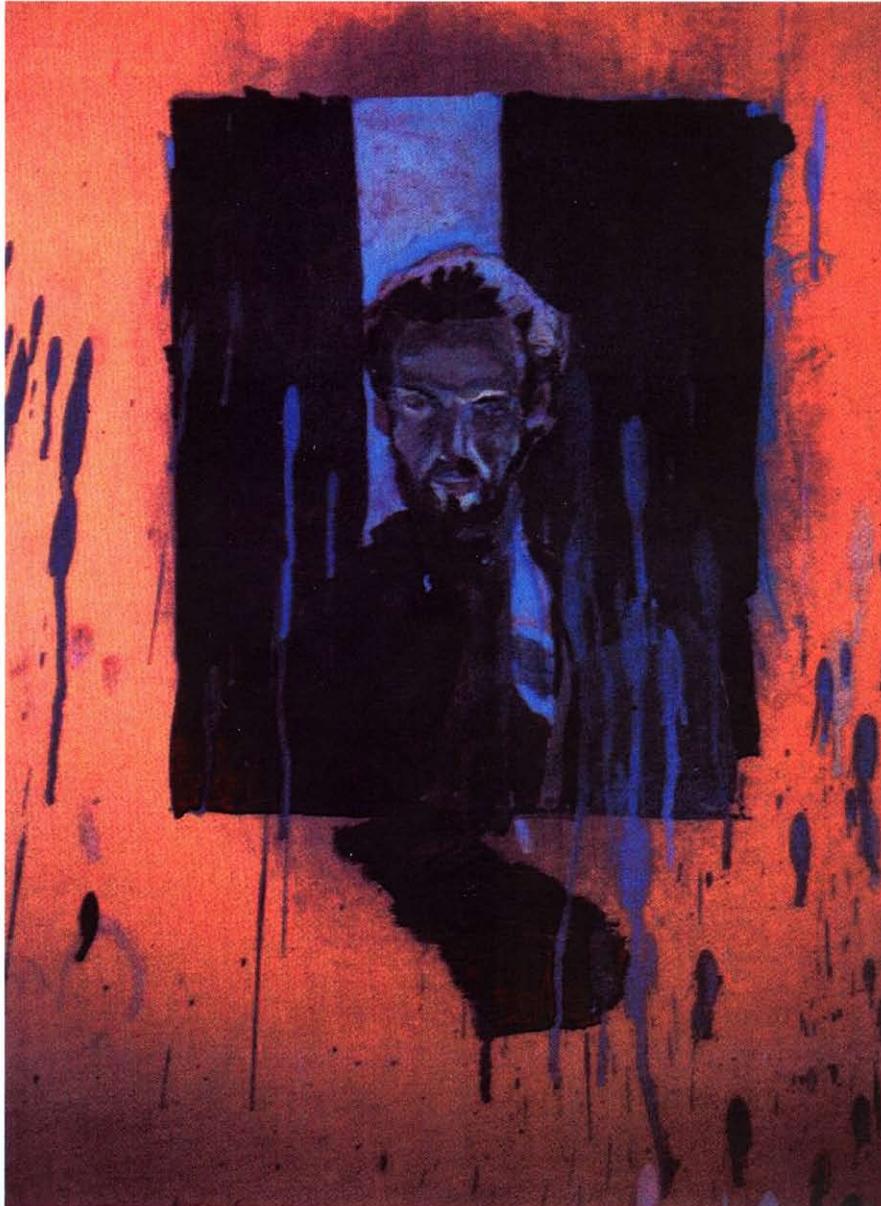


## Can Luc Tuymans be Classified as a Political Painter?



*Fig. 1*  
*Self Portrait.*  
*1978. Oil on*  
*cardboard. 52,5*  
*x 39 cm.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this essay I analyse several of Luc Tuymans' paintings and series in pursuit of an answer to my research question: 'Can Luc Tuymans be classified as a Political painter?'

My starting point is an insight into Tuymans' technical methods and vision on how paintings can be bearers of meanings and insights. Aided by a workable definition of a 'Political Painter' I go on to investigate a selection of possibly political works. In different chapters I analyse Tuymans' historical series: 'Heimat', about Flemish nationalism, 'Mwana Kitoko', about Colonialism, and a series about the Holocaust. Furthermore, I choose some paintings with subjects deriving from the American state of affairs. Every chapter is concluded with a small analysis of their political content.

In my general analysis I examine each series against the 'political painter' definition and deduce that the different series have different degrees of political content. Nevertheless, on the whole, I come to the conclusion that despite valuable criticism, Tuymans can be classified as a political painter.

In the process of researching I read, extensively, many articles, newspaper archives, essays and books concerning the artist and topic, listened to radio emissions, visited musea, and their libraries, and even tried to get in contact with Luc Tuymans himself.

Luc Tuymans is difficult to like, and harder still to ignore.

**WORD COUNT : 218**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTON</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>POLITICAL PAINTER</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>MWANA KITOKO</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>HEIMAT</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>NAZISM</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>AMERICA</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3</b>	<b>36</b>

## INTRODUCTION

Luc Tuymans is the most prominent Belgian painter of his generation and very successful on the international art scene.

I have chosen this specific topic: ‘Can Luc Tuymans be Classified as a Political Painter?’ for several reasons. Firstly, I am very passionate about Contemporary Art; the diversity of styles and ideas entices me. Secondly, I am Belgian myself and Luc Tuymans has become a great sensation for Belgian art-lovers. And lastly, it is Tuymans’ specific approach, which he markets devotedly and sounds so very ‘thought-through’ and intellectual, which drew my curiosity to the real message behind his work.

Born in Antwerp, in 1958<sup>1</sup>, Tuymans started painting at a young age, producing his first mature works in his late teens. In his early twenties, he took an extended sabbatical from painting and produced film works. When he returned to the canvas, he introduced new techniques, such as close-ups, cropping, sequencing and framing which remain key elements in his work to-day.

Since 2000 he is widely regarded as one of the most influential painters of today. His impressive list of exhibitions<sup>2</sup> includes a major retrospective at the Tate Modern<sup>3</sup> and participation at Documenta<sup>4</sup> and Biennials for Contemporary Art<sup>5</sup>.

In his mostly small-to-medium scale paintings, Luc Tuymans uses a muted, bleached-out palette that shuns bright colors. His subjects vary from every day objects through existential and social topics to major historical and political topics.

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1 More detailed biography, see Appendix 1

2 Appendix 2

3 *Luc Tuymans*, Tate Modern, London, England, May 2004

4 Documenta 11, Museum Fridericianum Veranstaaltungs-GmbH, Kassel, 2002  
Documenta 9, Kassel, 1992

5 26th Biennale di Sao Paulo del Brasile, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2004

La Biennale di Venezia 49 International Art Exhibition, Italy, 2001

12th Biennial of Sydney, Sydney, Australia, 2000

La Biennale di Venezia 47th International Art Exhibition, Italy, 1997

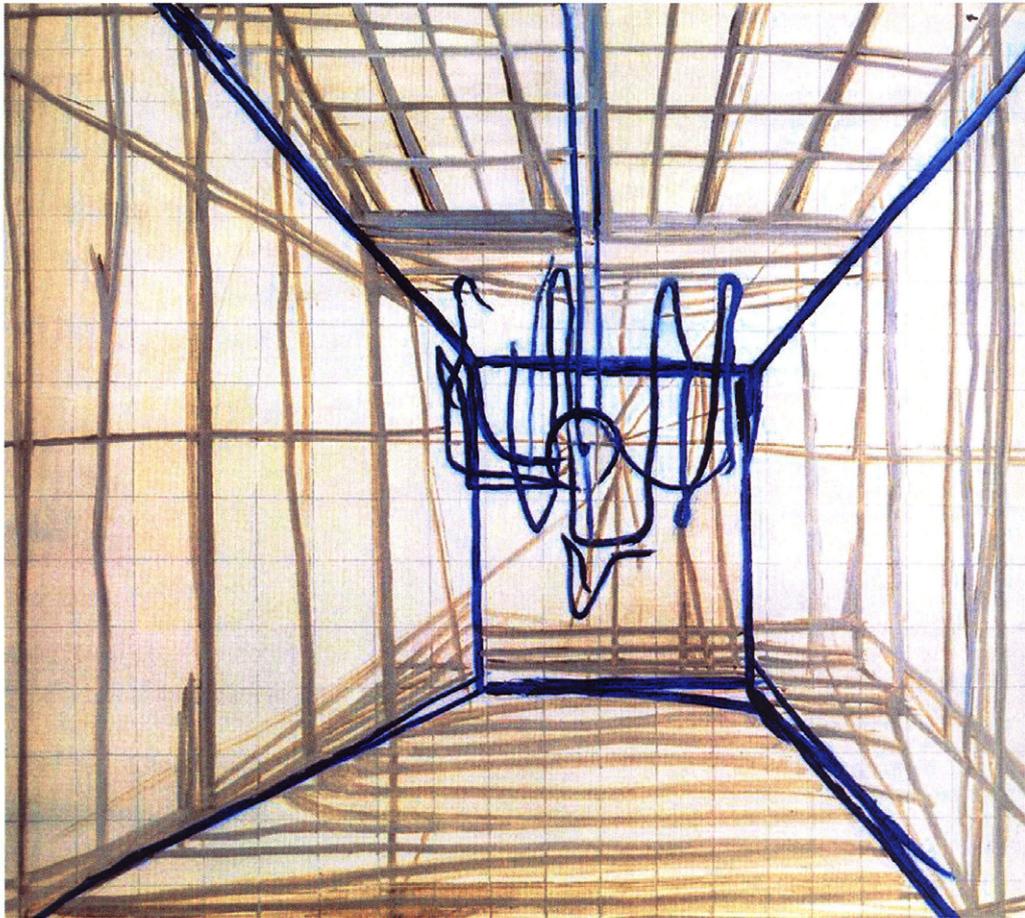


Fig. 2 . *Antichamber*, Luc Tuymans, 1985. Oil on canvas. 65 x 72 cm. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp.<sup>6</sup>

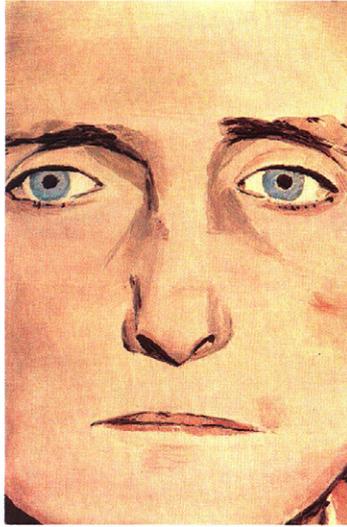
Tuymans denies the possibility of an original representation. For him, every image already exists, painting is irrevocably belated. All that possibly remains is 'authentic forgery',<sup>7</sup> and in fact, almost all Tuymans' works are drawn from photographs, archives, memories, film-stills and television images<sup>8</sup>.

