

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI



A-SIGNIFYING ALLEGORY. ART AS AN ACT OF FOLDING AND THE
CIRCULATION OF THE SENSIBLE

BY

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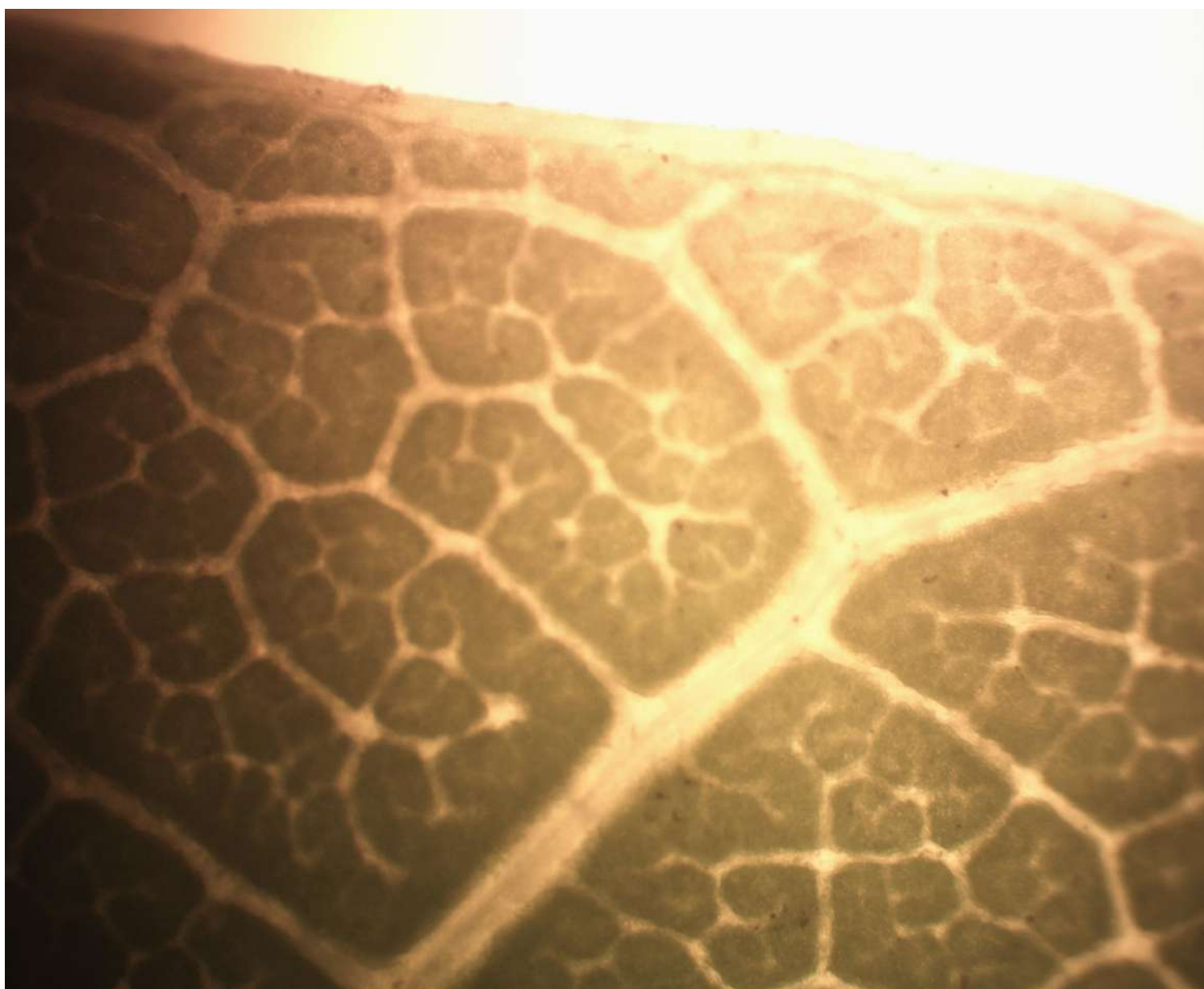


Figure 1 | Rebecca De Marchi, *We Insist!*, video, colour, sound, 5'44", 2023. Image: still from video

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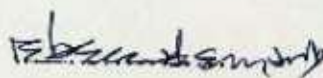
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the PhD and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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ABSTRACT

A-Signifying Allegory. Art as an Act of Folding and the Circulation of the Sensible is a wandering around the epistemic trope of how beings make experience and knowledge of the Earth, and how, consequently, a variety of worlds and ways of inhabiting and using them are conceived. Taking a generative, planetary, decolonial, and posthuman posture, the research-based artistic practice is carried on under the double lens of the academic and material-spiritual cultures. The metaphor of the fold that Deleuze reads from Leibniz has been pivotal among the various means that connect the Leibnizian impossible worlds animating the entire project. With Leibniz, it has been tenable to say that all impossible worlds are possible, and though not together, shape a different scenario for a best possible world in common. The enquiry further interrogates the extraction-driven consumption of the neoliberal system. The approach is not a critique, complaint, or denouncing of situations; rather, it is to let the deep and hidden other voices arise as a form of dissent. So, the means of working and the artworks that emerge contribute to the fabrication of an allegorical archive of the future shaped by attentive listening to the organic libraries of ‘persons’, as centres of intentionality, living or not, organic or inorganic, which precedes and includes the concept of the human. The practice incorporates an experimental research process in collaboration with several actants and organisms, institutions including KNUST Departments, students, artists, practitioners, and more constituting a curatorial entity of mutual care, *Zoe ΚοΚω*, who does not generate a community. In its becoming and a-signifying results, the practice is taken open to the appropriation of whoever encounters it, who simultaneously participates in the circulation of the sensible. Consequently, there is no conclusion, if not this attitude of mild equivocation embedded in any form of translation, as the discovering of new ways of folding.

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To those who gave me the birth, and to those who I am becoming.

FOLD A

On Fold, Equivocation and Appropriation

By Way of Enquiring

The artistic research, at the core here, is articulated around the epistemological trope of how beings make experience and knowledge of the Earth and how they consequently conceive worlds, use, and inhabit them.

Who makes knowledge of the Earth?

How is knowledge of the Earth made?

How does this knowledge affect the way worlds are conceived, used, and inhabited?

The foregoing is practical research. Of course, made by a human being. But, as much as possible, open to other ‘persons’, of all sorts, as a nexus of intentionality (Viveiros De Castro, 2014). The pressing questions come across as rhetorical; they might not present a definitive answer. The ambiguity covers, converts and corrodes every intention. Picking up materials from books, movies, songs, poems, artworks, driving exploratory processes, enchanting events, scientific procedures, news, catch-up spoken words, sounds, dialogue, fears, dreams, histories, memories, feelings, and many other encounters, something else appears, in the form of thoughts, texts, objects and occasional gatherings. And again, the play starts.

This has something to do with a multi-phonetic and unstable state of things that, at the same time, generates a tiny change of state. And composes an *A-signifying Allegory* that intends to contribute to fabricating an archive of the future, assuming a planetary, posthuman and decolonial critical posture. To let things happen anew, to not frame¹ them and their meaning,

¹ Even without quoting Tony Smith (1966), he is present and will return along this text several times regarding his nocturnal experience along the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike, which appears in two essays—written by Michael Fried (1967) and Gilles Deleuze (1993)—with opposite critical goals in the evolution of art.

to allow a current of feeling to run, a serious teasing attitude is kept: there the semiotic is pale, the scattered potentiality of meaning emerges—from time to time—in tune with a nameless truth. In other words, a posture aimed at undermining modern cultural supremacy and bringing out other sensible and possible worlds in common.

The question is not, or not only, what we have missed, but: what can we find doing otherwise? Echoes of Guattari (1995) and Benjamin² are perceivable here; they will be resumed in due time.

Artwork as a Cacophony of Works

Immanent to the rationale of the discourse developed here, the work is offered—exposed—to multiple improvisations by those who encounter it. It exists differently in the mind of the artist where a bundle of ideas stirs to produce the work—regardless of the chosen techniques and processes—even if they influence how the work is perceived. This applies whether it emerges as a product or through a process, in the practice of those involved in the co-production or in the perception of those who encounter it. It is exposed to the senses—not just sight—and to sensibilities, experienced in person, on social media, documented, critically described, recounted. The endeavour becomes a cacophony of works, coexisting and proliferating across a multitude of narratives. This is not said to excuse the intentions, whatever they may be, but to recall and affirm the unpredictable in the political compass of aesthetics.

² Here, the references do not go directly to Walter Benjamin's texts, as *Trauerspiel* on Baroque allegory (published in 1928 and translated into English in 1985 as *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*) and *Central Park* on Baudelaire as an allegorist (1937 c.), but to Bainard Cowan's *Walter Benjamin's Theory of Allegory* (1981).

Notes on Fold

In the impermanence of the events, association of concepts, interests, attempts of understanding, and in the continuous re-definition of art, its form and how it can act, these pages are organised as folds. Each fold aggregates notions around a topic, theoretic or practical, and the two are seamlessly connected. The simplest way of folding the document is like a pleated surface. One face touches the following one in a continuous flow. However, the fold can be amplified, the pitch between various points can become irregular and disclose other themes, and what is far can get close and vice versa. These folds can put in connection points on the same face of a surface or belonging to different faces, to different points of a malleable material that can be kneaded or melted. So, fold can be a practice of regular geometry or a disorderly mixture. I introduce the diagrammatic structure of the fold in its mix of sequential and non-sequential threads and, in addition, suggest some alternative folding strictly related to the understanding of this document and my practice.

Fold A: *On Fold, Equivocation and Appropriation*, is a backwards into the epistemological trope of who makes knowledge of the Earth, how this knowledge is produced and what effect it has on the way worlds are conceived, inhabited and used, thought in relation to art. It introduces the politics of aesthetics and its potentiality in the circulation of the sensible oriented to allow the rise of a possible world in common with a planetary, posthuman and decolonial posture. To allude to the impermanence subtended to the decolonisation of thoughts and its generative potentiality, besides the fold of folds in the continuous linearity of the pages, a diagrammatic mode suggests three kin themes that embrace forms of the affective and cognitive appropriation of the works of art, regardless of the media.

Fold B: *Bunch of Encounters*, follows the theme of the encounter already mentioned in Fold A and reveals the role of montage in the fictional composition of the events, the historical as well as the artistic. The elaboration proceeds with Jacques Rancière along the path that creates the social and political distribution of the sensible, and the potentiality of the art of disclosing and disrupting it, as fruit of the same cultural process, but led by different intentions. To figure out what an encounter could be and how entities act and feel in it, thirteen artefacts as events are narrated: the Kumasi urban immanence in Hassan Issah's work; the gift in Bernard Akoi-Jackson's performative practice³; the imponderable in Adjo Kisser's choreography; the fold of geography in 7°Ling8; the clever easy-going play with the paradox of the capitalism by Mika Rottenberg; the collapsed space-time in Toni Morrison's worlds; the re-remembering of forgotten history in Yussif Musah's narration; the soil's soul in Navjot Altaf's aesthetics of sustainability; the Bling Bling in Otobong Nkanga's things; the maze of dystopias in Yorgos Lanthimos's composition; the knitted cultures in Blitz the Ambassador's lyrics; the allegory in Petrit Halilaj's narration; the blurry in the flip over experience created by Pierre Huyghe.

Fold C: *On Collective*. The Ubuntu philosophy envisioned by the statement "I am because we are" signals a distinction from the individualistic Cartesian model of Western society. But what is the 'we'? In the search for an answer, Rancière warns that the being in common is strictly linked with conflict. When composing subject and object, could art offer conditions for reconciliation? The analysis moves to the quasi-object as a form of circulation, based on relation without assigned roles, staying on the generative side, even knowing that another—

³ kaŕi'kaçhä seid'ou uses the phrase "Transforming art from commodity to gift", to summarise his Emancipatory Art Teaching Project performed since 2003 at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi (Ghana) that generated blaxTARLINES. By this phrase, he meant transforming the private property form of art to collective commons (gift) and hence freeing the new gift form of art from the mutual obligation to return something to the giver. kaŕi'kaçhä seid'ou interpreted the non-reciprocal gift form as a "miracle" that suspends the impossibility of gifting in deconstructive readings. See Bodjawah, et al. (2021).

powerful—quasi-object is money. Is this kind of art capable of moving from the ‘cultural other’ investigated by Foster to a ‘multiple ownness’—echoing Stirner— that refuses voluntary servitude? What brings the shift from ‘well-being’ to ‘good-living’ that Gómez-Barris presents as an interspecific form of responsibility, respect and caring? Taking into consideration the exploitation of caring mentioned by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, who suggests ‘curatorialisation’ as one of many folds of curating. In this geopolitical frame, what has brought the Covid-19 pandemic? Some practices and events pre- (Eco e Narciso, from 2003 to 2016; Manifesta in Palermo, 2018; 12 Istanbul Biennial, 2019), post- (59 Venice Biennale, 2022; Documenta fifteen, 2022) and cross- (blaxTARLINES, since 2003; SCCA, Red Clay and Nkrumah Volini, respectively since 2019, 2020, 2021) Covid-19 are presented.

Fold D: *Worlds in Common. Learning New Way of Folding*, organises in paragraphs a path of de-centralisation, geographical and of species, in a post- de-colonial and posthuman horizon. Against the Western epistemic violence, thinkers like Nkrumah and Viveiros de Castro have elaborated on the necessity of and modality for freeing the mind of people from prejudices, which means producing a counter-discourse, and recognise that thinking is not a prerogative of the Western, or to put with Kusch, that apart the academic *filosofia, filosofar* (doing and thinking) has always been part of the life of people. In the scenario of ecological intelligence, not only of the human beings. With Phemister and Deleuze, the concept of impossible worlds and the, current, disposition that allows going through and across them, suggests the contemporaneity of Leibniz’s metaphysics, in terms of perspectivism, subjectivisation and also in its ecological reach and promises of *ontoegalitarianism*. The immanent circulation that connects life and death, humans and plants—“that tree is my Grandma”—subject and object, discloses the natureculture continuity that accompanies Mbembe’s elaboration on the

reparation of the planet and the restitution of artefacts that requires the ‘capacity of truth’ from the Western side, and attitude, at least for now, far. In connection with Rancière, Soto-Calderón analyses the themes of visual and politics and underline from an Amerindian point of view the need for new practices and community of knowledge, reverberating Fanon and Nkrumah discourses, and Rancièrian dissensus. The warning of avoiding any form of neo-colonialism came from Nkrumah, who added that thinking and practising should go ahead together. In Braidotti’s posthuman elaboration of *Zoe*-centred egalitarianism, what is said for human beings should be extended to other beings.

Fold E: *Planetary Curriculum*. In the process of moving from the Western cultural paradigms and their intrinsic violence, it is necessary to introduce counter curricula, elaborated in other geographies and outside the academy, intended as the Temple of the knowledge. In the attempt to say and act otherwise, and in the impossibility of grasping the truth, the allegory can provide an “other discourse”, as Benjamin suggests. A discourse that counters the scientific extractive-driven one and gives breath to a humanist perspective, or better ‘personist’ as I propose regarding the centres of intentionality. As urgent as this ‘other discourse’ is, it is clearer it should come from outside the Western, Braidotti stated, and on this topic, thinkers like Fanon, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, and Nkrumah provided meaningful insight. The cultural Emancipatory Art Teaching project at the KNUST Department of Painting and Sculpture triggered by *kari’kachä’said’ou* is a significant example. And it is related to my reason for studying in this context. To operate the potentiality of the academy in the Global South to act otherwise then induced me to collaborate with many departments on the campus, and let encounters happen. These encounters give life to *Zoe* KᵊKᵊ.

