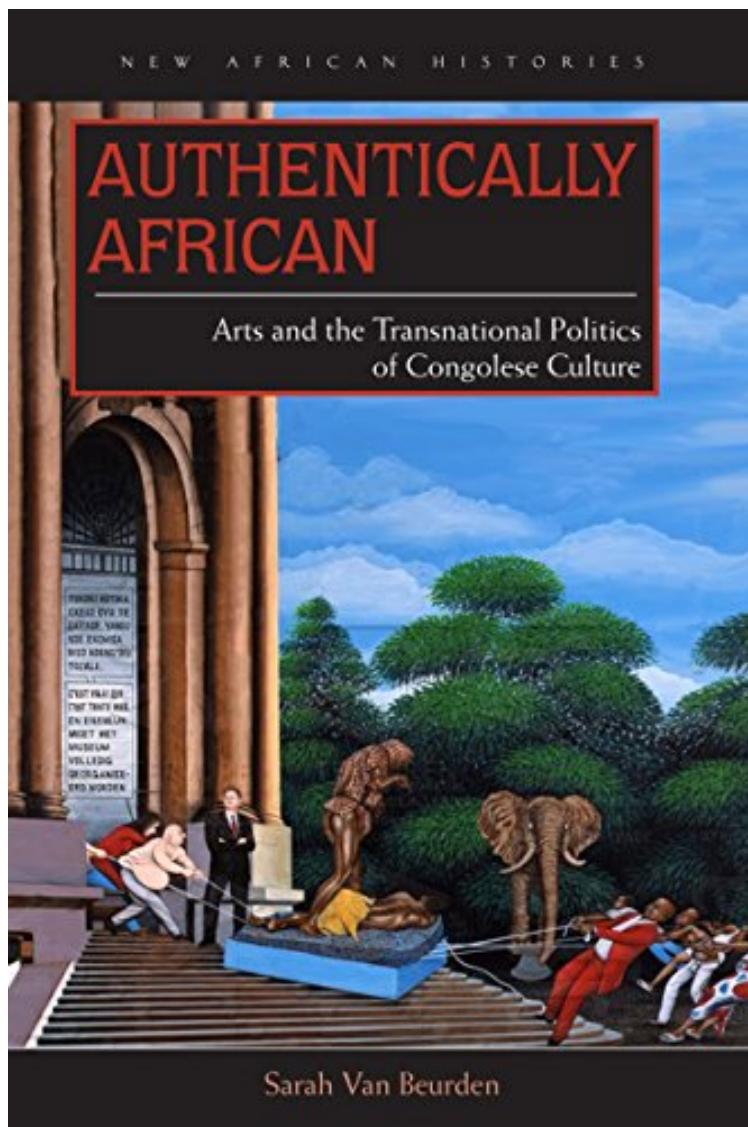


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## **Authentically African: Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture (New African Histories)**

*Sarah Van Beurden*  
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**Sarah Van Beurden : Authentically African: Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture (New African Histories)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Authentically African: Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture (New African Histories):

This masterful study of Belgian and Congolese collecting and exhibitions of African arts, and the murky heritage politics so implied, offers insights for understanding colonial and postcolonial histories of representation anywhere in the world.—Allen F. Roberts, author of *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo*Together, the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, and the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre (IMNZ) in the Congo have defined and marketed Congolese art and culture. In *Authentically African*, Sarah Van Beurden traces the relationship between the possession, definition, and display of art and the construction of cultural authenticity and political legitimacy from the late colonial until the postcolonial era. Her study of the interconnected histories of these two institutions is the only work of its kind in English. Drawing on Flemish-language sources other scholars have been unable to access, Van Beurden illuminates the politics of museum collections, showing how the IMNZ became a showpiece in Mobutu Sese Seko's effort to revive African culture and reconstructing debates among Belgian and Congolese museum professionals. She also casts light on the art market, showing how the IMNZ's traveling displays helped generate an international market for Congolese art. *Authentically African* tells a new history of decolonization as a struggle over cultural categories, the possession of cultural heritage, and the right to define and represent cultural identities.

This is an important book that fills a gap in our knowledge about museums in this geographical area as well as our understanding of the role of political ideologies, a topic which has been well covered in South Africa, for example, but not as much by scholars in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. ... An impressive analysis.—Museum Anthropology