Tuymans paintings often refer to images stored in our collective memory and conscience. His search for these images is the foundation for his projects and it allows him to communicate horror that is impossible to show by narrative paintings.

<sup>6</sup> Painting inspired by film.

<sup>7</sup> Tuymans explains that as an 18 year old he painted a self portrait which he was particularly proud of. When he later saw a self portrait of James Ensor which was almost identical in his content to his, he understood the impossibility of making an original painting. Thus he created the notion 'authentic forgery' as a commitment to painting and as a signal of its 'belated' quality.

<sup>8</sup> Tuymans explains that, more than the photographic material, the idea for a representation matters. Once the material found, he will start working on it by drawings, Polaroid pictures (already deforming it), maquettes,.. all to find out which representation he will give to the image. After a long process he will finally paint his reaction on the photographic image. Interview with Luc Tuymans, *Dwars*, Students magazine from the University of Antwerp, n. 32, 6th year, 2006-2007



Linked with the notion of belatedness of paintings and limitations of representations, Tuymans paints deliberately in a weak style that breaks completely with his virtuosity. We see ‘painterly clumsiness’<sup>910</sup>: awkwardness by peculiar use of short brushstrokes (see *Der diagnostische Blick IV*), drawings which often seem rigid, uncertain or slightly distorted. As Tuymans paints on flat canvas, his modeling has no depth. The compositions are simple, more has been deleted than added (empty rooms), often restricted to the presentation of one frontal object. The paintings themselves are executed in no more than one day.

Fig. 3. Luc Tuymans, *Der diagnostische Blick IV*, 1992, courtesy Zeno X Gallery Antwerp

Although Tuymans verbally is very explicit about content matters, the works themselves are very evasive and deceptive. They are figurative yet they are not narrative, they seem simple and yet they are difficult to read. They all need knowledge of the title, a subtext explaining the subject, because all – image, title and text – work together. Even then they require decoding as plenty of painterly clues and allusions are there to be discovered.

Tuymans always tries to give his paintings meanings which go further than what he is representing. To reach this he often provokes recognition or an emotional shock by communicating with our collective memory. As a consequence, a precise reading of Tuymans’ paintings will always be impossible and every attempt will prove very subjective. It is important to stress this as later on, this essay will attempt to analyse the political content of different paintings.

<sup>9</sup> Ulrich Loock, On layers of sign-relations, in the light of mechanically reproduced pictures, from ten years of exhibitions. in Ulrich Loock, Juan Vicente Aliaga, Nancy Spector, Hans Rudolf Reust, *Luc Tuymans*, Phaidon, London, 1996, this edition 2005, pp 38

<sup>10</sup> ‘he seems to have come to the conclusion that painting’s ‘failure’ is its strength’ Camelia Gupta, Anger, passion & artifice – Tuymans at Tate Modern, 05.08.2004 [www.24hourmuseum.org.uk](http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk)

## **POLITICAL PAINTER**

In Belgium, Tuymans is considered to be a political painter because of his paintings about the Holocaust, Flemish nationalism, Belgian Colonialism, American society and so on. To investigate the validity of this public opinion we must first define what is perceived by the term 'Political Art'.

Instead of exploring the interesting debate around what is, is not, can, can not, should and should not be 'Political Art', I will use a wide workable definition; Lucy Lippard's<sup>11</sup>. According to her; political art comments (often in a metaphorical approach) on socio-political and political issues and does so to enhance the consciousness of the onlookers (mainly the Fine Art public). Works can do so in a direct, explicit, or in a concealed, subversive, manner.

In the following section I will examine several of Tuymans' series in terms of their political load. I will review a number of select paintings from each, which seem politically most important, and conclude with my personal interpretations.

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<sup>11</sup> Article: Politieke Kunst, [www.kunstbus.nl/verklaringen/politieke-kunst.html](http://www.kunstbus.nl/verklaringen/politieke-kunst.html)

Lucy Lippard, born 1954, New York, is a cultural critic who has been described as a feminist, art critic, theorist and political activist. She is the author or editor of over two dozen books.

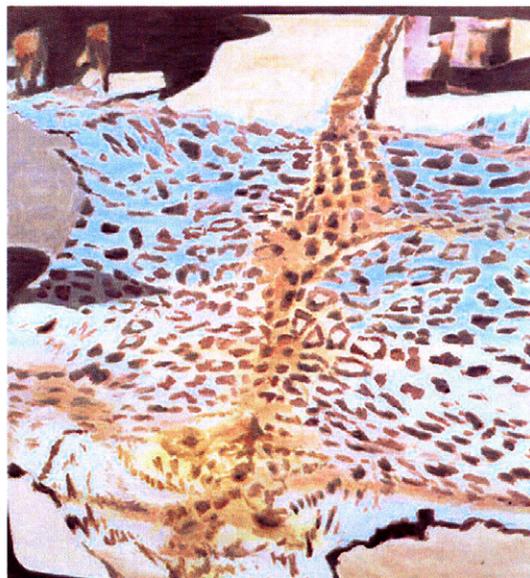
## MWANA KITOKO (Beautiful White Man)

In 2001, Tuymans participated in the Venice Biennial with 'Mwana Kitoko'. This series addresses Belgium's undigested colonial past at the moment that the Lumumba Commission<sup>12</sup> presented his final report in Brussels on the involvement of the Crown and government in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba<sup>13</sup> in 1960.

With the title, Tuymans shrewdly refers to the rather mollifying nickname 'Mwana Kitoko', i.e. beautiful/cute boy, which was given to Belgium's young King Baudouin by the Congolese, and which was promptly changed by the white Congolese authorities to the hierarchic and authoritative 'Bwana Kitoko'<sup>14</sup>, i.e. beautiful, noble man<sup>15</sup>. 'Bwana Kitoko', with its language mistake, is a projection of the colonial belief that the white colonials understood the Congolese people and that the colonial authority was widely accepted and legitimated. This is symptomatic for the whole colonial mistake.

This is the most narrative of series which Tuymans made, all paintings are based on existing public images: documentaries for television, news images, photographs...

The leopard skin, a symbol of power, will be carried away (by black hands) after a uniformed man (Mobutu?) has passed. In my view this painting asks questions about Mobutu, nicknamed 'the leopard', who was also said to rest his feet on a leopard skin.



*Fig. 4 Leopard, 2000*

12 The Lumumba Commission, an initiative of the Belgian Parliament, has investigated the murder of Lumumba. Rapport of the commission :

[www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf\\_sections/comm/lmb/312\\_6\\_page\\_001\\_to\\_227.pdf](http://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf_sections/comm/lmb/312_6_page_001_to_227.pdf), 16.11.2001

13 Patrice Lumumba was the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the independent Republic of Congo in 1960. The Belgian establishment saw him as a threat for Belgian economical interests, and his brutal murder in 1961 has been linked to the CIA and the Belgian Government and Crown.

14 Here the white colonials made the mistake of using a Swahili noun with a Lingala adjective, forming thus an impossible word for the Congolese. Belgian newspapers reported enthusiastically about 'Bwana Kitoko', the Congolese people continued calling the king 'Mwana Kitoko'

15 Ex Shit Congo - Het No Man's Land van de Congolese verbeelding. Jan Blommaert, 2001-09 Afrika-Vereniging van de Universiteit Gent



*Sculpture*, shows a statue of a half naked Congolese man which Tuymans had seen in a restaurant in Antwerp. It seems as realistic and, also due to the lighting and angle (he is looking down on us), it seems very lifelike and even intimidating.

Fig. 5. *Sculpture*, 2000



*Tsjombe*<sup>16</sup> sits at ease among a group of political bureaucrats. Only Tjombe is recognizable, the others are blurred. Except for the skin color of the participants, it seems a very Western meeting to take place in Katanga in 1960.

Fig. 6 *Tsjombe*, 2000

<sup>16</sup> Tsjombe together with Mobutu will play a key role in the murder of the abducted Lumumba in Katanga.



Scene based on a documentary film on the murder of Lumumba. We see cars leaving (after the murder?) near a tree at night.

*Fig. 7*  
*Reconstruction, 2000*

This is the most gripping painting: two black hands hold, as the title suggests, two pieces of chalk or are they the two golden teeth extracted from the mouth of the murdered Lumumba?



