



Smithsonian

National Museum of African Art

Mangbetu Woman photograph, EEPA 2002-007

Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art
Title:	Mangbetu Woman Photograph
Identifier:	EEPA.2002-007
Date:	1928
Extent:	1 Photographic print (silver gelatin; black & white; 27.5 x 19.2 cm.)
Language:	Undetermined .
Summary:	This collections contains one photograph taken by Elisabeth, Queen of the Belgians, of a Manbetu woman in 1928.
Container:	Box 1

Administrative Information

Provenance

Purchased, 2002.

Restrictions

Use of original records requires an appointment. Contact Archives staff for more details.

Conditions Governing Use

For study purposes only. Permission to reproduce images from the Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives must be obtained in advance. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Abstract

Bavarian-born Elisabeth, Queen of the Belgians (1876-1965), regularly photographed during her travels. A member of the Wittelsbach family, who ruled Bavaria until 1918, she shared her family's interest in travel, scholarship, and the arts.

She took the photograph during an official visit with her husband, King Albert I, to the Belgian Congo in 1928. Soon after the royal couple's return, the magazine *Illustration Congolaise* published a commemorative book entitled *Le voyage au Congo de leurs Majestés, le Roi et la Reine des Belges*. 5 juin - 31 août 1928. The first part of the book contains her images. The second part with photographs by other photographers, shows her in several pictures, holding a camera. Elisabeth left a remarkable body of technically accomplished, well-composed photographs. Among them is this portrait of a Mangbetu woman. Queen Elisabeth took it in Buta, a regional capital of the Uele District, during an official event staged for the royal travelers on the well-groomed grounds of the mission station of the P.P. Prémontrés and the Soeurs du Sacré-Coeur. The Mangbetu delegation arrived from Niangara at 450 kilometers distance from Buta to greet the royals. The woman portrayed in this image was part of a group of four Mangbetu women posing in another picture for the Queen, published in the commemorative volume (see attached Ill. 1 on the right).

The full portrait is shown in Louis Franck's 1929 deluxe two volume set *Le Congo Belge* (opp. vol. 1, p. 41; see attached Ill. 2). By then, the image, which echoes a famous picture of a Mangbetu women taken by

Georges Specht during the famous Citroën rally La croisière noire through African in 1924, had become an icon. It is among the most widely disseminated images of a Mangbetu with the famed, aureol-like coiffure. In 1931, this close-up portrait of the Mangbetu woman migrated to another medium: it became a 75 centimes postage stamp for the Belgian Congo (Ill. 3).

The stamp, part of a series of scenes showing indigenous peoples, animals and landscapes, which was also issued as a stamp booklet, was discontinued only in 1942.

The portrait is signed by Elisabeth in the front right corner in pencil. According to a note on the back of the cardboard the image was given to Julian Huxley by Elisabeth.

Arrangement

Collection consists of one photograph.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Rare photographs

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white photographs

Places:

Africa