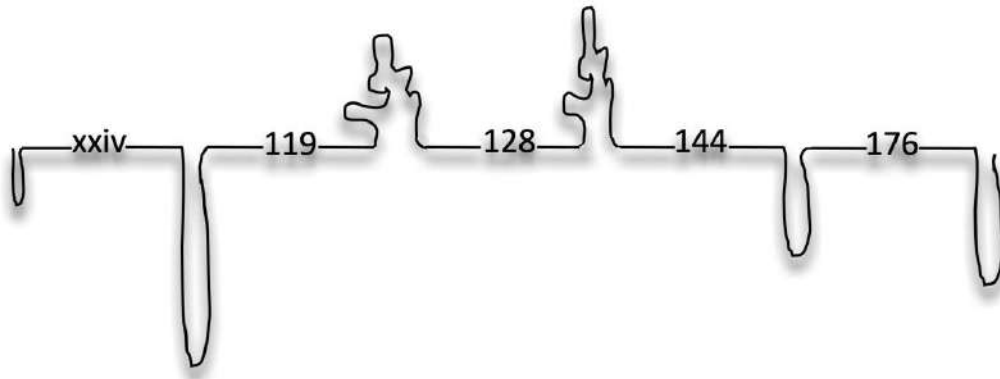
Fold F: *When the Wind Blows Only in One Direction, This is What Happens: The Tree Falls Down. Its Body was Full of Pain*. The potentiality of the encounters in the field of arts is linked to the practice of folding as ongoing decolonisation of thoughts aimed to introduce tiny changes of state. The circulation of the sensible is going on with its political reach. *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)* (2020) embodied this red thread of encounters, thinking and acting, a witness of the epistemic freedom of an aesthetic event contributing to the circulation of the sensible. The two-channel video installation, voicing Western academic and other traditional philosophies, testify to these last their dense potentiality after a prolonged quiescence. A third philosophy—transmitted by Kente cloth and stole—is a silent protagonist in both videos. The set up of the artwork at the KNUST Metal Product Design Studio and later at the central Library on Campus in collaboration with the textile section of the former Integrated Rural Art and Industry Department, respectively, have been aimed to reduce the artwork's duality and prompt a pedagogical discourse. A shake into the distribution of the sensible is at work. At the core is not the Kente, which can be intended as a coherent pretext, but the blurring of cultures and the ecological respect—also tackled by the display of other two works, *In the Shadow of Fresh Palms in Flowers* (2022) and *Healing Trousseau* (2021)—that shape the epiphany of another possible world, an allegorical subject. Of course, they can sound like empty words, but in the theatre of the artworks, they espouse and expose a planetary critical thought and aim of reparation and re-membering, echoing Rancière and Mbembe. Meanwhile, other devices than exhibition put in circulation works like *Carousel of Sentences* and *Grief-stricken*, both ongoing and started in 2021, *De-familiarised Family* (2022), an artwork that trigger the performance of Nkrumah's thoughts on decolonisation, and *Kakra Kakra*, a sort of invisible performativity and an attitude of patience related to the time.

Fold G: *Archive of the future*. Starting from what escapes human knowledge, I positioned myself in that generative void, in search of getting in tune with the organic library of cashew trees, accompanied by Phemister's reading of Leibniz's thought as an ecophilosophy and Falola's elaboration on ritual archive and African science and technology and their potentiality in a decolonial and posthuman scenario activated by the fold metaphor to connect impossible worlds. An initial insight into the neoliberal extractive industrial agriculture does not conduct my practice to complain but to depict a counter archive of the future, to listen back to knowledge left unheard by the Modern era, to give form to the 'legend of the cashew-head persons', an a-signifying allegory that leaves the process open as the only conclusion.

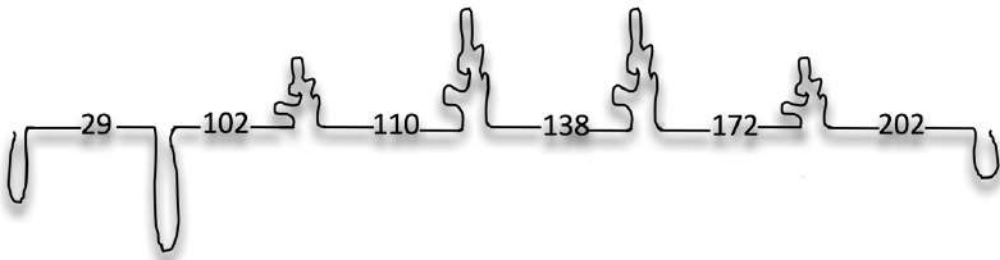
Fold H: is nested in Fold F and Fold G and is related to the practices experimented during the PhD in relation to the production of the artworks and in collaboration with persons and KNUST Departments. In Fold F, there are two-Fold H: *Broom*, on the making of that item with palm fronds; and *Kente*, on the design, weaving and learning around that cloth and stole. In Fold G, there are four-Fold H: *Braid*, of mop, extension hair and cashew knowledge; *Tanning Organs*, on the testing of etymological knowledge, using cashew to tan internal organs of ruminants; *CNSL*, on observing the appreciation of treated wood by the termites; and *Painting*, to become kin with the cashew through its pigments.

Indebted to Laurence Sterne, *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy Gentleman*, and as a homage to the Deleuzeian "fold of the outside", I sketch some other possible folds into this text. Others can be added by the readers.

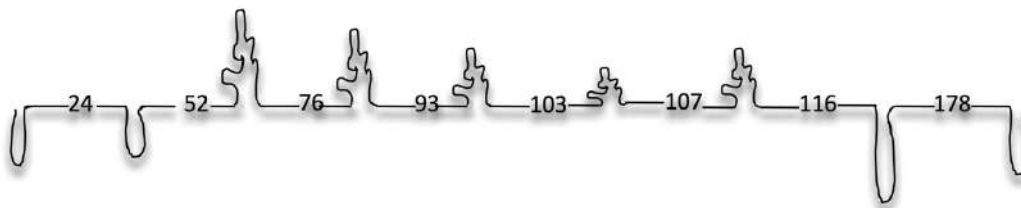
Acknowledgements Fold: Zoe KōKō



Death Fold: the good(after)living and 'the fold of the outside'



Solidarity Fold: community of walking persons



FOLD B

Bunch of Encounters

Little Breathing Room

The fiction with which a narrative is organised concerns all cultural expressions, not only the artistic ones. The same happens in the social sphere and in the structuring of history. There is a work of selection, montage, and temporal modulation, which arranges lights and shadows on what must be perceived and what must be forgotten, deciding to whom provide the voice, giving linearity to the chaotic teeming of events. The outcome is a political artefact. A theme that runs through Rancière's thoughts, from his reflections on the workers' struggles to that on the aesthetic regime of art (2018; 2006; 2007). It is precisely in what politics and art have in common that the latter can act on the former, creating forms of dissent that arise from showing how things act and, at the same time, from manipulating the components in action. And if reality is a hidden modelling of facts, art is real. But it is also a fact. And as such, it enters the circulation of the sensible. It must be remembered that the consequences are unpredictable, despite the original moral will.

Can epiphanic moments be generated by observing through a space-time magnifying glass? And, by replacing some components with others in a social body that evidently has nothing ontological? Saying the King is naked? Pedro Costa's cinema (Figure 2 and Figure 3) is recurrent in Rancièrian philosophical elaboration (2007; 2018, p. 285-286). The Portuguese director mixes in the long films that follow the daily life of people marginalized by the dominant narrative artistic genres (documentary and film), life and fiction, blurring their boundaries. Paradoxically, the concreteness of the chronicle appears abstract, diluted as it is in the space and time of life. Strategies of fiction recompose the events making them

intelligible, to the detriment of the rich original complexity. Here too, the intention marks the difference: if taming dulls the senses, interruption awakens them. What interruption is at the matter? One that disturbs the narcotic flow of artful narration, but also one that affects the dominant political narrative in artistic fiction. That is, that acts in the technique or in the contents. Or, sure, both.

Among the multiple reasons that move the artistic production, the research dealt with in these pages focuses on the revealing encounter with a knowledge that pre-occupies the thought and action of singular or plural entities, which rests on non-predetermined participation and enters organically in the circulation of the sensible. If the topic were food, it would be easy to grasp the meaning, of an ideal cycle from the earth, to the body to back to the earth. Even talking about flavour and taste is complicated entering the field of art. When Rancière deals with the theme of boredom or reverie as prerogatives of the social class which alternates action and leisure, rather than who is destined for work and rest, marking the entry into the literature of figures who contravene this division and therefore have a political cruciality, refers to a division that is real in the partition of the sensible fruit of modern Western social construction. And to which, at a certain point, the literature produced by that same sociocultural construct gives visibility. However, it is a sectarian division, as Rancière himself was revealed by consulting the archives of the class struggle. The seasonal cadence, the cycle of the day, the phenomenological enchantment, and the sentimental emotion, even in the exhausting life of those immersed in material work, have always freed up the possibility of poetry. As in the protean and exposed 'monster world' film *As Mil e uma Noites* (Arabian Nights, 2015) by another Portuguese director Miguel Gomes (Figure 4 and Figure 5), a continuous flow of daily and eternal stories unfold over the time (six hours) of the trilogy, whose individual parts, volumes, are titled *O Inquieto* (The Restless One), *O Desolado* (The Desolate One), and *O Encantado* (The Enchanted One).

I try to explain myself. And I try to do it with a collection of works not to be understood as a model—an impossible eventuality—but rather as an allegory, or as other-discourse in which syncretism recurs; artworks united, in this appropriation, by the theme of the encounter, even if what is encountered belongs to different stylistic and semantic fields.



Figure 2 | Pedro Costa, *Colossal Youth*, 2004.
Ventura at the old site. Image: still from movie.
Courtesy: the author - www.metamute.org



Figure 3 | Pedro Costa, *Colossal Youth*, 2004.
Ventura at the new site. Image: still from movie.
Courtesy: the author - www.metamute.org



Figure 4 | Miguel Gomes, *As Mil e uma Noites - volumes 1, Inquieto* (Arabian Nights, volume 1, The Restless One), 2015. Image: still from movie. Courtesy: the author - www.film-documentaire.fr



Figure 5 | Miguel Gomes, *As Mil e uma Noites - volumes 2, O Desolado* (Arabian Nights, volume 2, The Desolate One), 2015. Image: still from movie. Courtesy: the author - www.film-documentaire.fr

Urban Encounter. Transforming Pictorial Abstraction into Heraldic Representations

Tribute to different ways of experiencing the city—which explores the historical stratification of a spontaneous construction whose decorative and architectural elements bring together echoes of Baroque, tropicalism, the Middle Ages, Modernism, Islam and vernacular motifs, dominated by the liveliness of the colours—Hassan Issah⁴'s painting and research around his home city, Kumasi, is the result of careful observation of the context and its forms. This attitude captures the phenomenological diviner's sensitivity that binds human beings to the environment in which they live, and registers the 'sprezzatura' of an artisanal way of doing that while looking at the models mentioned above, betrays them uncared to read the underlying geometric codes, and yet conserves and revitalises, with involuntary irony, their aesthetic traits. An alive politicisation of histories. It is precisely in the attempt to keep all these aspects together that Issah's work finds its conceptual strength, put to the test by continuous experimentation aimed at finding formalisations capable of transferring them to artwork. Through the examination and recording of the physical and social context (using digital devices and sketches), Issah collects visual and audio data as well as establishes relationships with local welders, carpenters and blacksmiths, all elements that enter the artistic process. While he delegates the realisation of the structures/frame of the works collaborating with these craftsmen and women, there is another component completely entrusted to the pictorial practice conducted daily by the artist in the studio, in alchemical research of stratification and reactions of inhomogeneous materials, colour ranges, shapes and spatialisations, which give rise to the finished 'art-objects', which reintroduced into the public space of the city or presented in the gallery reveal the cultural and artistic richness of the untamed part of the city and the political possibility of the painting (Figure 6). In the outside display of Issah's work the actual transient participation of the butterflies (Figure 7)

⁴ Born in 1993, Kumasi, Ghana.

interacting with the canvases, becomes the revelation of the world's multi-worlds⁵. At the same time, the actions of people, animals, and insects that touch the pictorial surfaces, temporarily changing them, deconstruct the artificial affirmation of the material sacredness of the paintings and of the purely visual relationship with them. Hassan's work can push farther the very cultural meaning of the corruption of forms, that is neither a quotation nor an appropriation, but rather mutual digestion, something that recalls the process used by the termites on making their soil castle. Paradoxically the vitrines (Figure 8 and Figure 9) Hassan has designed for the exhibition at the Nubuke Foundation in Accra and their contents (sketches, wall paint, brushes, etc.)—to say the most assertive pieces if seen under the lens of modernist canons—are tremendously speaking of this seamless process. If things are already there, why continue to produce art? Or produce art related to this aesthetic? The answer seems to reside in the crucial aspect of this aesthetic, absorbed both in the long time of history and in daily life, revealing in its presence a critical statement against the flattening of modernist paradigms, even maintaining a dialogue with them. Enwezor refers to an off-centre perspective, correlated to heterotemporal references in the expression of contemporary art, that in the specific African context—“seen to be the most opaque to the persuasions of supermodernity”—elaborates the Aftermodernity (2009). Hence, Hassan's artistic practice: his painting that leaves the flatness of the canvas to expand and melt with the city, and his drawing keeping the materiality of the metal in the space. His doing so in a visual and productive dialogue with what inhabit the city, even if unseen, and with artisans, contribute to the circulation of the sensible. These—the already there and Hassan's work—are a practical answer. An answer that descends from nebulised authorship, part of the social structure, that overstep the issue at the core of community-based art practice, finding its reference in

⁵ Reference goes to perspectivism. See Viveiro de Castro, (2014), *Cannibal Metaphysics. For a Post-Structural Anthropology*, Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing and Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (2001), *Monadologia*, Milano: Bompiani (v.o. 1720)

categories belonging to local tradition—namely, humanism and solidarity⁶—instead of modernity, and its divisions and welfare-ism—frequently paternalistic—posture. The vital corruption of shapes and materials witnesses the cultural richness that can lead to emancipation with craftiness, translation, and betrayal—echoing Nkrumah. This remembering that the process of decolonization must guard against new colonization made possible through the flattery and complicity of seeking one’s own profit. It has to do with the confrontation of two forms of impurity, one transformative and the other moral. It is the first, not ideological, to be generative, where the second feeds itself on extractive processes.⁷

⁶ Fanon, Frantz (1991), *The Wretched of the Earth*, USA: Evergreen (v.o. 1961), Nkrumah (1970), and Latouche, Serge (2000), *L'altra Africa. Tra dono e mercato*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri (v.o, 1998)

⁷ The text is an adaptation of the essay written for the catalogue of Hassan Issah’s exhibition “Seduced by the Charms of a Mistake” at the Nubuke Foundation, Accra, in December 2021 (De Marchi).