*Fig. 8, Chalk, 2000*



Fig. 9. *Mwana Kitoko*, 2000

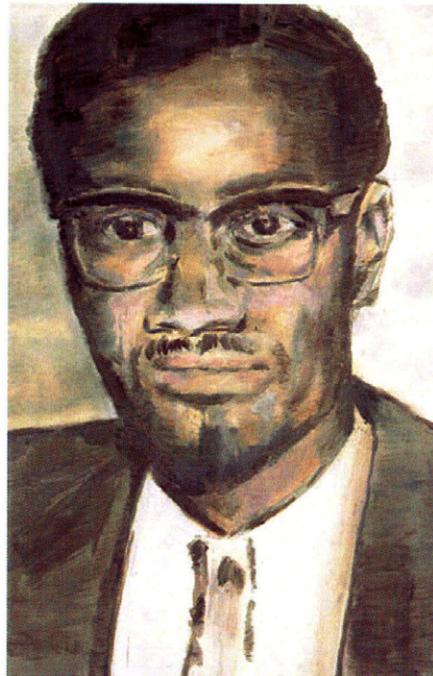


Fig. 10. *Lumumba*, 2000



Fig. 11

*Mwana Kitoko* depicts the Belgian King, in his crisp uniform, arriving for the first time in the Congo in 1950. Baudouin's face is masked by a hat and sunglasses portraying the anonymity of colonial control. Despite all symbols of power (uniform, attributes), he gives us an impression of lack of confidence.

In contrast with Baudouin, Lumumba looks explicitly at us. And we get more involved in this mysterious figure. He has a remarkably Western look; suit and glasses in the fifties fashion, even his face is painted slightly more Caucasian. His demeanour is remarkably self-assured yet friendly contrasting with the insecure Baudouin. It suggests that Tuymans wants to confront us with the hypothesis of the black intellectual<sup>17</sup> – a sheer impossibility in the collective memory of the white man, where the African black people were believed to be disadvantaged savages, uneducated and below the 'White race'.

Questions are raised by the use and meaning of white in the paintings in parallel with the title. Tuymans uses white to touch up Lumumba's dark face.

<sup>17</sup> Article found on internet. Hilde Van Gelder, The present-day scholar : an (im)possible representation?, [www.imageandnarrative.be/worldmusica/hildevangelder.htm](http://www.imageandnarrative.be/worldmusica/hildevangelder.htm)

Baudouin seems to shine an unnatural white, his face is darkened considerably while Lumumba's is lightened. If the 'white' in the title suggests the symbolic meaning of purity or cleanliness, to whom is it referring?

In this series Tuymans presents us, in my view, with beautiful paintings. Are they political? In interview, Tuymans made clear that he used the platform of the Belgian pavilion to ask urgent questions about a part of Belgian History that was pushed aside and this gave 'Mwana Kitoko' a pronounced political character.

In the series, Tuymans addresses the Belgian ideological and popular-cultural distortions about colonial Congo. There is the stately, imperial Baudouin - yet painted as in a self supporting suit - who was not considered a real man by the Congolese<sup>18</sup>. There is the invented story by Mobutu about the Congolese leopard tradition. The exhibition of 'primitive' African objects in Flemish interiors is questioned, as the only 'savage' African that Tuymans shows is the Antwerp restaurant statue.

Tuymans also asks direct political questions in the form of a portrait of Lumumba, the murder scene and the always smiling, but blurred Tsjombe. Most intriguing are the little black hands with white chalk, celebrating the colonial achievement of bringing civilisation in the form of education<sup>19</sup>. However the painting could be read as the two gold teeth extracted from Lumumba's mouth after the murder. The different meanings together shock us, we feel that the distortions in our memories about Congo are not at all that innocent.

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<sup>18</sup> As he was not married and very young indeed

<sup>19</sup> At the moment of the Independency in 1960, there were 13 Congolese with a university degree on a population of 13 million people, thus the painting can also be read as the failure of the imposing of Western schooling and culture in Africa

## HEIMAT

In the 'Heimat' series, 1995, Heimat meaning homeland, Tuymans takes on Flemish icons in connection with the Flemish movement for emancipation, Flemish nationalism and collaboration with the Germans during the Second World War.

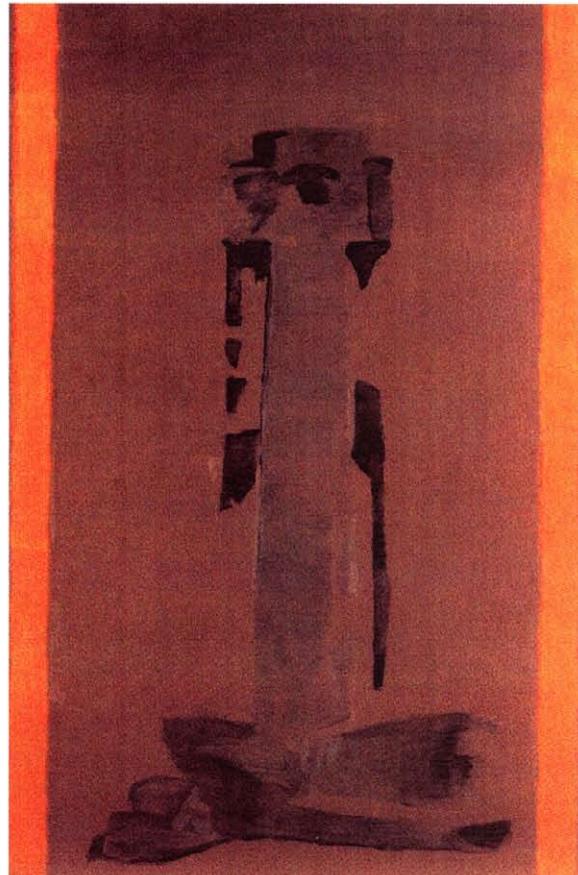


*The flag*, derived from a Polaroid photograph of a watercolour picture and shows a blurred Flemish flag. The all important yellow and black colours are gone and replaced by Tuymans' trade mark tones of white and grey. The emblem of the lion disappears in the limp folds of cloth as the flag hangs from a wall – not waving proudly in the sky.

Fig. 12 *The flag*, 1995

*Yzer-Tower*, depicts a controversial place of pilgrimage in Belgium for the right-wing nationalistic movement but was once a monument for the Flemish fallen in the First World War. It is shadowy, to the point of disappearing, disintegrating into a near abstract painting.

Fig. 13 *Yzer-Tower*, 1995



*Flemish Village* is based on an existing oil painting. It looks stiff, unnatural and artificial and Tuymans deliberately added yellowing and cracking to give a false impression of authenticity.

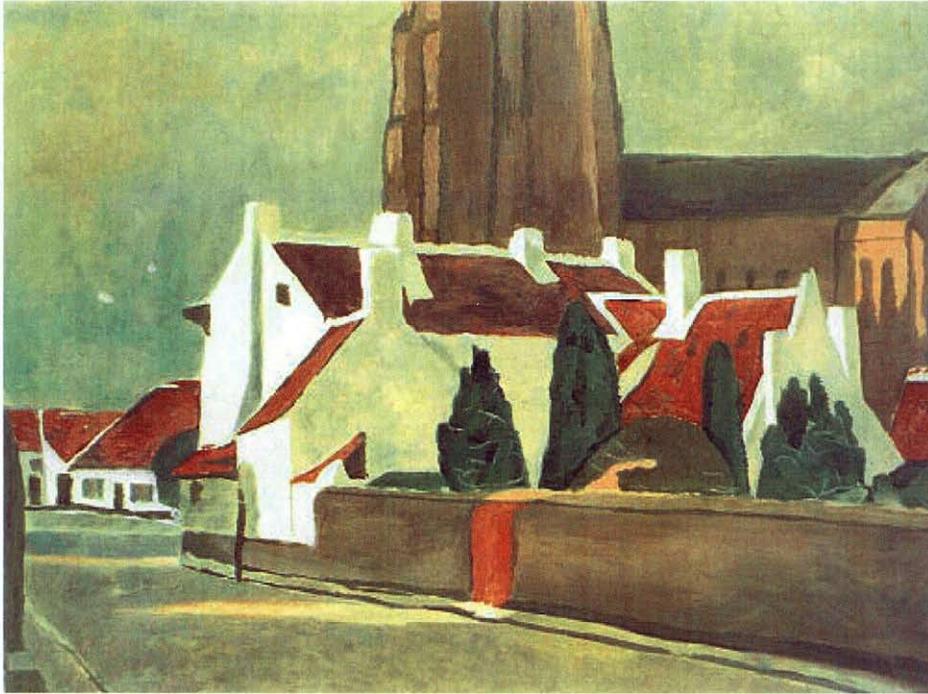


Fig. 14 *Flemish Village*, 1995

*A Flemish Intellectual*, portrays Ernest Claes<sup>20</sup>, a Flemish writer, in a very scanty way. It is as if Tuymans had already grown tired of the subject before starting. In an interview, Tuymans explains that ‘I have depicted him as though he is lacking in identity. The face is not really a face; it is more than a masked image. Nationalism is for me like a mask: unmovable, and quit hollow’<sup>21</sup>.

