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EXHIBITION: LUC TUYMANS "Mwana Kitoko. beautiful white man"

DATES: November 21 – December 23, 2000

Opening on Tuesday, November 21, the gallery will present new paintings by Belgian artist Luc Tuymans. The exhibition, entitled *Mwana Kitoko. beautiful white man*, is the artist's fourth solo show at the gallery. After its showing in New York, the artist will expand this body of work and exhibit it at the Belgium Pavilion of the 2001 Venice Biennale, where Luc Tuymans was chosen to represent his country.

Luc Tuymans's work has been shown widely throughout Europe and the United States. Recent solo exhibitions of his work have been held, among others, at the Tokyo City Art Gallery, Japan; the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, the Netherlands; the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; and the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland. The artist participated in last year's Carnegie International, as well as the 12th Biennial of Sydney, and his work is currently on view in London at the Royal Academy of Art in the exhibition entitled *Apocalypse*. In New York, Tuymans's work is on view at the Museum of Modern Art, as part of their current exhibition *Open Ends*.

The present exhibition, *Mwana Kitoko*, examines the colonial history of Belgium, by focusing on the colonization of Zaire, previously known as the Belgian Congo. In his 1999 book entitled *De moord op Lumumba (The death of Lumumba)*, Ludo de Witte makes the allegation that various institutions, including the Belgian government, are responsible for the 1961 murder of the Congo's first prime minister Patrice Lumumba, shortly after gaining independence. As a result of this publication, the "Lumumba Commission" was recently set up to investigate the matter further, the results of which will be finalized in February 2001.

The exhibition's title refers to the rather derogatory nickname *Mwana Kitoko*, i.e. beautiful boy, which was given to Belgian's young King Baudoin by the Congolese, and which was promptly changed by the Congolese authorities to the more respectful and authoritative *Bwana Kitoko*, i.e. beautiful, noble man. The painting entitled *Mwana Kitoko* is a life-size portrait of the 24-year old Baudouin in a crisp white suit, arriving for the first time in the Congo for a four-week triumphant procession in 1955. The authority suggested by Baudouin's uniform and his medals is contradicted by the featureless youthful face of the king, and his awkward and uncomfortable pose.

In all nine paintings in the show, Tuymans explores a politically charged subject matter by employing a subtle and remote realization of specific events and people. Although the subject matter in this work refers specifically to regional history, the artist's choice of paintings for this group of work invites parallels to recent American history. The racial divide apparent in the United States, reverberates throughout this body of work. The artist's stance is remote, neither accusatory nor moralizing, yet the urgency of these paintings cannot be denied.

The gallery has published a full-color, 30-page catalogue in conjunction with the exhibition with text by Philippe Pirotte, which delves deeper into the Lumumba controversy. Catalogues are available at the gallery.

Please contact the gallery at 212 966 9074