Figure 6 | Al Hassan Issah, *Swing Along*, acrylic and emulsion paints, vegetable oils, cast aluminium, steel pipes, iron rods, canvas material, dimensions variable, 2020. Installation view. Photo credit: Hassan Issah



Figure 7 | Al Hassan Issah, *Eloquence of the Wind: A Dream of Toffees and Spikes*, steel pipe, auto base, cast aluminium, canvas, iron chains, iron rods, acrylic paint, vegetable oil, wood environmental dimension, 2020. The picture taken at the Botanical Garden KNUST, Kumasi, during the exhibition "failure is the Key" in 2021, feature the interaction of beings with the artwork. Installation view. Photo credit: Tracy Thompson



Figure 8 | Al Hassan Issah, *Golden Genesis*, steel pipe, cast aluminium, iron rods, plywood, acrylic paint, vegetable oil, random studio tools and materials, 163 x 77 x 104 (h) cm, 2021. Detail. Photo credit: Elo Bosoka



Figure 9 | Al Hassan Issah, *Dream State*, steel pipe, cast aluminium, iron rods, plywood, acrylic paint, vegetable oil, selected drawing books, 95 x 95 x 92 (h) cm, 2021. Photo credit: Elo Bosoka

Encounter as Gift. Art Books at the Library

If art is a gift, and to be a gift it should “exit contemporary art” because “escape contemporary art” is not working—in fact always, with a sudden reversal, contemporary art can easily re-capture in the system the creative attempt of criticise and produce independent thoughts and with adulation bring it back to the exploitative institutionalisation—“how this goal is attainable?” Bernard Akoi-Jackson⁸ asks with his art practice and in his PhD dissertation, with references to karî’kächä seid’ou and Suhail Malik (Akoi-Jackson, 2017). The performativity of his collection of art books on the premises of the Prempeh II Library at KNUST, a central library that lacks books, put on stage the gift. A stage crossed by all the people who access and leave the Library, open to a potential exchange of intelligence and mimicking Rancièrian Jacotot’s emancipatory attitude (Rancièrè, 2008). With *Private Library Public View* (2016), part of the project *Disturbing The Piece*: A Post-Conceptual Praxis In Context*, Akoi-Jackson experimented a form of gift contesting the reciprocity entangled in it, as Marcel Mauss has analysed (1925), or at least lifting it up from its direct or indirect monetisation, to release it in the running and uncontrollable discursive potentiality in space and time. A “studio-at-large” as a conceptual space is a place, “any place, virtual or otherwise, where whatever we called ‘work’ (text, object, situation, discussion), could be produced and then disseminated”. The “I” becomes a “We” in the scattered production of effects triggered by the shattered piece. The plot was, as much as possible, unsystematic, with the re-arrangement and re-positioning of the desks and books during the three weeks of the event (Figure 10, Figure 11, Figure 12 and Figure 13), as well as the informality of the programme of film screening and talks happening in various locations on the Campus. The promise of the encounter in any place at any time is on the air, circulating.

⁸ Born in 1979, Accra, Ghana.



Figure 10 | Bernard Akoi-Jackson, *Private Library Public View. Disturbing the Piece: A Post-Conceptual Praxis in Context*, dimensions variable, 2016. Installation view. Photo credit: Bernard Akoi-Jackson



Figure 11 | Bernard Akoi-Jackson, *Private Library Public View. Disturbing the Piece: A Post-Conceptual Praxis in Context*, dimensions variable, 2016. Image shows assistants Percy Duncan, Abene Nsoh, security person: Mr. Tei Amanor and a guest. Photo credit: Bernard Akoi-Jackson



Figure 12 | Bernard Akoi-Jackson, *Private Library Public View. Disturbing the Piece: A Post-Conceptual Praxis in Context*, dimensions variable, 2016. Image shows a guest absorbed in some books while Mr. Tei Amanor looks on. Installation view. Photo credit: Bernard Akoi-Jackson



Figure 13 | Bernard Akoi-Jackson, *Private Library Public View. Disturbing the Piece: A Post-Conceptual Praxis in Context*, dimensions variable, 2016. Image kārī'kachä seid'ou with graduate students. Installation view. Photo credit: Bernard Akoi-Jackson

Encounter with the No-sense that Makes Senses

It is a flow—no, many flows—flowing and randomly meeting the junction of an antenna, an encounter, whoever, whatever the antenna is. It has something dreamlike. Things come together and gather in chaotic aggregation where the meaningless makes sense. And the woke up leaves this flavour of lost, not completely lost, and not missing, just fading, or be somewhere beyond a corner of the dark, thick mind or of a pink dust membrane that hides it from being caught by the conscience. And sometimes, a glimpse reappears, but it is un-chewable. It happens daily, repetitively, if only attention is paid to it. Adjo Kisser⁹ hinges her recent artistic practice on these impalpable events, and offers the possibility to whoever wants to join and fall into this capacious possibility, pulling an invisible carpet that, with a domino effect, attracts others. Spontaneous events and directed events eventually happen in a programmatic refusal of control, before and after. In 2019, in Hamburg (Germany), she launched *It's a Fluke. Trust Me* (Figure 14, Figure 15 and Figure 16) started sharing with some people a list of inconclusive narratives and inviting the actors—as she calls the people who voluntarily take part in the action—to feel free to take inspiration from them and do at the agreed time whatever they like, at the only condition to try to keep the verbal of factual discourse they trigger incomprehensible and nonsensical. In doing so, the actors can share the invitation with other people, involve unknown and unaware people in their actions, and act outside or inside the gallery—art deputy—space. The narratives are not instructions, even if they can be references, the artist cannot follow all the micro-events, and even less control them, know how many they are and where. There is no proper documentation, if not the videos sent by the actors, that the artist edited in real-time as a veejay. Is the un-controllable operation of a multiplicity of un-functional and un-usable—at least in the intention, since someone set up a protest (Figure 16)—actions that create a meta-narration only thinkable, so

⁹ Born in 1992, Ghana. This text is based on many conversations with the artist Adjo Kisser over the period 2022 and 2023.

close to art and so close to life, escaping both exactly because is both of them. The refusal of rational control frees through the aesthetic the potentiality of being. An anthropocentric posture that lends itself to involve other entities.



Figure 14 | Adjo Kisser, *It's a Fluke. Trust Me*, incomprehensible and nonsensical actions in Hamburg, 2019. The protest. Image: stills from video. Courtesy: Adjo Kisser



Figure 15 | Adjo Kisser, *It's a Fluke. Trust Me*, incomprehensible and nonsensical actions in Hamburg, 2019. At the swimming pool. Image: stills from video. Courtesy: Adjo Kisser



Figure 16 | Adjo Kisser, *It's a Fluke. Trust Me*, incomprehensible and nonsensical actions in Hamburg, 2019. Across the city. Image: stills from video. Courtesy: Adjo Kisser

Encounter with People. Migration as Fold of the Geography

In 2012, the project *7°Ling8* emerged from an encounter with asylum-seekers—young Sub-Saharan African men in their twenties and thirties—who arrived in Italy from Libya in 2011 and who were living at the Tebaldo Fenoglio multipurpose centre of the Italian Red Cross IRC in Settimo Torinese. This accommodation measure was introduced by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the early months of 2011 to deal with the refugee crisis from Libya in the frame of the so-called ‘North Africa Emergency’. Two workshops have been launched to create orientation and story-telling devices, leading to a hand-drawn ‘upside-down’ map from Settimo to Lingotto (Figure 17) and a meta biographical story called *Il richiedente* (The Seeker) by Cristiano De Majo.

The map results from ten-month weekly meetings of a temporal community of practice aimed to elaborate on knowledge of the territory covered and free up the world of the imagination. With this attitude, the city became the promising field of action of migration, intended as a fold of geography. The meetings took place at IRC, in the industrial area of Settimo Torinese, far from the town centre, and going on foot, by bicycle or bus through the two cities, as the title says, from Settimo to Lingotto. This last is a peripheral area in the South of Torino where Artissima, the local contemporary art fair, is hosted. A place we inhabited for four days, observing the artworks in their symbolic and literal texts as a critical source, among others coming from bunches of different experiences and references, to elaborate a personal visual code for our own map. Two geographies run side by side along different routes: a practical geography on the streets and in the buildings while, on the hills, the distance inspires the imagination, poised between memory and fantasy. There, a perceptive geography takes shape, allowing the eyes and mind to repose and giving proximity to places called home. A talking map of the territory emerges, bringing together experiences of the city that

usually do not converge, retracing the trajectory and triggering reflection on the connection between the city centre and the suburbs, then reverse.

The map, reproduced on a smaller scale with the practical information on the back, was distributed for free to share this new vision of the city and allow to mark other sites. A limited edition was released containing in a box the tale and map.

The community of practice was composed by Augustine Ametefe, Seeba Arimiyawy, Giulia Borri, Viola Careggio, Maurizio Cilli, Augustine Da Dapla, Cristiano De Majo, Rebecca De Marchi, Maurizio Giustetto, Shakibu Mallam, Ahamad Mamad, Faruku Mohammed, Luca Morena, Brigida Orria, Vincenzo Perrotta, Tatjana Pulaj, Giovanni Semi, Mamman Lamén Sidi, Yahya Tata, Yocuba Zanne.

The project, part of the “Eco e Narciso” art programme supported by the Provincia di Torino, was made in collaboration with the Italian Red Cross Centre in Settimo Torinese, municipality of Settimo Torinese and its Association Casa dei Popoli, Artissima, The Faculty of Sociology in Torino, and with the support of Fabio Sorano.

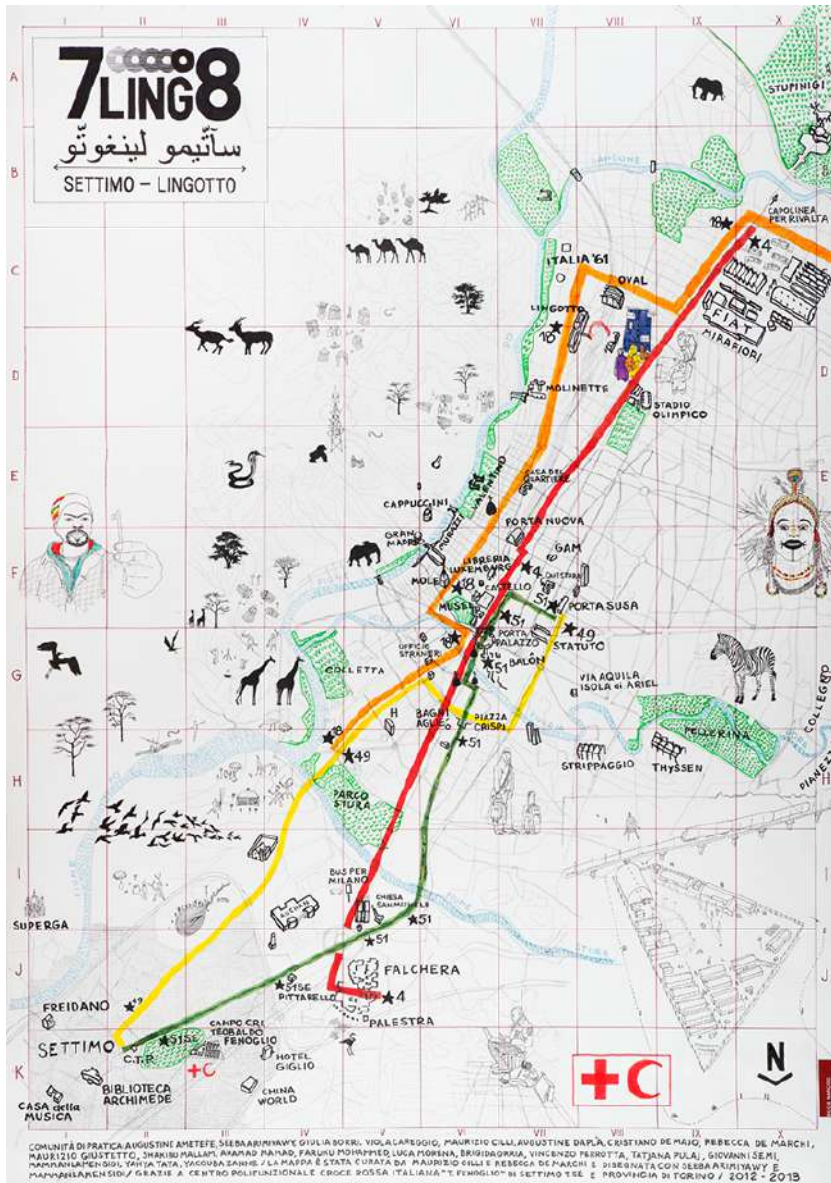


Figure 17 | Augustine Ametefe, Seeba Arimiyawy, Giulia Borri, Viola Careggio, Maurizio Cilli, Augustine Da Dapla, Cristiano De Majo, Rebecca De Marchi, Maurizio Giustetto, Shakibu Mallam, Ahamad Mamad, Faruku Mohammed, Luca Morena, Brigida Orria, Vincenzo Perrotta, Tatjana Pulaj, Giovanni Semi, Mamman Lamén Sidi, Yahya Tata, Yocuba Zanne (Community of practice), *Eco e Narciso*. 7Ling8, map, cm 150 x 250 (h). Thanks to: Fabio Sorano. Photo credit: Antonio Lagrotta

Encounter with the Paradox of Capitalism. Flow of Connections

The physicality of the Tuvan throat singer's voice in Mika Rottenberg's¹⁰ video *Spaghetti Blockchain*¹¹ shapes the space into which the video is exhibited. A sequence of images, mounted without a linear, intelligible, red thread, allude to the obsessive transformation of materials. It does not matter if they are nucleus at CNR, a coloured indecipherable roasted melting substance (Figure 19), the hairdressing of a grizzled partially bald man, the burning of netted spaghetti (Figure 20), harvested potatoes in mechanised agriculture, or the breath of a woman pushed with modulation outside the body to extend itself to the landscape: a woman devoted to the Siberian ancient tradition, mainly practised by men (Figure 18). This dreamlike montage does not miss the goal of examining the effect of the monetisation and capitalisation of human relations and labour. The cause-effect relation runs along the videos in practices that produce nothing, underlining the absurdity of capitalism-driven production. And its fascination. As the artist said, the impetus for this artwork "came from her looking at YouTube for endless hours" (sculpturemag, 2019). There, the ASMR (an acronym for autonomous sensory meridian responses) appeals to the spectators' senses, using voice and gestures to arouse enjoyable sensations. Without words, this video, as the other of Rottenberg, with irony, shows the meaninglessness of the endless circle of desire-production-satisfaction, giving form to a saga. In so doing, they tackle many topics of contemporaneity, like gender, environment, technology, communication, and labour, that cross all of them. In the title, two distant elements crash, evoking items belonging to different systems, and at the same time cleverly peeping to the title of a movie, that in its genre is a classic, "Spaghetti Western" (Bourriaud, 2019b; Bourriaud, 2019c; Daneri, Giusti, & Battin, 2021).

¹⁰ Born in 1976, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

¹¹ I saw the artwork for the first time in 2019 at the Istanbul Biennial "The Seventh Continent", curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, and later in 2021 at the Galleria di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea GAMeC, Bergamo, as part of the exhibition "Nothing is Lost. Art and Matter in Transformation" curated by Anna Daneri and Lorenzo Giusti.