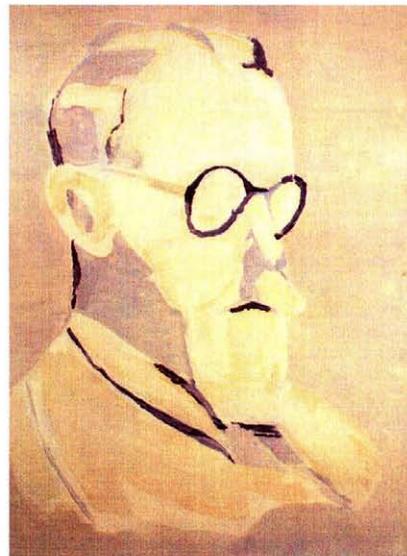


Fig. 15 *A Flemish Intellectual*, 1995

<sup>20</sup> Who was accused of collaboration with the Nazi Occupators but not convicted.

<sup>21</sup> Luc Tuymans, Interview with Juan Vicente Aliaga in Ulrich Looock, Juan Vicente Aliaga, Nancy Spector, Hans Rudolf Reust, *Luc Tuymans*, Phaidon, London, 1996, this edition 2005, pp131

All of these paintings, by pictorial means such as ironic, impotent or artificial presentation, dismantles a once strong Flemish symbol. Put together in the 'Heimat' series, this comes down to a deconstruction of Flemish nationalism itself and Tuymans has turned his paintings into bearers of political commitment.

I think that this series is a very specific protest against past and contemporary Flemish nationalism and Tuymans confirms this explicitly<sup>22</sup>.

Tuymans also made an undeniable political gesture by organising this exhibition in 1995 in Antwerp, where the ultra-rightist and nationalist Vlaams Blok had just obtained 28% of the vote in the elections<sup>23</sup>. He explains: 'The 'Heimat' series was a very specific series originating from a feeling of disgust for the 'Vlaams Blok'. I could have organised the exhibition in New York where it would have been a form of exotism. ... Therefore I did it in a gallery in Antwerp and the reactions were in fact quite sharp.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 31

<sup>23</sup> Municipal elections 1994 October 9<sup>th</sup>,

<sup>24</sup> Interview Humanistisch Vrijzinnige organisaties Vlaanderen Radio 1 Transcription [www.vrijzinnighumanisme.be/5\\_radio-tv/513\\_radio040726.htm](http://www.vrijzinnighumanisme.be/5_radio-tv/513_radio040726.htm)

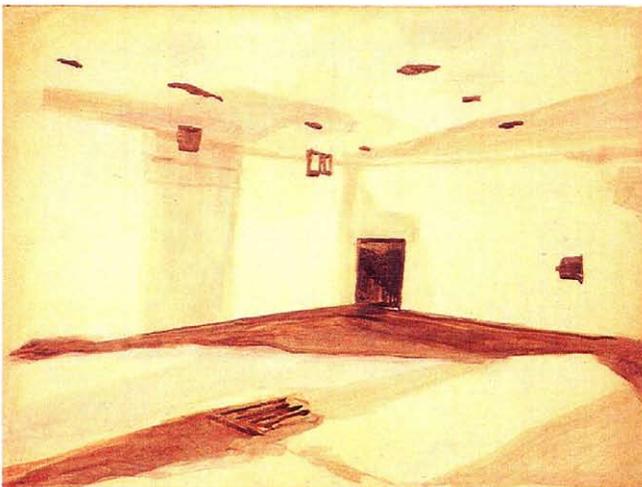
## NAZISM

Throughout his career, Tuymans has painted many works related to Nazism, some featuring in important exhibitions. In spring 2001, the exhibition 'Signal' in the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, presented 40 (!) works covering this period in Germany. The catalogue had the form of the former Nazi magazine 'Signal'. The cool, detached way in which atrocities like a gas chamber are depicted, provoked many reactions, however, the exhibition was very successful.



*Auschwitz* shows the arched opening through which bodies were thrown into the gas ovens. This representation is poorly done, as if in shorthand and tends towards abstraction and this doubles the onlookers' feelings of terror and helplessness in the face of this historical reality<sup>25</sup>.

Fig. 16. *Auschwitz*, 1979



*Gas Chamber* represents a gas chamber of Mauthausen. The perspective is not stable and so the room does not seem right. With warm colours, the picture seems to radiate both human warmth and fear. Tuymans says that this is actually its meaning; the picture disguises something that is absolutely inaccessible if not in disguise.

Fig. 17 *Gas chamber*, 1986

<sup>2525</sup> Ulrich Loock, Survey, in Ulrich Loock, Juan Vicente Aliaga, Nancy Spector, Hans Rudolf Reust, *Luc Tuymans*, Phaidon, London, 1996, this edition 2005. pp 44

‘Tuymans does not realise history in terms of monumental, world-shaking scenes but rather in the traumatic details. Even the *Gas Chamber*, the epitome of the crime scene, shows nothing of the actual deed; it is the title that unexpectedly short-circuits the ordinariness of the view of a room with our knowledge of the horrors that took place there. The shock does not derive from what we actually see, but from that intolerable ambivalence between banality and horror’<sup>26</sup>



Fig. 18 Luc Tuymans, *The Architect*, 1997, courtesy Zeno X Gallery Antwerp

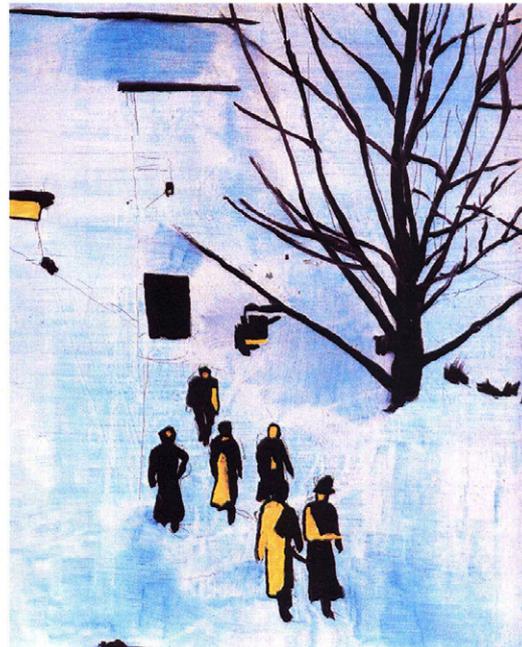
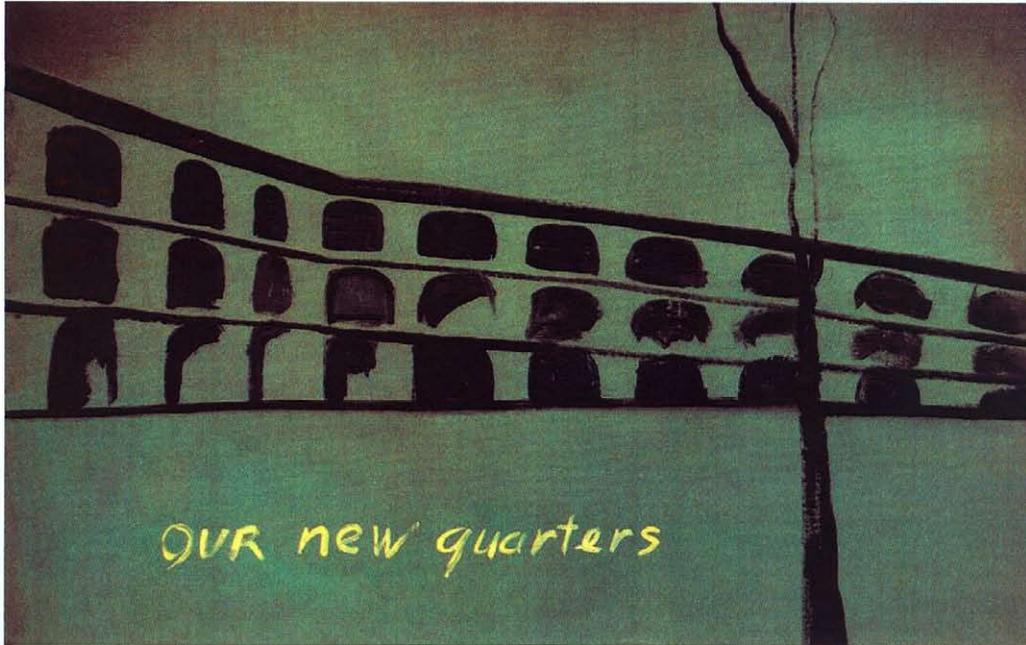


Fig. 19 *Walking*, 1989

The fallen skier in *The Architect*, derives from a film-still of Albert Speer, the architect of the Third Reich. It was filmed by his wife during a skiing holiday. An image of walkers in the snow, *Walking*, is taken from a known picture of Hitler and his entourage in Berchtesgaden. These paintings reveal Tuymans’ fascination with the banality of evil, the ordinariness of those who commit terrible crimes.

