



# TARZAN!

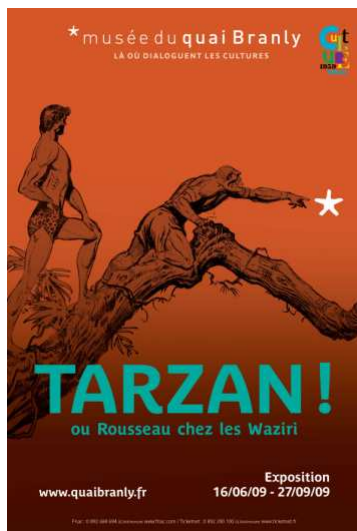
or Rousseau and the Waziri

16/06/09 - 27/09/09

Exhibition Portfolio  
East Suspended Gallery

Exhibition curator: Roger Boulay

Set design: Agence Fantastic – Stéphane Maupin and Nicolas Hugon  
Original soundtrack: Cyril Lefebvre and Claire Thiebault



Tarzan was real literary phenomenon from the very first book published in 1912, and soon appeared in comic strips, radio programmes, television series and films. The character, who features in many media such as posters, figurines, CDs and even games, continues to fascinate and fuel our vision of an imaginary, fantasy Africa.

In the exhibition *Tarzan! or Rousseau with the Waziri*, the Musée du Quai Branly, in collaboration with the Centre International de la Bande Dessinée et de l'Image (International Centre for Comic Books and Image), explores the myth embodied by this popular icon.

Through a series of objects from the collections of several French museums, as well as original comic strips, photos, excerpts of films, etc., the exhibition allows the public to discover the legend of Edgar Rice Burroughs' famous character in the collective images and representations he embodies, which are the cornerstones of some of the greatest legends of our age.

## \* EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Edgar Rice Burroughs was born in 1875 in Chicago. At first he wanted to enter the military, but gave up after failing the entrance exam for West Point. He then had a string of jobs that gave him his **taste for adventure: train conductor, gold miner, etc.** He then began writing, and published his first novel *Under the Moons of Mars* in 1912 in the "All Story" magazine. In October of the same year, *Tarzan of the Apes* was published, the first of the 26 novels about the famous "Ape-man". Edgar Rice Burroughs died in 1950, having published more than **90 volumes** in his lifetime, and having created other legendary characters found in the tales of Venus, the Pellucidar cycle and the adventures of John Carter.

*"It was as though I had been suddenly snatched back through countless ages to a long-dead past, and dropped into the midst of the prehistoric life of my Paleolithic progenitors"*

*"Tarzan thought of the fragile frontier between the primitive and the civilised".*

Edgar Rice Burroughs

## \* THE MYTH OF TARZAN

Edgar Rice Burroughs had never been to Africa, but in creating Tarzan, he was inspired by many legends, characters such as the jungle boy in Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*, the good savage, the lost Eden, the myth of the Great Ape (King Kong) or even the ancient Greek hero Hercules. He made Tarzan a real modern Western superhero/superman living in an imaginary and idealised Africa in which he accomplishes increasingly incredible exploits in adventure after adventure.

Edgar Rice Burroughs was quick to understand that the art of story telling in the 20th century was not limited to literature. He very quickly sold the rights to his novels to the Hollywood studios, and actively participated in the film adaptations. Since then, **the Tarzan character has directly inspired fifty-odd** films (including the famous performances by Johnny Weissmuller as a statuesque Tarzan, and by Christopher Lambert, cast as a romantic hero) as well as **comic strips (particularly those by Burne Hogarth**, whose talent, inspiration and fascination with the body in movement made him the master of the comic strip renewal and the forefather of many later artists), video games, CDs, games, as well as numerous imitations of the character (Tarou, Akim, Zembra and even Rahan). Nowadays, Tarzan remains an instantly recognisable figure through the characteristics that contribute to his iconic status: the vines, the leopard skin loincloth and his unique cry.



Leopard claw amulet (Ethiopia)

© musée du quai Branly

## \* THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition *Tarzan! or Rousseau with the Waziri* is built on several themes, representative of the universe of Edgar Rice Burroughs' character, enriched by many objects from the collections of the Musée du Quai Branly, as well as the Louvre, the musée d'Orsay and the museums Fontainebleau, Poissy and the Cité Internationale de la Bande dessinée in Angoulême.

The exhibition opens with an object showing Hercules shooting a bow and arrow, **reminding visitors of the parallel between the two heroes who had to use strength and courage to overthrow evil in an imaginary and reconstructed universe**. Throughout the exhibition, visitors are immersed in an atmosphere that mirrors Tarzan's world, thanks to a specially created original soundtrack, a collection of comic strip images (including Burne Hogarth's original plates), **stuffed wild animals and excerpts from Hollywood films**.

Visitors discover Tarzan's universe through several themes, including **Film and Tarzan**, **The Jungle**, **Tarzan's Africa** (with the Zulu, Masai, Kikuyu and leopard-men wearing the skins of big cats, Lego-like characters reflecting colonial imagery), **the son of Mother Nature** (in parallel with the myth of Romulus and Remus), **the twelve labours of Tarzan** (evoking the mythical hero Hercules), **the saviour of the jungle** (a pro-ecology anti-hunting figure who was contrary to the ivory traffickers and other slave traders who were popular at the time), as well as **numerous parodies** making light of Tarzan.

The exhibition ends with the robot from *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), symbol of the mechanical hero who invades the urban landscape. **Tarzan represents the anti-robot**, the naked man faced with the decadence of modern cities.



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## \* CURATOR

Roger Boulay, a Doctor of Ethnology, was director of the Oceania Collections in the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (National Museum of African and Oceanian Arts), and was entrusted with the museum programme of the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Nouméa. Until 2008, he was responsible for the Oceanian collections at the Direction des Musées de France and the museums of Tahiti and New Caledonia for the creation of museum exhibitions and projects to inventory heritage.

He was curator of the exhibition *Kannibals et Vahinés (Cannibals and Vahinés)* at the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (MNAAO) in 2001, and the exhibition *Festetics de Tolna, l'aristocrate et ses cannibales (Festetics de Tolna, the aristocrat and his cannibals)*, at the Musée du Quai Branly from 23 October 2007 to 13 January 2008.

## \* EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

- Number of pages: 128 pages
- Print: four colours
- Illustrations: approximately 70 illustrations
- Authors: Pascal Dibie, Pascal Ory, Serge Tisseron, Louis-Jean Clavet, Charles Tesson
- Recommended retail price: €19,50

## \* PRACTICAL INFORMATION: [WWW.QUAIBRANLY.FR](http://WWW.QUAIBRANLY.FR)

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