Figure 18 | Mika Rottenberg, *Spaghetti Blockchain*, 2019, single-channel video installation, sound, and colour, 18'14''. The Tuvan throat singer. Image: still from video. Courtesy: the artist - Hauser & Wirth



Figure 19 | Mika Rottenberg, *Spaghetti Blockchain*, 2019, single-channel video installation, sound, and colour, 18'14''. The smog left by the melting substance. Image: still from video. Courtesy: the artist - Hauser & Wirth

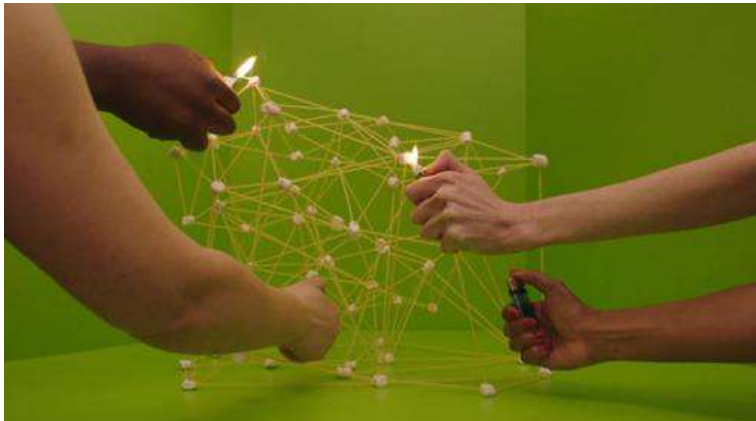


Figure 20 | Mika Rottenberg, *Spaghetti Blockchain*, 2019, single-channel video installation, sound, and colour, 18'14''. The netted spaghetti burning. Image: still from video. Courtesy: the artist - Hauser & Wirth

Encounter with Collapsed Space-Time. A Thought Picture

Toyin Falola, in the Art Talk part of “Back to the Small Stage” (Falola, 2023), mentions that at Makola Market, in Accra or Lagos, you meet people who are alive and people who are dead. Like in Facebook, I thought. The dead friends are there, along with the living friends. There is not a city of the dead and a city of the living beings. No cemetery on Facebook. No cemetery in the extension of time and space, in the place narrated by Tony Morrison in *Beloved* (1987), only the eventuality of encountering it, that is there, waiting.

"I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it.

Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do.

But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place--the picture of it--stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened."

"Can other people see it?" asked Denver.

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear.

And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else.

Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away.

Even if the whole farm--every tree and grass blade of it dies.

The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there--you who never was there--if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over--over and done with--it's going to always be there waiting for you.

"If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies."

Encounter with a Forgotten History

On the walls of an abandoned warehouse in Oduom, Kumasi, Yussif Musah¹² has remembered the life of the African soldiers who combated in the First and Second World War as part of the Royal West African Frontier forces. A meta-narration composed of paintings made using dirty engine oil on plaster (Figure 21, Figure 22 and Figure 23), drawings and words on paper, telling the anti-heroic story of these men whose military efforts have been forgotten. Musah, through a serious and profound work of digging into the archive of the Ghana Army Forces Museum, restoring photographs and paintings, has gained the trust of the institution that has collaborated with him to the two exhibitions he has devoted to giving back dignity to these men: *The Parable of the Blind Men and the Elephant* at the museum in a space restored on this purpose and *Singing to a Mockingbird* at the venue already mentioned. Used as a shortcut to reach the main road, or as an extemporaneous toilet, the building is a metaphor for these men's neglected story. It is not the celebration of the soldiers but the restitution to the life of people who, as a group, were army troupes but individually were 'persons' whose decision to embrace the weapons was made to serve the birthplace—not in itself but as a colony—, to find a girlfriend, to wear a uniform, to not be unemployed, whose bravery or fear, even the two together, are palpable. Intimate voices that Moussa has collected from different sources—radio, mail, books—and resuscitated by typing excerpts of them on a make-appear older paper (Figure 24), as personal noted memories or words grasped from someone's discourses. This choir of voices is reinforced by the paintings—which the artist has also made in collaboration with artist friends—that reproduce on different scales the men, the settlement, and the frond of trees that merge the green, alive ones entering the space of the unroofed building. It is speaking a moving language, that goes beyond the

¹² Born in 1997, Accra, Ghana. This text is based on dialogues with the artist and visits to the *Singing to a Mockingbird* exhibition at the opening on the 3rd of September 2022 and on the 26th of October 2022.

expectation from an exhibition of a painter whose work is devoted to death, memory and war.

A choreographed miscellaneous that, through art, frees humanity.



Figure 21 | I - Yussif Musah, *Singing to a Mockingbird*, 2022, dirty engine oil on wall, 2022. Photo credit: Lisa C. Soto



Figure 22 | II - Yussif Musah, *Singing to a Mockingbird*, 2022, dirty engine oil on wall, 2022. Photo credit: Lisa C. Soto



Figure 23 | III - Yussif Musah, *Singing to a Mockingbird*, 2022, dirty engine oil on wall, 2022. Photo credit: Lisa C. Soto

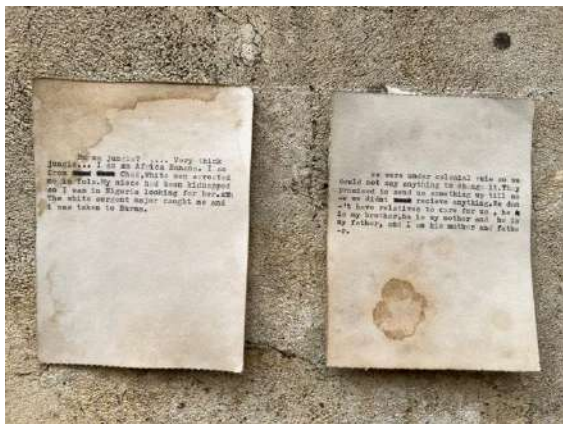


Figure 24 | Yussif Musah, *Singing to a Mockingbird*, 2022, texts typed out on paper, 2022. Installation view. Dimension variable. Photo credit: Lisa C. Soto

Encounter with Soil as Soul. “Aesthetics of Sustainability”

“My interest lies in a reflexive process, which examines both oneself as an artist-researcher, and the research relationship” says Navjot Altaf¹³ and continues,

engaging myself with the people’s struggle for justice, I want to experience the concept of “Aesthetics of sustainability” as it inquiries into the meanings and implications of justices, in a pluralistic way and it also conveys humility towards the non-human environment and inter-species relationship” (2020)

Altaf refers to the work that resulted in the video *Soul Breath Wind* (2014-2018) situated in the context of the struggles against the installation of coal mines and the exploitation of the land in various regions in India¹⁴ (Figure 25 and Figure 26). What in the capitalist rhetoric of progress is said to improve the quality of life is actually affecting the Earth’s well-being in many parts of its body, and, consequently, the life of living beings—human and not. Digging the soil to extract materials means eradicating the soul of the Earth. To avoid this consequence, people want to continue farming and be who decides, which means taking care of the environment as a living being. It is a form of collective resistance in the name of renewable resources: “I find it a space for feedback and collaboration, to create a feeling for care, a place of containment. ... one can sense that the ‘main ecological crisis for them is the increasing loss of connectedness’”. And it is in the name of the connection that the artist’s practice becomes part of this relationship of unstable collective subject, an open organism of listening and action. A posture in which the decolonisation of the thought that Viveiros de Castro (2014) attributes to a renewed consistency of anthropology is recognised. A situated practice of art that, with its long commitment to aesthetic research, captures and formalises,

¹³ Born in 1949, Meerut, India. All the quotes relating to Navjot Altaf are taken from the dialogue about her video *Soul Breath Wind*, which I watched on the 2nd of November 2019 at PAV in Torino at the opening of her solo exhibition “Samakaalik: Earth Democracy and Women’s Liberation” curated by Marco Scotini, and her practice, that we had in the period April-May 2020 through an email exchange and from the concept of the works she mentioned.

¹⁴ In the same email correspondence Navjot Altaf said: “Alongside my interactive/collaborative/site-specific works with indigenous artists and the community members in the state of Chhattisgarh in Central India for a considerable period of time (1997 onwards) I have also been engaged with research in mining areas of Southern Bastar and the Northern Central part of the state.”

in various participative works, the urgencies of a resistant society and makes visible the social matrix¹⁵ of traditional and local knowledge of the Earth, in which the relationships play a pivotal role. The author is the community-at-large, bearer of a culture and commitment of which the artist is an aesthetic translator, producing devices for aesthetic reverberation of rooted and radical practices.

The syncretic attitude that has shaped cultures outside Western dualisms for millennia also connoted this aesthetic posture. Marco Scotini¹⁶ (Scotini & Cardone, 2020) on this subject warns that art must not be adjectivised (that is, we must not speak of ecological art, environmental art, rural art, etc.) in order not to bring it back to a sterile self-referential categorisation part of the art system (the -isms of the various currents) and its ambitions (participation in fairs, biennials, etc.). In other words, it is an art that operates from an ecological angle and, therefore, produces a counter-discourse that is both critical of the capitalist system and its deformations and criticism of artistic institutions. Not without compromise, which to be evaluated is necessary to abide by the intentions (an analysis that I suspend here because it would bring the discussion on the broad issue of operating independently from the cultural-artistic field). An art centred on the aesthetical knowledge of the world (here, a dichotomy appears, having scientific knowledge as another pole) in which enchantment plays a primary role. It is not a phenomenological revelation ended in itself but of emotional openness to the tangible mystery of the immanent material existence, deconstructed and reconstructed in an analytical, critical, symbolic or literal way. An approach in which subject-object, singular-plural are inseparable, expressions of a multi-

¹⁵ Reference goes to Vandana Shiva, extract from *Monocultures of the Mind – Biodiversity Biotechnology and the Third World*, (London and New York: Zed Book/Penang (Malaysia): TWN (Third World Network), 1993) in “The Rural” (2019, pp. 26-29).

¹⁶ Marco Scotini, since 2014, has been the curator of the exhibitions at PAV Parco d'Arte Vivente in Torino (<http://parcoartevivente.it>) and, paraphrasing him from a recent interview, investigated: the relationship between human beings and nature under a more historical and political light. Or better, I would say geo-political because we focused our attention on research in Southeast Asia, China, and Africa, evaluating the impact of colonialism and slavery on those areas. I believe the so-called Anthropocene should be endowed with a detailed history and not reduced to an abstraction in which we are all guilty of the current crisis (Scotini, 2020).

relational community, which must be noticed, does not in itself have any ethical, romantic or nostalgic meaning. A being together that in the phonetics of the French ‘avec’, for ‘with’, finds a twist that contains: an expression of inhabited beings who inhabit, maintaining an anthropocentric reading. Yet, it is elusive the cultural and natural presence in some concepts. That is their equivalent in the Amerindian perspectivism to which Eduardo Viveiros de Castro appeals, where the multinatural plurality of the actants shares a monoculture, as an ontological culture distinct from knowledge, that distinguishes. Getting back to what was said about art, in this horizon, it is understood as a critique of the distortions part of the Capitalocene, denouncing the relative causes, but also, suggesting alternatives, conceptual or material, in which acting becomes the signifier: and therefore, it is a political practice.

In a passage from the video *Soul Breath Wind*, recalling the Indian indigenous thought, it is said: “Land sustains Adivasis, physically, socially, culturally and spiritually.” A paradigm shift is introduced: what used to be the subject becomes the object, and what used to be active becomes passive, of course, continuing to act. What in the current debate around the ‘sustainable’ is mainly terminological and focuses on the subject preceding it (the economy, usually cited as development, or in general human activity) here is entirely re-semantised: moved from the adjective to the verb, from a subject (above mentioned) to another (the Earth). This transubstantiation is produced by the shift from one pole—Western culture—to another—indigenous cultures—of a dichotomy. To reduce the degree of generality, we find in Vandana Shiva’s reflections (2019) some specific topics focused on the disappearance of local knowledge through interaction with the dominant Western knowledge. On the epistemic violence, as the basis of the construction of power, she underlines how it starts denying the local systems of knowledge of being knowledge itself, removing it from perception, or referring to it as ‘primitive’ or ‘unscientific’, while the Western system is hail as universal, instead of a globalised local tradition. The blindness of this model is emblematically recalled

with the example of the forest whose exploitation relegates it to a wood producer, denying its agricultural potential and, therefore, its ecological complexity. Even dividing them into branches of knowledge on a scientific level, contrary to indigenous knowledge: «The creation of fragmented categories thus blinkers out the entire spaces in which local knowledge exists, knowledge which is far closer to the life of the forest and more representative of its integrity and diversity» (AA.VV., 2019b, p. 29). That is an organic library.



Figure 25 | Navjot Altaf, *Soul Breath Wind*, two channel colour projection with sound, 60', in loop, 2014-18. On the left still, the subtitle, that is the voice going on, states 'but kills the soul of the soil'. Image: stills from video. Courtesy: the artist



Figure 26 | Navjot Altaf, *Soul Breath Wind*, two channel colour projection with sound, 60', in loop, 2014-18. Image: stills from video. Courtesy: the artist

Encounter with Matter. The Bling Bling of Things

In the soil, something is shining. On the face of women, something is shining. It is because of the light on them. There is a bling bling, a glitter activated by an external source, appearing and disappearing as it came. A light and a sound at the same time, the artist Otobong Nkanga¹⁷ says in a conversation with Peter Zumthor (2022). This statement reveals her entanglement with materials, including the light and the voice. Her being African—with roots in water, forest and desert—and European—speaking many languages of that continent—seamlessly.

Mica, pyrite, and copper become critical mineral subjects that, among human subjects, generate a world of interconnection, frequently on extractive bases, where these materials speak themselves becoming, through Nkanga's works, "functional emotionally", that is to say, spreading political and social effects via poetic attitude. They emanate their minerality inserted in a fabric of relations that perform them thanks to habitable design pieces, which metamorphose human beings into gentle machines, provoking the overemphasising of the visual properties of the materials, accompanied by lyrics composed and sung by the artist. The strict network that mixes minerals and humans is the subject of drawing and tapestry, as well as actions in which the artist swallows, englobes, manipulates, wears, and sings the minerals (Figure 27 and Figure 28). It is a sort of ritual choreography that does not allow the scientific research—that indeed engages the artist in approaching the topic—to transpire, as well as it does not act on a representative or phenomenological level, but lets the organic archive of the matter shine through. Is this last that Nkongo listens carefully directly from the material when she approaches it, and is what at the end she liberates to circulation, and the visitors encounter even if usually not involved in participative practice, which are limited to some performers, and only in few occasions (Pirotte, et al., 2017).

¹⁷ Born in 1974, Kano, Nigeria.