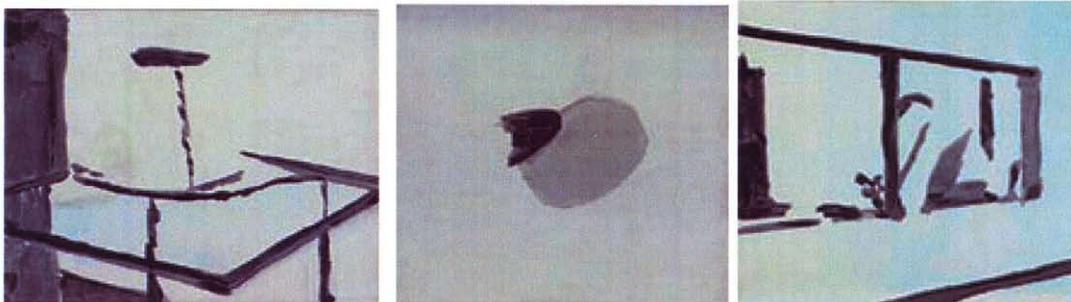
<sup>26</sup>Update, Hans Rudolf Reust, *Luc Tuymans* in Ulrich Loock, Juan Vicente Aliaga, Nancy Spector, Hans Rudolf Reust, *Luc Tuymans*, Phaidon, London, 1996, this edition 2005, pp 172

Fig. 20 *Our new Quarters*, 1986



*Our new Quarters*, is based on the memory of a postcard of Theresienstadt; a 'model' camp that the Nazis used as decoy for the true concentration camps. Prisoners were encouraged to send these post-cards home to disseminate Nazi lies about the camps. Tuymans describes 'the background' as depressing and the words of false hope as inadequate in explaining the drawing<sup>27</sup>. Even without the help of external discourse, we perceive the whole picture as hopeless.

Fig. 21 *Investigations*, 1998



*Investigations* is a triptych referring to the Holocaust by indirect hints, and we need Tuymans' explanations to realise their horror<sup>28</sup>. The lampshade, tooth and

<sup>27</sup> Ulrich Loock, Survey, in Ulrich Loock, Juan Vicente Aliaga, Nancy Spector, Hans Rudolf Reust, *Luc Tuymans*, Phaidon, London, 1996, this edition 2005 p 55

<sup>28</sup> 'Investigations consist of three different pictures, and contains a memory of things I've seen. ... In the first picture you see a lampshade on a glass table. In Buchenwald I saw lampshades made from human skin. ... A usable object emerges from death. ... In the middle picture what you first see is a death's head. But it's

laboratory all refer to the terrifying Nazi experiments with human bodies of prisoners; an evocation of death.

The works are painted as in the manner of a still life, yet the lines and black areas give the impression of a photocopy. There is again the paradox between works that evoke a banality through the way it was painted, yet the banality is an incredible reality.

Are Tuymans Nazism paintings political? What is their message?

In these paintings, Tuymans confronts us with the horrors of the German Nazi period without showing them. We see no victims, no horrific actions, yet Tuymans uses all sorts of painterly means to double the impact the moment we realise which horror the painting is about.

However, the problem with Tuymans' paintings is that the full range of possible interpretations is impossible without external explications. They can be read and explained using the pictorial clues which are in the painting<sup>29</sup>, yet without information, they are less powerful and without much sense. Once we have the title, we see the gas chamber. Once we have the stories behind the paintings, we can start realising. Once we read the interpretations by experts about the means used by Tuymans to represent the full scale of horror, we can start admiring the paintings in all facets.

Are the paintings political? Yes, they force us to remember the horrors of Nazism, they warn us about the banality of evil and the unsettling normality of criminals. Furthermore they attack the taboo on not painting the Nazi horrors because it is too big; it is a political gesture.

Nonetheless, Tuymans does not make a statement. He lets the audience relate to their memory and make their own interpretations, which, arguably, could be anything.

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actually an X-ray of a diseased tooth. The last picture represents a display-case I saw in Auschwitz, containing various fabrics made of human hair. Again, a material used in a form of cannibalism'. Artist's writings, Luc Tuymans in Ulrich Loock, Juan Vicente Aliaga, Nancy Spector, Hans Rudolf Reust, *Luc Tuymans*, Phaidon, London, 1996, this edition 2005, pp 126

<sup>29</sup> JOHN TUSA: But in that particular painting if we don't know that it is Albert Speer, Hitler's architect, then the painting is much less interesting and much less powerful, so we'd miss an enormous amount.

LUC TUYMANS: If you don't know what you're looking at you will see a person in the snow. You will see that at the borders of the painting there is a sort of bluishness, a sort of radiant bluish image that gives you the idea of projected image, so you will, you will know you are looking at something that has been mediated or is delivered through the media towards you. Looking at the pointed shapes of the skis you will see that it is somewhat dated, it's not a new skiing gear or whatever, and it's also reductive in its size. Looking through the blocked offness of the sort of collage nearly blocked offness of the face that it is in deterrent that you look at it, you recognise the element of failure but as an open gap, you have to fill it in.

## AMERICA: 'Proper' and 'Still life'

In the 'Proper' series of 2005, Tuymans is said to 'put forth the image of a fragile America and the crumbling state of current affairs'<sup>30</sup>.

Fig. 23 *The Secretary of State*, 2005



*The Secretary of State* confronts us with the cropped, larger-than life-sized face of Condoleezza Rice, looking in the distance, away from the onlookers. In an interview, Tuymans emphasizes that the subject of the painting is not Rice, but the first black women in this position of power. As we know little about her, he wants us to look very closely and we see willpower, race, constriction and the irony that 'those in the Bush administration would consider the painting earnest and complimentary and those opposed to it would find it ironic and ominous'<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Press release by Gallery David Zwirner, Exhibition Luc Tuymans : *Proper* [www.davidzwirner.com](http://www.davidzwirner.com)

<sup>31</sup> Jerry Saltz, Mr. System and Dr. Death, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005  
[www.villagevoice.com/art/0545,saltz2,69731,13html](http://www.villagevoice.com/art/0545,saltz2,69731,13html)

Fig. 22 *Still life, 2002*

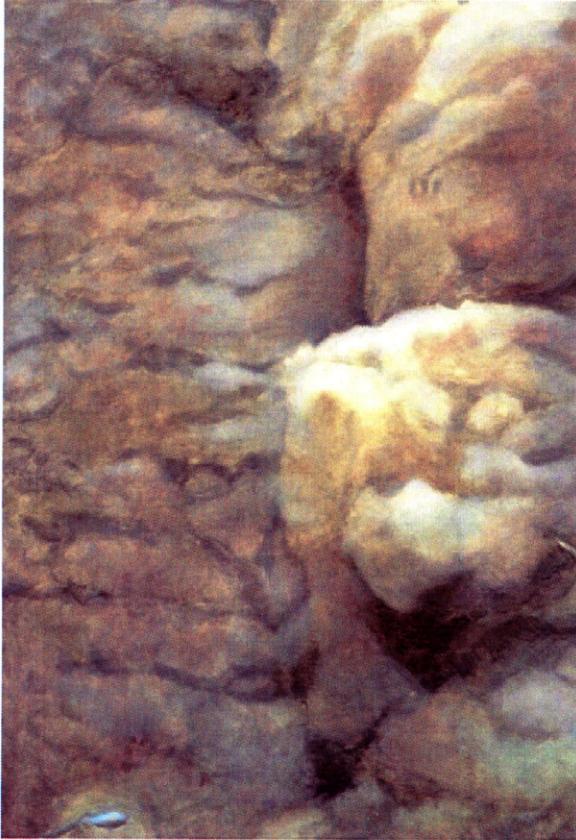


Still life (347 x 500cm!) was initially made for the 2002 Documenta, Luc Tuymans was expected to present paintings of images relating to 9/11. What he decided to show was a giant still life<sup>32</sup>. The sheer scale makes the contemplation of this painting almost impossible: a vast canvas representing an absolute nothingness. Tuymans ignores in this painting all reference to world events as a deliberate strategy of sublimation. 'It became clear to me that the pictures about 9/11 are fantastically precise. Those attacks were also an assault on aesthetics. That gave me the idea of reacting with a sort of anti-picture, with an idyll, albeit an inherently twisted one.'<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Tuymans explains furthermore in an other interview : I wanted to react with an element of restoration but one with a twist in terms that is would be the lowest category in painting which is the still life hierarchically but blown out of proportions.' BBC3 The John Tusa interview with Luc Tuymans, 28 July 2005.  
[www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview)

<sup>33</sup> Luc Tuymans , Interview with Luc Tuymans by Julian Heynen, Tate Publishing, 2004, pp 13

Fig. 24 *Demolition*, 2005



*Demolition* is a magnificent work depicting the demolition of an apartment block in Chicago. Thick, billowing dust raises towards the onlookers what, because of the implied scale with the tiny lamppost in the left corner, immediately suggests the collapsing of the World Trade Centre. *Demolition* is simultaneously an image of something you've never seen and can't forget, and that never existed. Demolition might only be an image of a construction site, but it's a reminder that all clouds contain traces of what we saw that morning: a glimpse of the end.'<sup>34</sup>

When asked whether by painting this series he is a political painter, Tuymans answers that of course life on itself is about politics. However he adds that he does not want to moralize about the current state of the USA, he only wanted his paintings to raise some question marks and show that multiple interpretations are possible<sup>35</sup>. Maybe Tuymans indeed invites us to reflect on the possible 'crumbling state of affairs' in the States, yet I feel disappointed by the lack of critical questions and I do not see many interpretations.

While the States reacted to 9/11 with a war, Tuymans reacted with a still life as an painter, not as a political artist.

<sup>34</sup> Jerry Saltz, Mr. System and Dr. Death, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005  
[www.villagevoice.com/art/0545,saltz2,69731,13.html](http://www.villagevoice.com/art/0545,saltz2,69731,13.html)

<sup>35</sup> Radio 1, 31-10-2005, Tuymans sells Condoleezza Rice

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The series I have analysed could be called ‘political’ for obvious reasons. However, some art critics have serious doubts about this and their arguments are not without grounds.

The series ‘Heimat’ and ‘Mwana Kitoko’ together with the paintings about Nazism and the Holocaust comment on political troubled times and do so to question the consciousness of the onlooker. They are therefore clearly political.