Figure 27 | Otobang Nkanga, *In Pursuit of Bling*, 2014.
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie In Situ - Fabienne Leclerc, Paris



Figure 28 | Otobong Nkanga, *In Pursuit of Bling*, 2014. Installation view. Courtesy: Lumen Travo Gallery

Encounter with Dystopian Enmeshed Status

In the dystopian society depicted in *The Lobster*, a 2015 movie directed by Yorgos Lanthimos¹⁸, adult people can have a human life only if married. When singles they are deported to a clinic (Figure 29 and Figure 30) with a strict programme aimed at finding a partner in a short forty-five-day period, instead their destiny is to be transformed into an animal of their choice (Figure 29). A lobster, in the case of the main character, David. Someone decides to revolt against this imposition of power, designed for easier and complete control of the person as part of a society, and shelter in the forest (Figure 31), where a counter society, dystopic as the first, does not allow its members to have affective relationships that are severely punished. Periodically, the people of the first society are conducted during the night to hunt the fugitives: each human-game rewards the hunter with one more day in the clinic, as a human—inhuman—being. The atrocity of both the moral system—cultural formations—let arise by contrast as peaceful utopic basso continuo mirage the magnificence of the trees and plants in a humid, slightly sunny, fertile atmosphere and docile attitudes of the animals, once human, beings—the pretended natural harmony. The soundtrack accompanies the narrations, situations, and characters millimetrically with the montage of a classical music repertoire that silently quotes previous movies and their themes. Sentiments are banned. What lingers is a metamorphic immanent transformation that distorts the myth, not conferring soul (‘anima’ in Italian) to the became animal humans. This rational picture shapes an immoral society that also affects the animals, and in so doing, deprives us of the solace of «a story of the time before men and animals became distinct beings»¹⁹ or of «a chaosmos where the corporeal and spiritual dimensions of beings do not yet conceal each other» (Viveiros De Castro, 2014, p. 65, 66).

¹⁸ Born in 1973, Pangrati, Athens, Greece.

¹⁹ Claude Lévi-Strauss quoted in Viveiros de Castro, 2014.



Figure 29 | Yorgos Lanthimos, *The Lobster*, colours, sounds, 1'58", 2015. David (Colin Farrell) with his brother (the dog) at the clinic. Image: still from film. Credits: the author - www.chambrefluide.com



Figure 30 | Yorgos Lanthimos, *The Lobster*, colours, sounds, 1'58", 2015. Breakfast at the clinic. Image: still from film. Courtesy: the author - www.chambrefluide.com



Figure 31 | Yorgos Lanthimos, *The Lobster*, colours, sounds, 1'58", 2015. The fugitives in the forest. Image: still from film. Courtesy: the author - www.chambrefluide.com



Ama, kɔ fie (Ama, go home)



Figure 32 | I - Blitz the Ambassador, *Shine*, 2016. Image: still from video. Courtesy: the author. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gheiegmG5Q>

Figure 33 | II - Blitz the Ambassador, *Shine*, 2016. Image: still from video. Courtesy: the author. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gheiegmG5Q>

Figure 34 | III - Blitz the Ambassador, *Shine*, 2016. Image: still from video. Courtesy: the author. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gheiegmG5Q>

²⁰ Blitz the Ambassador, musician and author of the lyrics and video. Born in 1982, Accra, Ghana.

Encounter with Allegorical Narration. Shkrepëtima

Shkrepëtima, which in Albanian, the Petrit Halilaj²¹'s native tongue, means 'flash' or 'a sudden and intense feeling', is a three-part project. The artist's practice is influenced by his biography linked with the recent history of Kosovo, his Nation. The first act was a performance event with the local community that took place on the 7th of July 2018 at the abandoned Cultural Centre of Runik (Kosovo), where the artist grew up. The story re-enacts fragments taken from some of the most important Albanian dramas, in this case recited by amateur companies, passed through the filter of a dream. The texts were selected by the artist to question problematic issues concerning Albanian identity and some of the models that still regulate its social structure: the struggle for personal and collective freedom (*Toka Jonë*), female education (*Cuca and Maleve*), gender resistance (*Nita*), machismo and efforts to overcome a traditionalist and reactionary mentality (*Hakmarrja*). The second act was an exhibition at the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern (Switzerland). The final exhibition in Torino was hinged around the performance in Runik. Between 1968 and 1983, several archaeological excavation campaigns revealed in that city an important Neolithic settlement. The ocarina, the oldest musical instrument ever found in the Balkans, was also discovered among the artefacts. It, with many other artefacts, remains inaccessible to the citizens of Runik, having been loaned to the Belgrade Museum and never returned due to the war. *Shkrepëtima* was also the title of a multi-ethnic magazine created in the 70's and 80's by teachers and students of Runik. Halilaj's project functions as a spark: the performance looks to reactivate the link between the population and its culture in what remains a symbolic place for the town's memory. The new drawings created by the artist after examining the documents found at the Cultural Centre function as a conceptual storyboard for the performance. The costumes were

²¹ Born in 1986, Kostërc, Kosovo. I visited the exhibition in Torino at Fondazione Merz, curated by Leonardo Bigazzi, 29 October 2018 – 17 February 2019.

designed by the artist and became part of the set-up at the Fondazione Merz with fragments of the Runik's building (Figure 35, Figure 36 and Figure 37) (AA.VV., 2019a).



Figure 35 | I - Petrit Halilaj,
Shkrepëtima, Installation.
Photo credit: Renato
Ghiazza. Courtesy:
Fondazione Merz

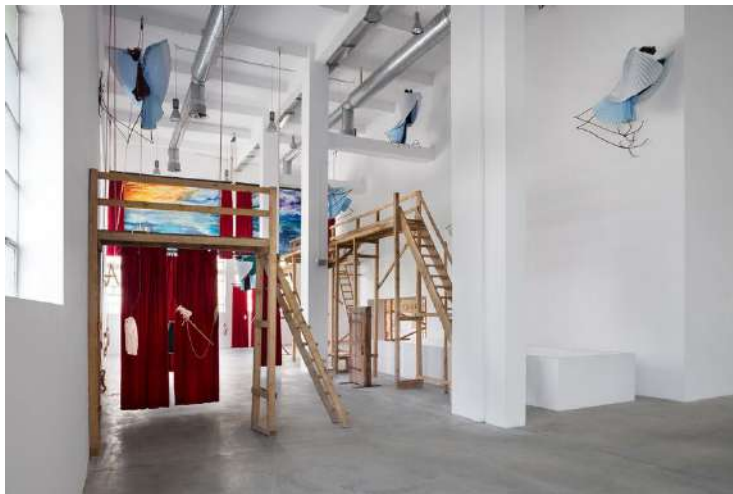


Figure 36 | II - Petrit Halilaj,
Shkrepëtima, Installation.
Photo credit: Renato Ghiazza.
Courtesy: Fondazione Merz



Figure 37 | Petrit Halilaj,
Shkrepëtima, video,
colour, sound, 30',
2018. Image: still from
video. Courtesy:
Fondazione Merz

Encounter with the Blurry of the Artwork

Pierre Huyghe²²'s artwork at dOCUMENTA (13), curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, adheres to his motto "I want to expose viewers to something rather than just expose something to someone"²³ or even better to its paraphrased arrangement by blaxTARLINES KUMASI "Exposing Something to Someone While Exposing Someone to Something" (seid'ou, et al., 2021) in an inter-species mutuality that is effective in *Untilled*. In Huyghe's work, visibility, as a possible status between reality and representation, is crucial, and in this piece of art, ambiguity is at the core. Set up at the composting facility located in the Aue-Park, it is decentralised from the formal art venues, and the ambiguity is even bigger there. Seamlessly the artwork is melted with the already in situ, objects as living beings, introducing a posthuman perspective. A dialogue that crosses the modern and contemporary art languages, with a subtle and provocative quotation of minimalist works of art, or of work of artists involved in previous editions of Documenta, an activation of pigments, not anymore on a flat canvas, but randomly into the space, not a wall to stand by but a vector, a satellite, moving and maybe crossing the viewer's gaze. A pair of pliers taking open impossible worlds²⁴. A concrete replica of a 1930s sculpture by Max Weber is lying down, a naked woman whose head has been replaced by a yellow-brownish beehive fibrillating of flying insects (Figure 38). Medical, aphrodisiacal and psychotropic plants populated the area (Figure 39), while a white dog with a painted pink leg wandered into the space (Figure 38). Scattered here and there, concrete geometric shapes allude to a corroded minimalist repetition (Figure 40 and Figure 41). Are they pieces of art or abandoned objects? Is it a significant distinction? As *objet trouvé* in the field of art, they are part of a processual possibility

²² Born in 1962, Paris, France. Artwork seen in Kassel in 2012 at dOCUMENTA (13).

²³ Quoted from Pinault Collection website <https://lesoeuvres.pinaultcollection.com/en/artwork/offspring>

²⁴ Reference goes to Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*, 1993, p. 137.

initiated by the artist and then left to biological interaction and variation of the living entities, and to the imagination of who makes experience of the site, whoever he-she-it is.

Dorothea von Hantelmann (2017) puts the work on a bifurcation. On one side, referring to Suhail Malik²⁵ that underling the central role of the viewer or “interpreting subjects” in the current art system, a “nice soft democracy of plural disagreements”. On the other, recalling how this self-nourishing artwork is not independent by the art industry as it may seem, due to the fact a film of the same title has been produced for the circuit of exhibitions and collections.

²⁵ Suhail Malik, “Beyond the Contemporary/Jenseits des Zeitgenössischen”, roundtable about speculative thinking and its meaning for contemporary art, moderated by Armen Avanesian, Spike Magazine No. 36, 2013, pp. 90-104 (p. 100).



Figure 38 | I - Pierre Huyghe, *Untitled*, 2011–12, alive entities and inanimate things, made and not made, installation view, documenta 13, Kassel. Courtesy: the artist - Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris - Esther Schipper, Berlin



Figure 39 | II - Pierre Huyghe, *Untitled*, 2011–12, alive entities and inanimate things, made and not made, installation view, documenta 13, Kassel. Courtesy: the artist - Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris - Esther Schipper, Berlin



Figure 40 | III - Pierre Huyghe, *Untitled*, 2011–12, alive entities and inanimate things, made and not made, installation view, documenta 13, Kassel. Courtesy: the artist - Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris - Esther Schipper, Berlin



Figure 41 | IV - Pierre Huyghe, *Untitled*, 2011–12, alive entities and inanimate things, made and not made, installation view, documenta 13, Kassel. Courtesy: the artist - Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris - Esther Schipper, Berlin

FOLD C

On Collective

*How can the Word 'I' be Put Into the Plural*²⁶

“I am because we are” elaborates the possibility of being as a plurality by introducing an alternative paradigm to the Cartesian anthropocentric one, “I think, therefore I am”. But if the anti-individualistic position in the Ubuntu philosophy is easily delimited, the collective dimension remains indeterminate. Etymologically *ubuntu* consists of the prefix *ubu-* and the stem *-ntu*. “At the ontological level there is no strict separation between *ubu-* and *-ntu*. *Ubu-* and *-ntu* are mutually founding in the sense that they are two aspects of being as oneness and indivisible whole-ness” (Dauda, 2017, p. 482; Etieyibo, 2017). Ideally—and objectively—what best represents it is the *pnéuma*, an interspecific breath that crosses different ‘persons’, human, vegetable, and animal, in immanent pre- and post-heartbeat states, to try not to refer to the categories of life and death elaborated by transcendental metaphysics. Or, to paraphrase the philosopher Emanuele Coccia while he speaks about vegetal beings, remembering, paraphrasing, that: the existence of any living beings is necessarily a cosmic act (Coccia, 2018, p. 54). Practically the plural dimension is much more complicated. “A common world is not a consensual world”, observes Rancière and continues, “A common world is a conflict of worlds; it puts together worlds that don’t go together” (2018, p. 283). The question of worlds is central to the analysis in this research and recurs throughout these pages. But the question here is: Why do not these worlds go together? Why are they in

²⁶ The title comes from a sentence by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (*Phenomenology of perception*, 1945) quoted in Achille Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night* (2021, p. 110)

conflict with each other? A first answer is that every being is a multiplicity, which composes its own world, but components of this world belong to worlds that partially cross it. And the world has not only a spatial extension but also a temporal, social and emotional one. The conflict is present, but also the possibility of partial sharing. It is so for the orchestra or on a playing field. Let's leave it open for now that in both cases, there is a conductor, or coaches, who do not compose but harmonize, interfere with the world that takes shape, following a pre-existing and interpreted score or the orbit of the quasi-object, for say it with Michel Serres (1982, p. 224-234). Something about the artist and the curator, they should say. And it has still to do with the questioning between the 'I' and the 'we', between the "i" and the "we", between the subject and the object, between the dot and the line, between stasis and movement, between being and relationship that Serres articulates around the parasite. And this opens up another answer, namely that it is challenging to reconcile positions in an interspecific system, and this difficulty is often a cultural construct. So, the 'we' is something transient and multispecific. And, seamlessly, it is eternal and absolute, immanent, when viewed at a scale that includes all parts. Sékou Touré evoked it at the second Congress of African Writers and Artists held in 1959 in Rome

«In the realm of thought, man may claim to be the brain of the world; but in real life where every action affects spiritual and physical existence, the world is always the brain of mankind; for it is at this level that you will find the sum total of the powers and units of thought, and the dynamic forces of development and improvement; and it is there that energies are merged and the sum of man's intellectual values is finally added together», (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1965, p. 200)

More than half a century later, the term 'world', in its second appearance in the sentence, can be replaced by 'Earth' to trace back to the planet. A more resigned drift has been exposed by Serres doubting that one can know "what is collective", at least on an intellectual level, leaving the experiential possibility open (1982, p. 224-225). Closing the circle, another answer is that since subjectivation is shaped by the social dimension, the 'I' is collective. What about freedom? Emancipation? (Guattari, 1995; Rancière, 1991). To free the

community from an exploitative realm, as Miwon Kwon asserts, drawing from Jean-Luc Nancy, it should be seen not as a “common being” but as a nonessential “being *in common*” (Kwon, 2002, p. 153). What is the common? What is a community? What is the collective? What is the choral or a chorale? It seems a continue back and forth between equal ‘i’ and ‘we’, in the best case. Neither ‘I’ nor ‘We’. Something that art, as a quasi-object, can allow composing, blurring the subject-object condition. That is entering a posthuman state. As Pierre Huyghe puts it, “I don’t want to exhibit something to someone, but rather the reverse: to exhibit someone to something” (Lewin, 2018). Re-inserted in a circularity by kaŕi’kaçhä seid’ou, who adds “while something is exhibited to someone” (2020-2022). In its orbit, the quasi-object is decentralising. It is putting things into circulation. What should be saved is the relation without assigned roles. Always taking in mind that the crisis is the same for everyone, but not the risks. Another clarification is necessary. The scenario that I try to depict here is a generative one. It does not mean I am unaware that another, powerful one, quasi-object is money. Paraphrasing Serres speaking of language, “When art converges on money, it monotonies its flow; it tends toward the whitest and flattest quasi-object” (1982, p. 231). But I am trying to let something else emerge. And see how it can generate a tiny change of state. The interest is not on the ‘cultural other’ (Fried, 1967) but rather on the ‘multiple ownness’ as a scattered and un-graspable formulation of life, inclined to free oneself from voluntary servitude (Stirner, 2003; de la Boétie, 2014), and at the same time neither centring nor universalising. We are again in the field of intentions. Shifting from an individualistic human-centred concept of well-being based on appropriation to a concept of ‘good living’ based on interspecific responsibility, respect, and caring open to another scenario (Etieyibo, 2017; Gómez-Barris, 2017, p. 23). These concepts also are not innocent. If care has been commodified, not only in the medical spectrum and its iatrogenic consequences but in the affective field of action, what about art and curating? Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

traced along the line that rings a bell with ‘curating’, the ‘curatorial’ and ‘curatorialization’, a path that moves from the staging of an event to the actual event as a performance, quoting Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff, to a permanent process that takes life inside a cultural space, evoking both the concept of creolisation introduced by Édouard Glissant shifting from the fixity of *Créolité* to a dynamic condition, and the marronage as escape from slavery and creation of hidden communities in the peripheries of the plantations. Could the curating of art epitomise caring—healing—on a social and spiritual level? Wonders Ndikung, suggesting that a matriarchal structure can empower—via kin—neighbour, instead of destroying it as the patriarchy does, epitomising the capitalistic economic model (Ndikung, 2021, p. 46; 58). If this scenario draws from a post- and de-colonial attitude, how could one introduce a posthuman kind?

Covid-19 pandemic has been a watershed in reflecting and acting through art on a planetary scale. Not a neutral one. Some events I visited stir on the analysis in these pages, some exclusively pre-Covid-19; others immanent to it; and finally, ongoing practices conducted along a temporal line that started before the pandemic.

Pre-Covid-19 Practices. Eco e Narciso

In 2003, on the theme of re-opening the history and attention on material culture, I conceived *Eco e Narciso*²⁷, a nomadic socially engaged art programme sponsored by the Provincia di Torino, which I curated involving co-curators and international artists who generated participatory processes of reflection and site- and issue-specific artworks in relation to the context. My artistic practice preceded the theoretical knowledge of the evolution of Public Art and Institutional Critique and, right from the beginning, placed itself outside the sphere of the art system of galleries, museums and market.

Depending on *Eco e Narciso*'s edition, the invited artists intervene in dialogue with material culture (through the eco-museums, in other words, centres of cultural interpretation of the territory), local government administrations, the new generations (regarding the themes of belonging), workers, farmers and migrants. Visual art, literature, music and design trigger interaction with the territories and their cultural, social and economic heritage of themes, knowledge, traditions and skills that, in their vitality, bond the historical and present dimensions, the relationship between local and global, desires and conflicts.

The posture I took was that of an artist who intended to extend to other artists the development of a very current discourse at that time, namely the relationship between global and local, and the risks inherent in the identity themes. And doing so in dialogue with local people and entities, starting from the specificity of a context, the province of Torino, and the existing cultural network of demo-ethno-anthropological museums and eco-museums on that territory (I am speaking about 100 centres spread over an area ranging from 300 to 2500 meters high, from towns with tens of thousands of residents to villages with just 40 inhabitants, from polluting industries that caused the death of many workers and given rise to

²⁷ *Eco e Narciso* Art Programme ran from 2003 to 2016. Information on the various editions is available on the website www.ecoenarciso.it.

the legal battle for the right to health in the workplace, to an abbey where few monks are continuing care of the restoration of ancient books, and many other things in between).

The theme, as well as the contexts, posed some questions: Is it possible that all this knowledge and this know-how had lost their contemporary charge, in a climate flattened by the pursuit of liberal development models? It is possible that those wise, ecological actions resulting from the solidarity between human beings and between them and the environment should be relegated exclusively to the past, and the rhetorical nostalgic gaze toward it, rather than being a living and active part of the present in dialogue with the more markedly contemporary aspects? A reflection that referred to ecomuseums as the ‘mirror of a community’, ‘pact of human beings with the environment in which they live’, and ‘bridge that in the present connects the past to the future’, summarising the thought of Hugues de Varine and George-Henri Rivière, that are the fathers of eco-museum concept. These are questions, and a way of looking at the context with which one comes into contact—made up of needs, relationships, knowledge and charm—that I had begun to know under the maieutic guidance of Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, both professors of the Faculty of Architecture and my teachers, in a cultural horizon marked by Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological reduction. And later reinforced by the encounter of Valter Giuliano, a sensible and visionary thinker at that time Alderman of Culture at the Provincia di Torino. That kind of attitude has guided me in artistic and curatorial practice, a double label that I do not recognise but started to be attached to me depending on the activity I was doing. Activities that were usually unclear to many: a nomadic project, which crossed the various artistic disciplines, such as *Eco e Narciso*, hardly find a collocation. Even though operating in an area that was the first in Italy to boast a museum of contemporary art (the Castello di Rivoli, founded in 1984), and in the years around the turning of the millennium saw the flourishing of galleries and artistic foundations, which was the setting for Arte Povera in the 1960s and in which an entity like

the Pistoletto Foundation supported art to produce a responsible transformation of society.

Over the years, I have found the interlocutors in geography as international as punctual, often not referring to the contemporary art system.

My curatorial practice, in general, begins with a deep immersion into the context, usually requiring at least one year of work, to enter into contact with people and institutions, breathe the surroundings, listen to memories, consult archives and literature on the place, as well as on the theme that emerges. This work generates the basis for creating communities of practice and intention, which will be enlarged through the arrival of the co-curator and artists, overpassing the local size.

The artists were invited, in relation to their artistic poetics and its resonance with the specific place, to a residence period to get in contact with the extra-urban context—as an elective space where focusing on artistic research—and with local people, so to develop their works, that in the end were exhibited in a venue in that area. Any annuity included many artists working in different villages, with the opening spread all over the province of Torino. Each *Eco e Narciso*'s edition of the 'Material Culture' (Figure 42) cycle was devoted to a different discipline. It has been a compromise to bridge the gap of the diffidence of people outside the art system towards contemporary artistic languages. A process that has been faster than expected, thanks to the fact that art has been intended as a mutual gift. People involved in the art-making process quickly started to be open to the possibilities given from that encounter.

Eco and Narciso launched in 2004 a project called *LAP* (Permanent Artistic Laboratory) with municipal administrators and the community to compare art, local development and transformation of the territory. A workshop opened to all the municipalities in the province of Torino (315 towns) marked the beginning of the LAP project. Several local administrations applied to participate in the project, and four have been selected. The selection process was based on previous projects started by the municipalities, and so with allocated resources,

concerning environment, social issues, culture and tourism, and the chance to involve neighbouring communities.

In 2011, the 150° anniversary of the Unity of Italy, *Eco e Narciso* changed its format. I invited a philosopher, a writer, an architect and urbanist, a media expert, a sociologist and a neuroscientist to work together and imagine which were the ‘infrastructures’ the Country needed at that time (not physical infrastructure, but social and cultural ones), pinpointed, by this multidisciplinary group, in generative answers to the value crisis and their crucial echo on social issues, like migration and suburbs. These themes have been developed in the two works of the series *Seven Small Skies: 7° Ling8* already illustrated (Fold B, p. 24), and *Nichelino Base Alpha* (Figure 43 and Figure 44).

Subsequently, I have been invited to curate a special edition of *Eco e Narciso* elaborating the cultural activities of the project *Stupinigi Fertile* (Figure 45 and Figure 46), inviting eight artists (working in two cases as a duo) to imagine new epiphany and generative situations for a neglected historic agricultural park close to Torino, evoking with the works of art the possibility of experiencing that place in a sensible—rather than consumerist—way, so to avoid its transformation into another theme tourist park. Of the six invited artists, five developed procedural and participatory works involving different people from a context extended to the municipalities in the surrounding area, as appropriate, triggering a relationship with history, agriculture, nature, and myth.

Eco e Narciso has been guided by intending art as how ‘we’ can act politically inside the society, thanks to the sharpness and freedom of art itself, that at the same time can strictly criticize the state of affairs and open to poetic perspectives, triggering small changes of state. In other words, art as a practice of thinking to depict new possibilities, with an attitude always constituting, never constituted, able to re-image the institutions.



Figure 42 | Luca Vitone, *Aurora*, 2003. Environmental intervention at Ecomuseo dell'Industria Tessile (Ecomuseum of the textile factory) in Perosa Argentina (Italy). Eco e Narciso. Material Culture / Art curated by Rebecca De Marchi and Sergio Risaliti. Photo credit: Fernando Manfredi



Figure 43 | *Nichelino Base Alpha*, workshop with Martino Gamper 10-14 May 2013. Eco e Narciso / Seven Small Skies curated by a.titolo and Rebecca De Marchi. Photo credit: Antonio La Grotta



Figure 44 | *Nichelino Base Alpha*, workshop with Martino Gamper 10-14 May 2013. The artefact. Eco e Narciso / Seven Small Skies curated by a.titolo and Rebecca De Marchi. Photo credit: Antonio La Grotta



Figure 45 | Andrea Caretto and Raffaella Spagna, *Epiderma*. Happening in the park, 20 September 2014. Preparing the potions with the 'fruit' of the park. Eco e Narciso / Stupinigi Fertile curated by Rebecca De Marchi. Photo credit: Paola Monasterolo



Figure 46 | Andrea Caretto and Raffaella Spagna, *Epiderma*. Happening in the park, 20 September 2014. The beauticians working in the park using the potions. Eco e Narciso / Stupinigi Fertile curated by Rebecca De Marchi. Photo credit: Paola Monasterolo

Pre-Covid-19 Events. Manifesta 12 Palermo

Manifesta, the nomadic European biennial, took place in 2018 in Palermo (16 June – 4 November 2018). Crucial for the selection of this city as the venue of the twelfth edition of the event has been the political agenda and vision of Mayor Leoluca Orlando on migration and the improvement of social conditions hinging on socio-humanitarian principle and the international right of hospitality of the “roamer” to say in Etienne Balibar’s terms (2018). A programmatic clue that comes straight from the history of an island that has been the crossroads of cultures, peoples, and natures for centuries. At the same time, there was the hope to sensitise locally and at the European level on the theme of welcome and open citizenship, nourished by the meeting of various traditions, histories and biology. Curated by Bregtje van der Haak, Andrès Jaque, Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli, and Mirjam Varadinis, the biennial was entitled *The Planetary Garden: Cultivating Coexistence*, after the French botanist Gilles Clément that in 1997 referred to the world as a “planetary garden” that should be cared by human being acting as a gardener. The centrality of the curatorial concept remains on human beings, even if referring to the cross-pollination that migration literally and metaphorically can provide. Organised on tree theme and hosted in many venues of the city, the aim of a strict collaboration with the local cultural and activist forces partially failed because of the lack of time that always chokes this kind of event. At the same time, the dialogue with the locals, unless the ones directly involved in the participation of the art process, was stained by the privatisation of the venue, through the economic barrier of the ticket price, and consequently mainly confined to the perimeter of the art entourage. *The Garden of Flow*, the first theme, had as its main venue the Orto Botanico (botanical garden) founded in 1789 and hosting a variety of the Palermo flora, not including indigenous Sicilian plants. The works in that section were mainly on migration and the metaphorical relation between the vegetal and human, even if some tried to escape that rhetoric, like in the case of

Palestinian artist Khalil Rabah²⁸ *Relocation Among Other Things* (2018) (Figure 47), a display of displaced objects (as said in the descriptive text) he collected in Palermo and coming with from all over the world, exhibited in a flea market style inside the Tineo Pavilion at the entrance of the Orto Botanico usually presenting scientifically the seed and plant collections. Always part of this section, but at Palazzo Butera, the video installation *Wishing Trees* (2018) by the Swiss artist Uriel Orlow²⁹ entrusts the narration to three trees in Sicily witnesses of political and ethical events along the centuries and to people and documents embodying the same themes (Figure 48, Figure 49 and Figure 50): a cypress planted by the first black saint, Benedictus, son of enslaved African who lived in Sicily; a rubber tree close to the former residency of Giovanni Falcone, an anti-mafia investigating judge, and his wife Francesca Morvillo, killed in a massacre by the mafia in 1992; an olive tree that marks the location where, in 1943, was signed the armistice of WWII. In the second section of the biennial, *Out of Control Room*, mainly presented at Palazzo Forcella de Seta, a semi-abandoned building on the seaside, artworks of complaint against socio-political-military imposition, as the video *The Body's Legacies. The Post-Colonial Body* (2018) by the Franco-Algerian artist Kader Attia³⁰ focused on the bio-political discrimination tied to the diasporic flesh, blood, and skin and made after the brutal aggression on young Théo Luhaka happened in February 2017 in the Paris suburb by police officers arresting him. The interviews of four migrant descendants are alternated with the documentation of that news (Figure 51). Sculptures made of wounded and sewn wood completed the artwork (Figure 52). Fallen Fruit³¹ developed *Theatre of the Sun* (2018), a wallpaper installation (Figure 53) and a map (Figure 54) of plants in public and private spaces where edible fruit is at the disposition of people inside the city's perimeter but usually overlooked. This map of Palermo is part of

²⁸ Born in 1961, Jerusalem, Palestine.

²⁹ Born in 1973, Zurich, Switzerland.

³⁰ Born in 1970, Seine-Saint-Denis, Paris, France.

³¹ Founded in 2004, Los Angeles, USA, by David Burns and Austin Young.

the Endless Orchard, an expanding global resource that, in the anonymity of urban context, potentially generates a form of mutual care between species. The last section, *City on Stage*, was devoted to giving voice to the local communities, mainly disadvantaged, participating in art practice promoted by artists like Marinella Senatore and the collaboration between the architecture collective Coloco and the botanist Gilles Clément working to provide to the inhabitants of the housing estate in the outskirts of Palermo, ZEN, a vegetable garden to take care (Zonnenberg, 2020).

The artworks are often instrumentally aimed to tackle social or political topics, in turns on functional, symbolical, documental or activist levels, and to serve a party agenda, even if sharable, and in this attempt lacking the very possibility of the circulation of the sensible at the core of the political reach of the aesthetics.