For me, it was a little unsettling that the ‘American’ paintings also got the label ‘political’ in Art reviews, as, in my eyes, these are the least of all political. I think that Tuymans can not be as sharp as in other series because his memory about the past and current States, and the collective memory on which he plays, do not completely match. As a result, he does not always find the most meaningful icons nor can he lay enough double meanings. ‘Demolition’ on the other hand is easy (albeit not less gripping) as we have all seen and felt the beginning of the possible end.

If there are precise political messages which Tuymans wants to convey, they are neither explicit nor always apparent. Hence, if the audience wants to see the political content and explore the layers of meaning hidden in the paintings, they must accept to use the painterly keys that Tuymans offers combined with external data (title, catalogue, interviews and Art reviews). Analysing the political content of the paintings will thereby become very exciting (on a political, as well as artistic level). Yet, not all Art critics agree.

An essay by Bunny Smedley<sup>36</sup> questions whether Tuymans really cares about the ‘political’ content. She claims that he paints with explicit lack of passion or sympathy. In her opinion Tuymans appears to ‘*hold up his work for admiration and aesthetic enjoyment*’ on the one hand, while on the other hand ‘*he avoids analysis, judgement or condemnation.*’<sup>37</sup>

I think Smedley is right; there is not much passion or sympathy felt when viewing a Tuymans painting. Yet, this derives from his style and his concept about how reality or subjects can be painted. Crying and the bare display of misery is done by the media, and Tuymans has a deep distrust of this depiction of reality. He has his concept of using existing pictures to deconstruct reality and then paint it while adding layers of meaning and referring to our collective memory. Tuymans concedes that this work is very cerebral and that no

36 Bunny Smedley, *The good, the bad and the beautiful*. 2004 for Electric Review. Bunny Smedley has a doctoral degree in history from Cambridge University and was co-founder of Electric review, Britain's first High Tory online journal of politics, art and literature.

37 Ibid.

emotions are allowed. Yet the result, albeit not expressionistic in any way, shocks the viewer into recognition leaving them disgusted or fearful. In this respect, the criticism that Tuymans' paintings '*do not convey us to a more beautiful and better place*'<sup>38</sup> nor '*make better people of us*'<sup>39</sup> is very correct. This is not his intention and his view on the state of the world shining through his paintings is pessimistic indeed.

Nevertheless, I can not agree with Smedley's remark on Tuymans' avoidance of analysis, judgement or condemnation. Painting is not writing historical essays and a painter should not intend to analyse the totality of the topic that he paints<sup>40</sup>. Judgement and condemnation is another matter. Does Tuymans judge and condemn the Holocaust? Could a Neo-Nazi see and understand the Holocaust paintings and go away utterly convinced that Tuymans agrees with Hitler's horrors? No, Tuymans shocks us so much by forcing us to remember the horrors that there is not the slightest doubt.

This brings us to the argument that Tuymans is maybe a Political Artist, but, because he plays on rather local issues, he can not reach the world with his insights. I think this is correct. Japanese people, for example, could not understand the 'Heimat' series, because they do not know about the history of the Flemish Movement. They can not possibly link any painting to the significance-loaded icons of Flemish nationalism.

As another example, and with the same logic; it can be very difficult for Americans to understand 'Mwana Kitoko'. They do not share the collective memory upon which Tuymans relies to lay out his layers of meaning.

Tuymans therefore has to present his messages to the right public. As I wrote earlier, the series 'Heimat' was exhibited in Antwerp. The paintings on the Holocaust and Nazism were especially shown in Germany, and Tuymans chose the Belgian Pavilion at the 46th Venice biennial for 'Mwana Kitoko'<sup>41</sup>. Lastly, the paintings commenting on the United States are shown to the American public.

This answers the initial question about Tuymans caring for the political content; he clearly does, as he shows the political paintings to those who can understand them.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> I think that Picasso in *Guernica* did not analyse the Spanish Civil war nor the reasons that led to German bombardment of the Basq village, that David in *Marat* did not analyse Jacobin ideals nor the reasons why he thought Marat was a martyr, I do not think that Manet analyses the politics of Bonaparte III in his *Execution of Emperor Maximilian* (1868) the politics ....

<sup>41</sup> Previous to the Venice biennial, Tuymans has shown the *Mwana Kitoko* in New York. As he was afraid of a refusal by Belgian officials (as had happened to an other artist the biennial before) he wanted to show he paintings in advance.

Smedley also doubts Tuymans' political credence as he paints for the *'art-world ... without actually saying anything with which it is possible to disagree'*<sup>42</sup>. It is true that most contemporary paintings are viewed by a relatively small and quite liberally-minded circle who will agree with Tuymans' interpretations. However, there have been many different political reactions to the 'Heimat' exhibition in Antwerp. In Flanders today it is still possible to disagree with Tuymans, and this has driven him into becoming a political activist<sup>43</sup>. It could even be said that solely because of the 'Heimat' series Tuymans is a 'political painter' as he directly attacks a political movement and tries to rally his public against it.

To conclude, I think Tuymans is implicit when giving political comments, he allows, and even stimulates, different interpretations of his works. With his series 'Heimat' and 'Mwana Kitoko', Tuymans had a clear political agenda and his paintings about the Holocaust and the Third Reich can not be misunderstood as anything else but a profound anti-Nazi stance. Therefore, I conclude that I found what I wanted to find : Tuymans as a political painter.

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<sup>42</sup> Bunny Smedley, The good, the bad and the beautiful. 2004 for Electric Review, in my print out p2

<sup>43</sup> In the months leading towards the last municipal elections (8th October 2006), there has been a huge concert organized by Flemish artists (pop-groups and popular singers) as an appeal for more tolerance. This was seen as an appeal against the far-right Vlaams Belang. Tuymans took the initiative for the action 'Sirene' (siren), also an appeal for tolerance, which succeeded in most Flemish museums and Art schools; at noon, all fire sirens in these buildings went off and people were asked to join discussions about the elections. Many artists as well joined the action which got large coverage in the Belgian press.

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*Schilderen voor verdraagzaamheid*, De Standaard, 23.09.2006

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## APPENDIX 1- Biography

Luc Tuymans was born in 1958 in Mortsel, Belgium, in a typical Flemish family.

From a very young age, it was clear that he would take the artistic path.

He studied from 1976 till 1982 at Belgian art schools (the Academy of Antwerp, St. Lucas and La Cambre Brussels<sup>44</sup>).

From 1978 on, Tuymans start copying old photographs in thinned-down oils and develops his personal signature style.

In 1982, while studying art history at the VUB in Brussels<sup>45</sup>, Tuymans took a two year break from painting because of, what he calls, having ‘a small crisis’<sup>46</sup> in which he no longer knew how to go on, what to paint. Instead he made black and white films.

After his studies, he continued painting and filming and to survive financially, he worked as night porter in nightclubs and discothèques.

In 1985, for his first solo exhibition<sup>47</sup>, organised in a empty swimming pool in Ostend, Tuymans sends out over a thousand invitations, tough no one attends. In 1988 however his second solo exhibition<sup>48</sup> is more successful. Nearby, a colloquium is organised for Belgian art curators, critics and organisers, near all of them see his paintings and contacts for exhibitions in Ghent and Ostend follow. In this period, Tuymans moves to the Zeno X Gallery of Frank Demaegd, which till today represents him and will play a key role in his success.

A big solo exhibition in Bern<sup>49</sup> in 1992, followed by a participation at Documenta IX in Kassel, lay a solid base for international recognition.

The following years Tuymans and Demaegd continue to conquer the German and American art market by organising exhibitions in galleries, musea, etc.<sup>50</sup> The price level of the paintings are brought to international level. The exhibition of the Lumumba series (Mwana Kitoko) in the Belgian section of the Biennale of Venice in 2001 attracts huge international attention.

The overview exhibition in 2004 in Tate Modern together with the acquisition of paintings by many contemporary art musea all over the world and record prices at Christie’s New York<sup>51</sup> establish Tuymans finally as the most influential European painter of his generation<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> 1976 to 1979 Sint Lukasinstituut Brussels, fine arts

1979 to 1980 Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels de la Cambre, Brussels, painting

1980 to 1982 Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, painting

<sup>45</sup> 1982-1986 Vrije Universiteit Brussels, art history

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Juan Vincente Aliaga, 1994, Luc Tuymans

<sup>47</sup> 1985 ‘Belgian Art review’, Palais des Thermes, Ostend

<sup>48</sup> 1988 ‘Josefine cést pas ma femme’, Ruimte Morguen, Antwerp 19 March-30 April

<sup>49</sup> 1992 ‘Luc Tuymans’, Kunsthalle, Bern, 13 March-26 April

<sup>50</sup> See Appendix 2

<sup>51</sup> 1,16 million Euro for ‘Sculpture’ in Christie’s New York, Mai 2005

<sup>52</sup> The good, the bad and the beautiful, Bunney Smedley ,  
www.socialaffairsunit.org.uk/blog/archives/000136.php

## APPENDIX 2- List of Exhibitions<sup>53</sup>

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

#### 2009

Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, USA

#### 2008

Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, USA

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA

Haus Der Kunst, Munich, Germany

#### 2007

Mucsarnok, Kunsthalle Budapest, Hungary

ZenoX Gallery & Zeno X Storage, Antwerp, Belgium

#### 2006

*Restauration*, Wako Works of Arts, Tokyo, Japan

*Luc Tuymans*, Kanazawa 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum, Ishikawa, Japan