Figure 47 | Khalil Rabah, *Relocation Among Other Things*, installation, 2018. Photo credit: Nathalie Zonnenberg



Figure 48 | I - Uriel Orlow, *Wishing Trees*, installation, 2018. Photo credit: Leandro Lembo - www.domusweb.it



Figure 49 | II - Uriel Orlow, *Wishing Trees*, installation, 2018. Photo credit: Leandro Lembo - www.domusweb.it



Figure 50 | Uriel Orlow, *Wishing Trees*, installation, 2018. Detail. Photo credits: Leandro Lembo - www.domusweb.it

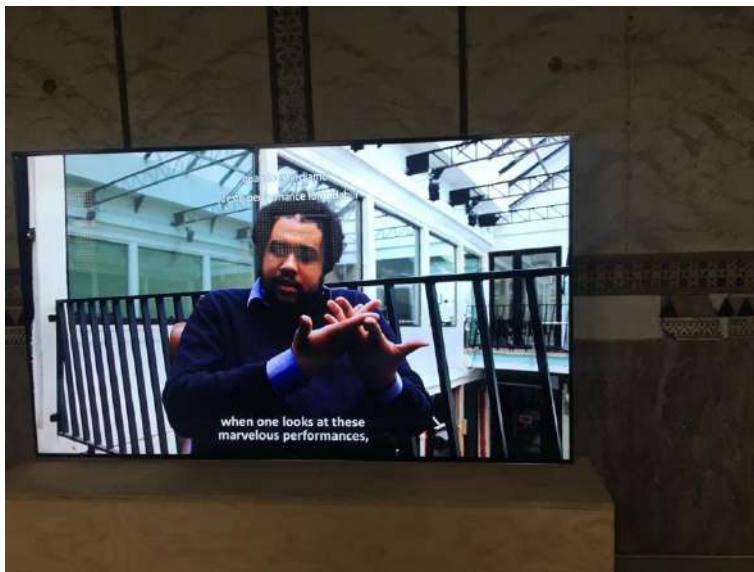


Figure 51 | Kader Attia, *The Body's Legacies. The Post-Colonial Body*, installation, 2018. The video. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 52 | Kader Attia, *The Body's Legacies. The Post-Colonial Body*. The sculpture: wood, metal, 2018. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 53 | Fallen Fruit, *Theatre of the Sun*, mix media installation, 2018. Photo credit: www.fallenfruit.org

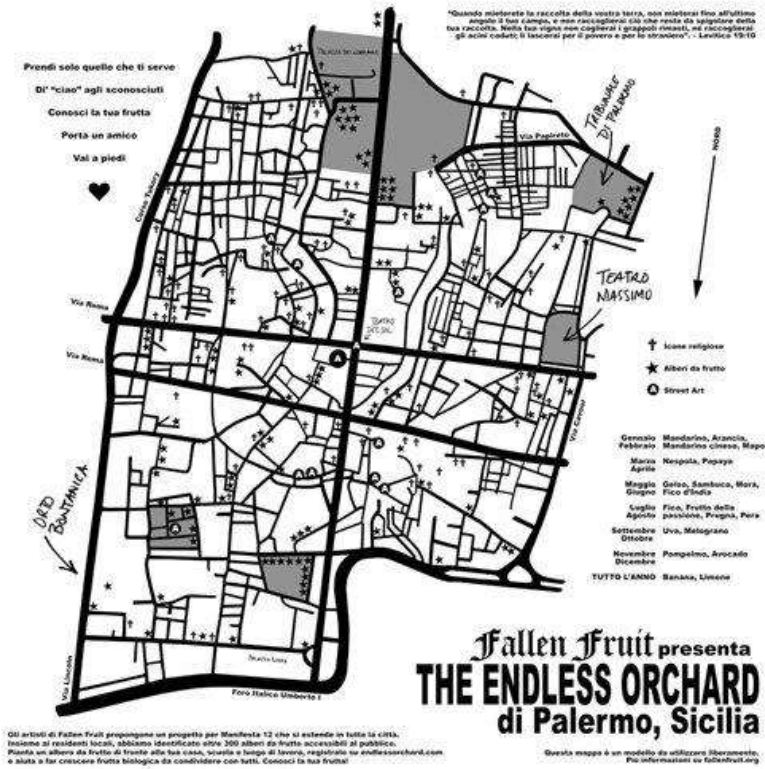


Figure 54 | Fallen Fruit, *Theatre of the Sun*, map, 2018. Photo credit: www.fallenfruit.org

Pre-Covid-19 Events. 16th Istanbul Biennial

Entitled *The Seventh Continent* referring to the floating mass of plastic in the Pacific Ocean caused by the voracity and ignorance of the neoliberal lifestyle and sign of the Anthropocene era marking the disastrous and irreversible damage provoked by human beings to the Earth, more properly designated as Capitalocene, the 16th Istanbul Biennial (14 September – 10 November 2019) curated by Nicolas Bourriaud is suspended among a series of incongruity and ambiguity. In his statement, the curator asserts that in the current world, art is “an anthropology embracing alternative or pop-up communities”, or if referred to the past, an archaeology that discovers an “alternative version of History” (2019a). And, in pretending that the artist is like a “shaman” able to capture the multiplicity of signals of contemporaneity and coagulate them in a meaningful signifier, he implies the scenario is not the ideal meeting between nature and culture in an overcoming of the Western dominant paradigm, but an impure coexistence, that maintains as hinge the human beings and their postures. To this extent, I can say, the seventh continent is the product of a collaboration between humans and the Ocean, instead of an attack by the first on the last, insofar as this understanding can be disturbing. And in conclusion, Bourriaud remarks, “*The Seventh Continent* is an anthropology of an off-centred world and an archaeology of our times” destabilising even more in his appropriation of Enwezor’s critique of his concept of altermodern (2009) that if linked to his other affirmations, actions and selection of works results inappropriate. To name his decision to accompany his speech at the conference press with the projection of an excerpt of Werner Herzog’s *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), having as a subject the whim of a European (rubber exploiter) to climb a steamship in the Amazon jungle exploiting the labour of indigenous people employed in this titanic effort. This as a metaphor for the need to move the main venue of the event, one month before the opening, from a building in the Istanbul Shipyards, where asbestos was found, to the even unfinished new Painting and Sculpture Museum of the

Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. Or, despite the theme of the event, accept as sponsors local companies “deal in petroleum, gas, energy, cars, and other products that cause global warming instead of prevent it” that has raised the protests of environmental protection and human rights activists (Retzer, 2019/2020). Or, not tackle openly the issue of the restraint of the freedom of speech in Turkey and the consequent incarceration of thousands of regime critiques.

Stuck in the dystopian scenario, some artworks caught my attention, like *Spaghetti Blockchain* by Mika Rottenberg (mentioned in Fold B, p. 27) and *Monochrome* (2019) by Ozan Atalan³², a video installation hinged around a concrete pedestal on which a water buffalo skeleton lying down (Figure 55 and Figure 56), a species threatened in the great Istanbul by the construction of the new airport and its hydrologic impact. At Pera Museum, the work *Infestation Piece (Mueselled Moore)* (2019) by Simon Starling³³ links the art history, with a homage to Henry Moor, and the authorial action of pathogen mussels. Starling produced a steel replica of the Moor’s *Warrior with Shield* (1954) and submerged it in Lake Ontario, exposed to the attack of zebra mussels whose increased presence in Canada is related to climate change. When the art piece entered the Art Gallery of Ontario, it suffered from an additional moth infestation. In Istanbul, the work was displayed as two light boxes (Figure 57) with images of high-technology moments of the conservation, and a sculpture. The water is still present in the work—research-based—*Prospecting Ocean* (2018) by Armin Linke³⁴, denouncing the increase of industrial deep-sea mining that affects the oceanic ecologies. The documents, sources of the research, and video were displayed on the ground floor of the Yellow House, a neoclassical mansion part of the Anadolu Club facilities, in Büyükada Island (Figure 58). Not far, at the Mizzi Mansion, *Untitled (AMERICA)* (2019) by

³² Born in 1985, Gelibolu, Turkey.

³³ Born in 1967, Epsom, United Kingdom.

³⁴ Born in 1966, Milano, Italy.

Glenn Ligon³⁵ refers to the influence of the American consumer culture in post WWII in Istanbul. Recalling the arrival in 1946 at the city's port of the battleship USS Missouri, welcomed on the *mahya* (string lamps used for spelling out verses from the Qur'an) of the Blue Mosque, the artist wrote with that media the word AMERICA (Figure 59). In another room, as part of the ongoing reflection on his artwork, the documentary on James Baldwin *From Another Place* (1970) by Sedat Pakay was projected, for the first time with Turkish subtitles (Figure 60). In the 1960s, Baldwin, searching for a tolerant context referring to gay and black people, moved to Istanbul from the USA. The work was completed by two videos shot by Ligon, *Taksim (1)* and *Taksim (2)* (both 2019), showing the current excessive touristic exploitation of the city and, in the background, the protests against the government. (Bourriaud, 2019b; Bourriaud, 2019c).

³⁵ Born in 1960, The Bronx, New York, US.



Figure 55 | Ozan Atalan, *Monochrome*, concrete, soil, video, water, buffalo skeleton, 2019. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 56 | Ozan Atalan, *Monochrome*, video installation, 2019. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 57 | Simon Starling, *Infestation Piece (Mueselled Moore)*, light box, 2019. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 58 | Armin Linke, *Prospecting Ocean*, installation view, 2018. Photo credit: Sahir Urgan Eren. Courtesy: the artist - 16th Istanbul Biennial – www.artpapers.org



Figure 59 | Glenn Ligon, *Untitled (America)*, Mahya (lightbulbs, paint and wire) on metal stands, 2019. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 60 | Sedat Pakay, *From Another Place*, video, sound, Turkish subtitle, 1970. The video is part of the Glenn Ligon's artwork. Installation view. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

Post-Covid-19 Events. Fifty-Ninth Venice Biennale

Any other way, for me, of thinking the Venice Biennale, if not like a cemetery? My mind is stacked there. At the Giardini. A thought spread to the other main venue, the Arsenale, and even widely to the added pavilions in the city. So, going back to my visit to the 2022 Art edition (23 April – 27 November 2022), my interest in the national pavilions is limited to a few of them: to mention, the Greek with the 3D virtual reality installation *Oedipus In Search of Colonus* (Figure 61 and Figure 62) by Loukia Alavanou³⁶ who makes the tradition of the Sophocles' classic theatre to collapse with the challenging life of the Roma community living in the suburbs of Athens, in the video version of the drama interpreter by amateur actors; the Australian, with *Desastres* (Figure 63), a performative wall of noise and images by Marco Fusinato³⁷, which merges the sounds made by the artist using an electric guitar in his daily presence at the site and a random selection of images from social media based on given keywords; and the Belgium, with *The Nature of the Game* (Figure 64) by Francis Alÿs³⁸, an intense and anthropologic work about the infant embryonic construction of worlds, unfortunately with an excessive setup design. My focus has not been—and will not be here—on them, maybe because they are the family chapels, to continue with a perception that is more than a metaphor, interesting—not always—from the architectural point of view, but too impregnate of proud strutted around even in the city of death, even when dead (but of course is also for the alive left) to deserve any attention. And, my position is not to hope for the allocation of a burial recess to anyone who passed away, but on the opposite, the calm lawn spotted of identical signs, ideally not religious, for an emancipated death, at least, if the emancipation failed on life, not a personal failure but a social one. Toward another political aesthetics.

³⁶ Born in 1979, Athens, Greece.

³⁷ Born in 1965, Melbourne, Australia.

³⁸ Born in 1959, Antwerp, Belgium.

So, in Venice at the Art Biennale, the focus is on the main exhibition, in 2022 conceived by Cecilia Alemani, the artistic director whose work was affected in many ways by the Covid-19 pandemic. First of all, because of the epochal change, or at least as it was perceived at that time, a truly challenging time, and now seems surreal, far, in a sort of future that has more to do with a nightmare than a dream, anyway a dystopia that we deceive ourselves to have left behind, but actually are us that refuge in the past, living beyond this tragedy for the human beings, this relief for the other beings. And, this is a compelling topic that Alemani tackled in her *The Milk of Dreams*. The impossibility of travelling has forced her to work from afar, meet the artists virtually instead of fiscally in their studios, or see their works as documents instead of in person. The advantage was one more year to work and research, even with the abovementioned uncertainty.

The title of the Biennale draws from a book by Leonora Carrington, and alludes to the ambivalence of a time astride Surrealism and social judgment and imposition, a search for a transcendental redemption, aimed to give voice to the women, mainly hidden in the selected artistic history. It is a programmatic theme: among the more than 200 exhibiting artists for the first time in the history of the Biennale, since its beginning in 1895, the majority are women and gender non-conforming. And, it is a transhistorical exhibition, articulated around five time-capsules—shows within the show, as Alemani says in the statement (2022) in dialogue with the contemporaneity—each of them with a specific design aimed to stress the collocation into time more than space, devoted to female Surrealism, the ties between human being and machine, the bonds between body and language, the symbiosis between animal and human, and the cyborg. Posthuman declinations that take an anthropocentric starting point and a transcendental posture, despite her referring to Silvia Federici's idea of reenchancement of the world, and her contribution to the Biennale with a conversation with Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui focused on the beauty of being surprising by nature (Alemani & Velasco, 2022), that is the poetic bequest of

the Covid-19 time. The place of dreams, which is not my inclination to the immanence of all the entities in a continuity that does not share worlds, although they share the Earth, because of the elaboration of different systems of knowledge that leave the potentiality of their encounter to let arise new best possible world in common.

The diasporic identity, a double consciousness to put with W.E.B. Du Bois, crosses *Kwaku Ananse* (2013) (Figure 65), the video made by the Ghanaian American artist Akosua Adoma Owusu³⁹.

Destroy and build are the two forces going on in *Of Men and Gods and Mud* (2022) (Figure 66), the video shot by the Lebanese artist Ali Cherri⁴⁰ in the Northern Sudan along the Nile River where a hydroelectric dam is under construction, imposing the displacement of thousands of people. A seasonal brickmaker during the night built a mystical creature on mud, remembered what had been disrupted.

Tradition and contemporariness, persecution and irony merge in *'U Scantu': A Disorderly Tale* (2021) (Figure 67) by the Italian artist Elisa Giardina Papa⁴¹ to re-activate the story of the 'donne di fora' (women not in themselves) female and male, human and not, which inhabited the Sicilia among others in the sixteen and seventeen centuries. In the video, young riders and goats move across the elegant Baroque building and the ruins of the postmodern architecture in Gibellina Nuova, releasing an unresolved flavour.

Exceptionally inside, the Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuña⁴²'s 'precarious' *NAUfraga* (2022) (Figure 68) hangs from the ceiling a collection of found objects abandoned in Venice, a poetic transient work referring to the unsustainable neoliberal exploitation of the Earth, linked with the literal unsustainable weight of Venice that is sinking into the sea. Around the room, on the wall, her paintings *Leoparda de Ojitos* (1977) and *La Comegente* (1971) show themes indebted to the Incan tradition, contesting with their iconography the Western reference.

³⁹ Born in 1984, Alexandria, Virginia, Stati Uniti.

⁴⁰ Born in 1976, Beirut, Lebanon.

⁴¹ Born in 1979, Medicina, Italy.

⁴² Born in 1948, Santiago de Chile, Chile.