*Luc Tuymans*, Museo Serralves, Porto, Portugal

#### 2005

Compton Verney House Trust, Warwickshire, England

*Les Gilles de Binche*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium

#### 2004

*Luc Tuymans*, Tate Modern, London, England

*Luc Tuymans*, K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany

*Tracing*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico

*Luc Tuymans*, Display Room 2, Saatchi Gallery, London

#### 2003

*The Arena*, Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover, Germany

*The Arena*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany

*The Arena*, Kunstmuseum, St. Gallen, Switzerland

*Display*, Helsinki Kunsthalle, Helsinki, Finland

*Fortune*, David Zwirner, New York, NY, USA

*Curtains: Reconstitution*, Clermont-Ferrand, France

*The Rumor: Monoprints*, Brooke Alexander Editions, New York, NY, USA

#### 2002

*Niks*, Zeno X Storage, Antwerp, Belgium

#### 2001

*The Rumour*, White Cube, London, England

*Imperfektum*, Rogaland Kunstmuseum, Rogaland, Norway

Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Germany

*Luc Tuymans*, Belgian Pavilion, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy [catalogue]

#### 2000

*Mwana Kitoko: beautiful white man*, David Zwirner, New York, NY, USA [catalogue]

*Undetermined*, Wako Works of Art, Tokyo, Japan; catalogue

*Insolence*, Wako Works of Art, Tokyo, Japan

Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium

*Luc Tuymans Sincerely*, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan [catalogue]

#### 1999

*Splendid Isolation*, White Cube, London, England

*The Purge, Paintings/1991-1998*, Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, The Netherlands

*The Passion*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerpen, Belgium

*The Purge, Paintings/1991-1998*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria

*The Purge, Paintings/1991-1998*, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany

*The Passion*, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland

*The Passion*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium

#### 1998

*Security*, David Zwirner, New York, NY, USA

<sup>53</sup> List is a compilation from Tuymans' CV's on the websites of Tuymans' art gallery in New York ([www.davidzwirner.com](http://www.davidzwirner.com)) and his art Gallery in Antwerp ([www.zeno-x.com](http://www.zeno-x.com))

## Can Luc Tuymans be Classified as a Political Painter?

- Privacy: Luc Tuymans, Miroslav Balka*, Fundação de Serralves, Porto, Portugal  
*Premonition: Works on paper*, capcMusée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France [catalogue]  
*Delayed*, Anders Tornberg Gallery, Lund, Sweden  
*Der Architekt*, Galerie Gebauer, Berlin, Germany
- 1997**  
*Premonition: Works on paper*, University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA, USA  
*Premonition: Works on paper*, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Switzerland  
*Illegitimate*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium  
*Ons Geluk: One Year's Presentation of Luc Tuymans and Dany Devos*, Breydelstraat 5, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1996  
*The Heritage*, David Zwirner, New York, NY, USA  
*Necklace*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1995**  
*Supersition*, The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA  
*Superstition*, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, England  
*Luc Tuymans. Paintings, 1978-1993*, Goldie Paley Gallery, Moore College of Art & Design, Philadelphia, PA, USA  
*Heimat*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes, France [catalogue]  
*Le Verdict*, Centre Genevois de gravure contemporaine, Geneva, Switzerland  
*'Blow Up'. Luc Tuymans. Schilderijen paintings 1985-1995*. De Pont Foundation, Tilburg, The Netherlands [catalogue]  
*The Agony*, Galerie Foksal SBWA, Warsaw, Poland  
*Heimat*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1994**  
*Indelible Evidence*, Galerie Erika and Otto Friedrich, Bern, Switzerland  
*Superstition*, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany [catalogue]  
*At random*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium  
*Superstition*, David Zwirner, New York, NY, USA  
*Superstition*, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada [catalogue]
- 1993**  
*Luc Tuymans*, Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany [catalogue]  
 Galerie Paul Andriessse, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
*Intolerance*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerpen, Belgium  
 Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremerhaven, Germany
- 1992**  
*Luc Tuymans*, Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland [catalogue]  
 Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium  
*Repulsion*, Isabella Kacprzak Gallery, Cologne, Germany
- 1991  
*Disenchantment*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium  
 Le Creux de l'Enfer, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Thiers, France
- 1990**  
 Provinciaal Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Oostende, Belgium [catalogue]  
 Vereniging voor het Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, Belgium  
*Tekeningen*, Schouwburg Gallery, Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
*Suspended*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium  
*Schilderijen 1978-1989*, Plateau, Brussels, Belgium
- 1989**  
*Zimmer Frei*, Ruimte Morguen, Antwerp, Belgium  
*A Place in the Sun*, Ruimte Morguen, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1988  
*Josefine n'est pas ma femme*, Ruimte Morguen, Antwerp, Belgium
- 1985**  
*Belgian Art Review*, Palais des Thermes, Oostende, Belgium

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS****2006**

*Extremities. Flemish art in Vladivostok*, Museum Artetage, Vladivostok, Russia  
*Contemporary Art Reflecting Medicine*, Kunstspeicher Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany  
*Imagination Become Reality V: Crossroads*, Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Germany  
*Political Realities*, Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg, Germany  
*Street: Behind the Cliché*, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, NL  
*MUTE*, Hofstraat 2, Antwerp, Belgium  
*Afrika Remix*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan  
*Leeftijdgenoten*, Roger Raveelmuseum, Machelen-aan-de-Leie, Belgium  
*NichtsNothingNadaRien*, Schrin Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany  
*Where Are We Going?: Selections from the François Pinault Collection'*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, Italy  
*We Humans are Free: From the Collection of S.M.A.K.*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent (BE)

**2005**

*Art and its Space*, Benefit Auction, Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany  
*The Triumph of Painting*, Saatchi Gallery, London, England  
*Visionair België. C'est arrivé près de chez nous*, Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, Brussels, Belgium  
*Drawing from the Modern: 1975-2005*, MOMA, New York, USA

**2004**

*Karel Appel. Onderweg-Reis van Rudi Fuchs langs de kunst der Lage Landen*, Paleis voor Schone Kunsten Brussel, Belgium  
*Carpe Artem*, Kunstproject in de stad St. Truiden, Belgium  
*Witslag*, Roger Raveel Museum, Machelen-aan-de-Leie, Belgium  
*The Undiscovered Country*, UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA  
*Contre-images*, Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France  
*Zehn Jahre Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst in Dresden e.V. 94-04*, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden, Germany  
*The Voice of Art*, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland  
*26th Biennale di Sao Paulo del Brasile*, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
*Treasure Island: 10 Years Collection Kunstmuseum*, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany  
*Not Afraid: Rubell Family Collection*, Miami, FL  
*Friedrich Christian Flick Collection*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Germany [catalogue]  
*Reinstallation of the Collection*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

**2003**

*Mental Mappings*, Kunstverein, Hannover, Germany  
*Dear Painter, Paint Me*, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany  
*The Exquisite Object*, Lucas Schoormans Gallery, New York, NY  
*Beaufort 2003 - Triennale*, PMMK – Museum Voor Moderne Kunst, Oostende, Belgium  
Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp, Belgium  
*The Ambiguity of the Image*, Art Athinai, Athens, Greece  
*Ik of een ander – zelfportretten van Belgische kunstenaars*, Passage 44, Brussels, Belgium  
*EU3*, Stephan Friedman Gallery, London, England  
*Gelijk het leven is; 50 jaar Belgische en Internationale kunst uit de Collectie*, S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium  
*Outlook*, Technopolis, Benaki Museum and Athens School of Fine Arts, Athens, Greece [catalogue]  
*An International Legacy: Selections from Carnegie Museum of Art*, Oklahoma City Art Museum, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma [itinerary: Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; USA, Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH, USA, [catalogue]  
*Zehn Jahre*, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

**2002**

*Documenta 11\_ Platform 5: Exhibition*, Museum Fridericianum Veranstaltungs-GmbH, Kassel, Germany  
*Limits of the Perception*, Fundació Miró, Barcelona, Spain  
*Transform the World 2002*, Wako Works of Art, Tokyo, Japan  
*The Unthought Known*, White Cube, London, England  
*Painting on the Move*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Switzerland [traveling to Kunstsammlung Basel and Kunstmuseum, Basel, Switzerland]

## Can Luc Tuymans be Classified as a Political Painter?

*Dear Painter, Paint Me*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France [traveling to Kunsthalle Wien, Austria and Schrin Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany]

*The Painting Room*, Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, Germany

*Time Machine*, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Switzerland

*Startkapital*, K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany

*Pressing, objectif [...]*, Antwerp, Belgium

**2001**

*I ε NY*, David Zwirner, New York, NY

*The Beauty of Intimacy*, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Netherlands

SMAK, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium

*La Biennale di Venezia 49 Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte*, Italy

**2000**

*Open Ends*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

*Of the Moment: Contemporary Art from the Permanent Collection*, Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA

*Europeans; Summer 2000*, Zwirner & Wirth, New York, NY

*Sammlung (1)*, *The Oldest Possible Memory*, Sammlung Hauser & Wirth, St. Gallen, Switzerland

*12th Biennial of Sydney*, Sydney, Australia [catalogue]

*The Memory of the Painting*, Kunsthau Aarau, Aarau, Switzerland

*Apocalypse*, The Royal Academy of Art, London, England [catalogue]

*Imperfectum*, Touring Exhibiton, Norway

*82,65% verf. Een keuze uit de aanwinsten 1991-2000*, Stadsgalerij, Heerlen, The Netherlands

**1999**

*Am Horizont*, Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, Germany

*De Kabinetten Van De Vleeshal*, De Vleeshal Gallery, Middelburg, The Netherlands

*Negotiating Small Truths*, Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas [catalogue]

*Selected Paintings, Sculpture, and Works on Paper*, Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York, NY

*Trouble Spot Painting*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, Belgium [catalogue]

*Carnegie International*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA [catalogue]

*Examining Pictures*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, England [catalogue]

*Examining Pictures*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL [catalogue]

*Two hours wide or two hours*, Through Art and Society, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, Belgium

**1998**

*Now and Forever Part I*, Pat Hearn Gallery, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, NY, USA

*The fascinating faces of Flanders. Through art and society*, Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, Portugal

*Stan Douglas, Carl de Keyser, Maria Serebriakova, Luc Tuymans, Noritoshi Hiramawa, Zeno X* Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium

*Five Years*, David Zwirner, New York, NY, USA

*Vier Temperamenten*, Galerie Gabriel Van de Weghe, Wortegem, Belgium

*Verzachtende Omstandigheden*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam, The Netherlands

*S.M.A.K. in Watou*, Watou, Belgium

*EV + A XXII*, Limerick City Gallery of Art, Ireland

*Artist's Proof*, Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, Germany

*Artist's Proof*, Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nürnberg, Germany

*Bildgewordene Wirklichkeiten*, Internationale Kunstzentrum Ostbeigien, Ostbeigien, Germany

*Shopping the Stars*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium

**1997**

*ART 28'97, Basel AND Transmitter*, Kunstverein Bonn, Bonn, Germany

*A Decade of Collecting*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA

*Artcologne 1997*, Rheinhalle, Köln, Germany

*4e Biennale de Lyon*, Halle Tony Garnier, Lyon, France

*10 Jaar aankopen, een selectie uit de collectie moderne Nederlandse schilderkunst van de Stadsgalerij Heerlen*, Stadsgalerij Heerlen, The Netherlands

*10 Jahre Stiftung Kunsthalle Bern*, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland

*De Zachte Kracht*, C.C. de bogaard, Sint-Truiden, Belgium

*Francis Picabia, Fleurs de Chair fleurs d'âme*, Galerie Hauser & Wirth, Zürich, Switzerland [catalogue]

- Future, Present, Past. 47<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition*, Venice Biennial, Corderie, Venezia, Italy [catalogue]
- La Pittura Fiamminga e Olandese*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, Italy
- Maakt kunst staat*, Provinciaal Museum Hasselt, Belgium
- Nature Morte*, Cultureel Centrum Leuven, Belgium
- Painting- The Extended Field*, Magasin 3 Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden [catalogue]
- Reality Revisited: The Memory as Longing*, Sala Montcada de la Fundació "la Caixa", Barcelona, Spain
- John Currin, Elizabeth Peyton, Luc Tuymans*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
- Été 97*, Centre genevois de gravure contemporaine, Geneva, Switzerland
- 1996**
- Some Recent Acquisitions*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
- Hebben wij het geweten? Were we Conscious, or its Conscience?*, Provinciaal Museum voor Kunsten, Hasselt, Belgium
- Ver na Vermeer: contemporary painters in the Netherlands and Flanders*, de Beyerd, Breda, The Netherlands
- Acchrochage*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
- 4x1 im Albertinum*, Albertinum, Dresden, Germany
- Face à l'Histoire*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
- Screen*, Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York, NY; curated by Joshua Decker
- Painting- The Extended Field*, Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden
- '94-'95, Kunstwerken verworven door de Vlaamse Gemeenschap in 1994 en 1995*, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp, Belgium
- Avant-première d'un musée*, Institut Néerlandais, Paris, France
- Contact Prints*, Galeria Foksal, Warsaw, Poland
- The Gramercy International Contemporary Art Fair 1996*, Gramercy Park Hotel, New York, NY
- 1995**
- ARS 95*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland
- Musée Departmental d'Art Contemporain*, Château de Rochechouart, France
- Hopeless*, CCA, Glasgow, Scotland
- Change of Scene VII*, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
- Luc Tuymans and Francis Picabia. Paintings*, David Zwirner, New York, NY
- Ripple across the water*, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan
- Een actuele prive-verzameling*, Sint-Lukasgalerij, Brussels, Belgium
- 1994**
- Unbound*, Hayward Gallery, London, England [catalogue]
- Galleri F15, Norway
- This is the Show and the Show is Many Things*, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, Belgium
- 1993**
- In Extenso/1989-1992*, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, Belgium [catalogue]
- Artfair*, Zeno X Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- Der Zerbrochene Spiegel*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria
- Het Sublieme Gemis (The Sublime Void)*, Koninklijke Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Belgium
- Menschenwelt*, Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany [itinerary: Castello di Rivara, Turin, Italy; Norwich Gallery, Norfolk Institute of Art and Design, Württembergische Kunstverein Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany; Westfälischer Kunstverein Münster, Germany] [catalogue]
- Backstage*, Kunstverein Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany
- 75 Jahre Kunsthalle Bern/Bild des Monats im Kunstmuseum*, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland
- Look in the Window*, Het Kruithuis, Stedelijk Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Art in Belgium*, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Japan [catalogue]
- Peintures Abstraites*, FRAC, Auvergne, France
- 1992**
- Selectie Belgische Kunstenaars voor Documenta IX*, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens-Deurle, Belgium
- Documenta IX*, Kassel, Germany
- Modernism in Painting*, Museum Ostende, Belgium
- Laatste tentoonstelling with De Keyser, Richter, Polke, Penck, Knoebel*, Rudolf Zwirner Gallery, Cologne, Germany

Can Luc Tuymans be Classified as a Political Painter?

**1991**

*Works on Paper*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerpen, Belgium

*Vis à Vis*, Gallery Sacre, Liege, Belgium

*Art Cologne*, Zeno X Gallery, Cologne, Germany

*Accrochage*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium

*Kunst in Vlaanderen Nu*, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp, Belgium

**1990**

*Art Cologne*, Zeno X Gallery, Cologne, Germany

**1989**

*Wahrheit und Dichtung. 4 Aus Antwerp*, Maerz Gallery, Cologne, Germany

*Paesmans, Schepers, Tuymans, Vermuyten*, CREDAC, Ivry, France

**1988**

*Doodgewoon, Beelden van de dood in de actuele kunst*, De Warande, Turnhout, Belgium

### **APPENDIX 3**

#### **List of paintings**

##### **With source**

**Fig. 1**

*Self-Portrait*, 1978. Oil on cardboard. 52,5 x 39 cm.  
Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 2**

*Antichamber*, 1985. Oil on canvas. 65 x 72 cm.  
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art. Antwerp. Belgium  
Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 3**

*Der diagnostische Blick IV*, 1992. Oil on canvas. 57 x 38  
Private collection, long loan to De Pont Foundation  
Picture from [www.zeno-x.com](http://www.zeno-x.com)

**Fig. 4**

*Leopard*, 2000. Oil on canvas. 142 x 129cm  
Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 5**

*Sculpture*, 2000. Oil on canvas. 150 x 63 cm  
Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 6**

*Tsjombe*, 2000. Oil on canvas. 73 x 108 cm  
Private collection  
Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 7**

*Reconstruction*, 2000. Oil on canvas. 111.2 x 121 cm  
Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 8**

*Chalk*, 2000. Oil on canvas. 71.4 x 60.6 cm 85,000  
Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 9**

*Mwana Kitoko*, 2000. Oil on canvas. 204.7 x 88.6 cm  
S.M.A.K., Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium  
Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 10**

*Lumumba*, 2000. Oil on canvas. 62 x 46cm  
Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 11**

*Lumumba*,  
Photograph copied from [www.sojournerstruth.com](http://www.sojournerstruth.com)

**Fig. 12**

*The Flag*, 1995. Oil on canvas. 138 x 78

Private collection

Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 13**

*Yzer-Tower*, 1995. Oil on canvas. 115,5 x 75,5.

Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 14**

*Flemish Village*, 1995. Oil on canvas. 110,5 x 144,5 cm. Collection Flemish Community.

Brussels. Belgium

Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 15**

*A Flemish Intellectual*, 1995. Oil on canvas. 89,5 x 65,5 cm.

Collection Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes. France.

Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 16**

*Auschwitz*, 1978, 110 x 90 cm, oil on canvas.

Picture from [www.dwb.be](http://www.dwb.be)

**Fig. 17**

*Gas Chamber*, 1986. Oil on canvas, 60,5 x 82,5

The Overholland Collection

Picture from [www.renaissancesociety.org](http://www.renaissancesociety.org)

**Fig. 18**

*Der Architekt*, 1997/1998,. Oil on canvas, 113 x 144

Society for Modern Art Dresden, Germany

Picture from [www.zeno-x.com](http://www.zeno-x.com)

**Fig. 19**

*Walking*, 1989. Oil on canvas. 70 x 55 cm.

Private collection Belgium

Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 20**

*Our New Quarters*, 1986. Oil on canvas. 80 x 120 cm.

Collection Museum of Modern Art. Frankfurt. Germany

Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 21**

*Investigations 1/3* 1989. Oil on canvas. 40x42 cm

*Investigations 2/3*. 1989. Oil on canvas. 40 x 40 cm

*Investigations 3/3*. 1989. Oil on canvas. 40 x 45 cm

Private Collection, New York

Picture from <http://pintura.aut.org>

**Fig. 22**

*Still-life, 2002*. Oil on canvas. 347 x 500

Private collection, Sydney, Australia

Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 23**

*The Secretary of State, 2005*. Oil on canvas . 45.5 x 61.5 x 4 cm

MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>

**Fig. 24**

*Demolition, 2005*. Oil on canvas. 165 x 113 x 4 cm

MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Picture from <http://www.davidzwirner.com>