Figure 61 | Loukia Alavanou, *Oedipus In Search of Colonus*, 3D virtual reality installation, 2022. Photo Credits: Marco Cappelletti. Courtesy: La Biennale di Venezia - www.juliet-artmagazine.com



Figure 62 | Loukia Alavanou, *Oedipus In Search of Colonus*, VR, 2022. Image: still from video. Courtesy: the artist – www.artreview.com

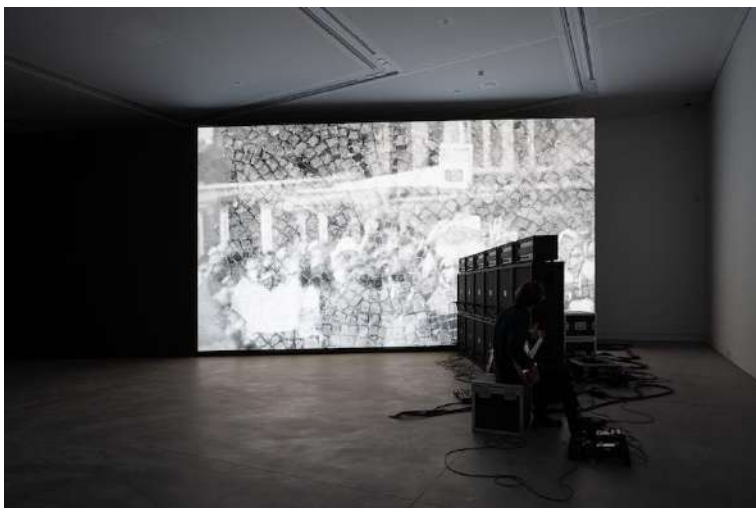


Figure 63 | Marco Fusinato, *Desastres*, performance, sound, images, 2022. Installation view. Photo credit: Marco Cappelletti. Courtesy: La Biennale di Venezia – www.atpdiary.com



Figure 64 | Francis Alÿs, *The Nature of the Game*, installation view, 2022. Photo credit: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy: the artist – www.editorialedomani.it



Figure 65 | Akosua Adoma Owusu, *Kwaku Ananse*, video, colour, sound, 25'51", 2013. Image: still from video. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

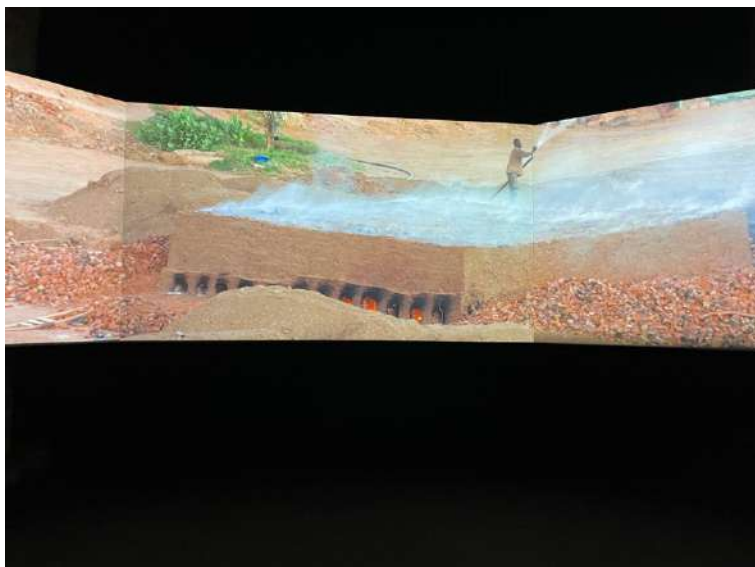


Figure 66 | Ali Cherri, *Of Men and Gods and Mud*, three-channel video, 2022. Image: still from video. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 67 | Elisa Giardina Papa, *'U Scantu': A Disorderly Tale*, video, sculpture, 2021. Installation view. Image: still from video. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 68 | Cecilia Vicuña, *NAUfraga*, installation, 2022. On the wall *Leoparda de Ojitos*, 1977. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

Post-Covid-19 Events. Documenta Fifteen

Reading from far about *documenta fifteen* (18 July – 25 September 2022) only hints at what the ruangrupa⁴³—the artistic director of the event—has made happen in Kassel. It is the experience that reveals that it is not a meta-discourse on community-based artistic practices but an unstable and continuous collective concrete syntax, which operates by interrupting the author-reader binomial of the narration and introducing non-rhetorical reciprocity. Something so distant from the controversies that have polarized attention on the event in the media, to denounce, with facts, that absurd inconsistency.

documenta fifteen—with its curatorial concept and the selected realities that have mostly been operating for decades in geographies that are not central to neoliberal maps and whose mother tongue languages expose and elaborate other concepts—witnesses that artistic activity outside the art industry is not only an issue of words, to say theory, but of practice. The ruangrupa have made the ‘lumbung’ the pivot of the event to urge critical experimentation that starts from this agricultural term used in Bahasa Indonesia, referring “to a rice barn where a village community stores their harvests together, to be managed collectively, as a way to face an unpredictable future”⁴⁴ (AA.VV., 2022), inviting to operate according to the principle of “making friends, not art” (Figure 79). It is to say that it is needed to take part in a larger context. And, at the same time, be agile as a collective, keep it small-to-medium, never too big, building collectives of collectives, in a constituting lumbung based on trust and affinities and not institutionalised. The preparatory work towards *documenta fifteen* has been managed based on *mini-majelis* (small assemblies of four or five artists, individual or collectives) put together according to time zones, favouring existing friendships predating Covid-19 and digital meetings. Sometimes they converge in *amajelis akbar*, a mega

⁴³ An art collective started in 2000 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

⁴⁴ From the *documenta fifteen* handbook (AA.VV., 2022). All references to *documenta fifteen* are from this book, as well as the blaxTARLINES experience in Kassel, invited by the artistic director to take part in the activities of the Fridskul.

assembly. The shared knowledge is referred to as harvest and enables continuous collective learning. So, making *documenta fifteen* an ongoing manifestation in its one-hundred days running, having in the *Fridskul* (Fredericianum—historically the main venue of *documenta*—as a school) a field of seeding and harvest. It is worth reporting some of the experiences present in *documenta fifteen*, besides Gudskul, all not created for the event, but vital in Kassel as in their original place, and take advantage of this experiences to experiment with non-extractive and non-domesticating forms of sustainability, even in the context of contemporary art and culture. Among these Agus Nur Amal PMTOH⁴⁵ who based on the Sudanese vernacular thought system *Tri Tangtu*—in which the mystical, rational, and natural intersect to guide the relational position of humans with other inhabitants of the Earth—creates devices that facilitate storytelling sessions (Figure 69). For *documenta fifteen*, the activities are developed by conducting workshops for schoolchildren, incorporating various domestic objects in his repertoires. The Atis Rezistans (Resistance Artists)⁴⁶ is another example (Figure 70), a fluid collective working in the Grand Rue neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince in Haiti whose style draws influences from Haitian popular culture, history and Vodou religion, that in 2009 first organized The Ghetto Biennale. In Kassel, pieces of art, a series of film screenings and conferences focus on the historical context of their activities, exploring the role of the Kreyol concept *konbit* (traditional form of collective labour), global class politics in art, and the history of the Haitian revolution and Vodou, challenging previous narratives invoking a new revolution. Working between Kassel⁴⁷ and Nongpho, Thailand, Baan Noorg Collaborative Arts and Culture engages with urban subcultures and mythic rituals promoting community ecological and economic sustainability. For *documenta fifteen*, Baan Noorg has focused on non-human animals and extended their operating methodologies through a three-

⁴⁵ Born in 1969, born in Weh Island, Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia. Exhibited at the Grimmwelt Kassel.

⁴⁶ At St. Kunigundis. The church is temporarily used as a contemporary art venue.

⁴⁷ At *documenta Halle*.

part project comprising a dairy farm exchange program, *Nang Yai* (Thai shadow puppetry) (Figure 71), and skateboard activities. In Kassel, in the area close to documenta Halle, the Bangladesh-based Britto Arts Trust creates an organic *palan* (Figure 72)—a Bengali kitchen garden—which feeds the *pak ghor*—the family kitchen-cum-living room—where meals are prepared by local immigrants and shared while stories are swapped. Since 2009, Britto has invited artists to work with local communities, creating performances, cultural and ritual events against the mass corporatization of food, collecting oral histories and recipes. The Hübner area hosts two immersive experiences. Created in 2009, the Fondation Festival sur le Niger (Figure 80) is grounded in the traditional Maaya philosophy, an integral concept with which to discuss the relationship between the individual and the community, grounded in values such as generosity, *jatigiya* (hospitality), *dambe* (knowing oneself and self-limitation), and *sinakunya* (humorous cousinhood), translated through artistic actions that resonate with the social practices that influence change in Malian society. The artistic proposals are presented in *Le Maaya Bulon*, a specific room in Malian architecture where decisions are made. The second is Jatiwangi Art Factory (Figure 74), which operated in Indonesia in the after-Suharto era, aiming to restore the dignity and resilient power of village structures by emphasizing the community's cultural ownership of the land. Positioning themselves as part of the village community, Jatiwang attempts to remake the village's identity by exploring local creative potentialities, having the soil as the symbolic and practical basis. For *documenta fifteen*, the collective has developed the New-Rural Agenda, a transnational summit among rural community networks. Cinema, in different ways, shapes the work of many collectives. Among them is the Komîna Fîlm a Rojava⁴⁸ (the Rojava Film Commune) (Figure 81), a collective of filmmakers founded in 2015 and operating in the autonomous region of Rojava in which culture and environment are melted, with the aim of fostering new

⁴⁸ At the Fridericianum, Gloria-Kino and Hübner areal.

audience and filmmaking skills, as a medium for empowerment and societal imagination of the ‘not yet present’, the permanent becoming that is the revolution itself. Launched in 2005, Wakaliga Uganda (Figure 82)—named after the neighbourhood in Kampala—involved local people with an open-door policy warmed by the fraternity. Together, they have worked through a collective written “script”, making the slum a site of music and cinema revolution, elevating everyday men and women to heroic status. Another collective of artists and activists against the Suharto New Order Regime is Taring Padi⁴⁹ (fangs of rice) (Figure 75), founded in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 1998. They constantly remind to sharpen one’s mind. Motivated by the guiding principles of organizing, educating and agitating, they approach collaborative and political consciousness, organizing workshops to make life-sized *wayang kardus* (cardboard puppets), woodcut posters, and large banners that are then mobilized in protests, carnivals, and musical performances. Through satirical iconography and concise, conspicuous text, these artistic materials convey local socio-political issues. As the last example from *documenta fifteen*, Marwa Arsanios’s work focused women’s resistance in places such as Syria and Colombia that bring together anti-colonial and Indigenous struggle, seed protection, commons, and land and water rights (Figure 76).

What does it highlight to be in Kassel, invited as a collective by Gudskul⁵⁰ to the in-person Kelas Bareng (Joint Class)? That “lumbung” (the Indonesian collective rice barn) key notion of *documenta fifteen* is not an abstract concept, a captivating and promising metaphor, but rather a practice that is, not without effort, articulated in a multiplicity of facets both in the long times of collective agricultural, ecological, urban, rural, cinematographic, narrative, and political actions—in any case always aesthetic—in the non-dominant geographies of the

⁴⁹ At Hallenbad OST.

⁵⁰ Formed in 2018 by three Jakarta, Indonesia-based collectives—ruangrupa, Serrum, and Grafis Huru Hara—, an unconventional space for exchanging knowledge. Among their activity, since 2020 the online *Kelas Bareng* involving Städelschule (Germany), Nordland kunst- og filmhøgskole (Norway), and blaxTARLINES KUMASI (Ghana).

world, as well as in the organization and presentation/existence of these and other actions in Kassel over the time span of *documenta fifteen*, to say the about five years from the appointment of the artistic director to the hundred days when the event is open to the public, and possibly beyond.

It is probably necessary to list where I find the “lumbung” attitude to try to render its character: in the collective curatorship operated by collectives; in the exchange of concepts put into circulation; therefore, in the setting aside of authorial attention-seeking; in moments of harvesting (a generative, spontaneous harvest, even without sowing); in economic dynamics; in the daily life that blends art and life, housed in a wing of the Fridericianum; in the concept of making friends rather than making art; in offering welcoming resting spaces where the exchange is spontaneous and not induced, rather than strictly exhibiting works of art; in preparing devices that make art into play and play into art, for children and their parents. It also means questioning many of the modern institutions. For example, the social and guarantor institutions that claim rights, but in the face of alienating distortions of practices and relationships: I am thinking of the rights of workers in front of labour exploitation. For example, the conventional artistic linguistic codes: proposing forms in which dialogue with the Western artistic tradition is not at stake; setting aside the primacy of authorship (to try to clarify, at the Fridericianum, OFF-Biennale Budapest and not Malgorzata Mirga-Tas; at the Museum of Natural History Otteneum, Inland not Hito Steyerl); rearticulating the narrative (the frankness in the texts of the handbook in dealing with the organizational and methodological issues; the dryness of the exhibition booklet, which invites to write down and share notes—as indeed we proposed to do in the presentation of Kelas Bareng on 11 July (Figure 77 and Figure 78)—filing the hierarchical character of communication materials); leaving the list of participants and events open and undefined; enriching the panorama of concepts by drawing from languages neglected in cultural imperialism, and in *documenta*

fifteen protagonists because they are seamlessly linked to the actions presented and the underlying and acting attitudes; the methods of economic, collective sustainability that puts the art system itself (major events, galleries, collectors, artists) in front of the limits of participatory rhetoric; not to expose something but to make something act, that is, the practices presented are mostly pre-existing elsewhere, they happen in Kassel for *documenta fifteen* and continue in the places from where they originate, and tend to be actions and not documentation.

I am thinking of two works, one presented in Kotzia Square in Athens for *documenta 14* (2016-2017), *Shamiyaana - Food for Thought: Thought for Change* by Rasheed Araeen⁵¹ (Figure 73), which implements collaborative and meeting forms, setting up canopies with geometric patchwork in a transformative dialogue with the modernist tradition, in which a restaurant is operating. To access is needed to book, pay and agree to eat at a table with diners who do not know each other. An intricacy that disappears from the scene in Kassel in the area close to *documenta Halle*, where the Bangladesh-based Britto Arts Trust (Figure 72) creates an organic *palan*—a Bengali kitchen garden, from which the vegetables are harvested—which feeds the *pakghor*—the family kitchen-cum-living room—where meals are prepared by local immigrants and shared while stories are spontaneously swapped.

The results will not be seen immediately, but the aesthetic attempt to move from representation to action, putting in place a current of thought, attitudes and sensitivity, has succeeded for now. However, I question myself on some contradictory aspects, such as the ticket cost that generates economic discrimination (the suspended ticket is certainly not enough as a countermeasure). And how an event can be made accessible to those who cannot be present (for economic, geopolitics, and health reasons). The latter theme was not among the organisers' objectives but, to me, is truly relevant.

⁵¹ Born in 1935, Karachi, Pakistan



Figure 69 | Agus Nur Amal PMTOH, *Tri Tangtu*, installation view at Grimmwelt, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

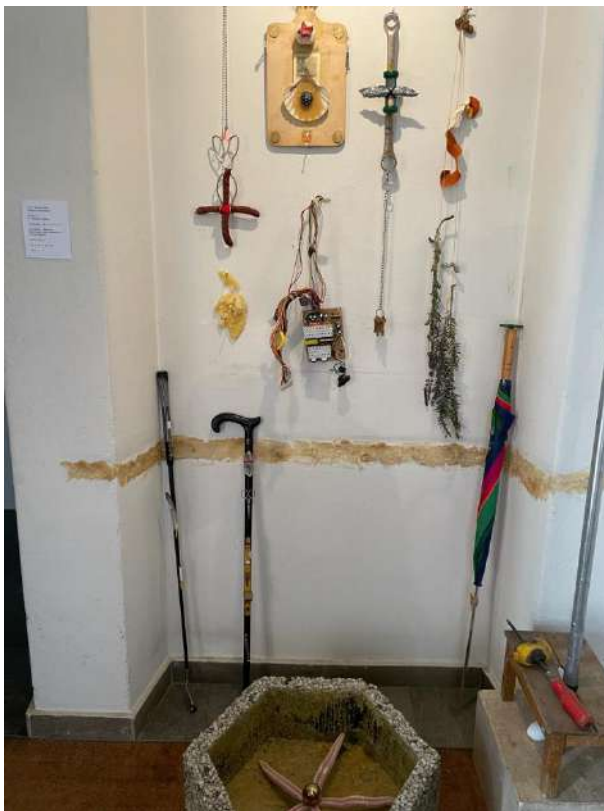


Figure 70 | The Atis Rezistans, *The Atis Rezistans*, installation view at St. Kunigundis, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

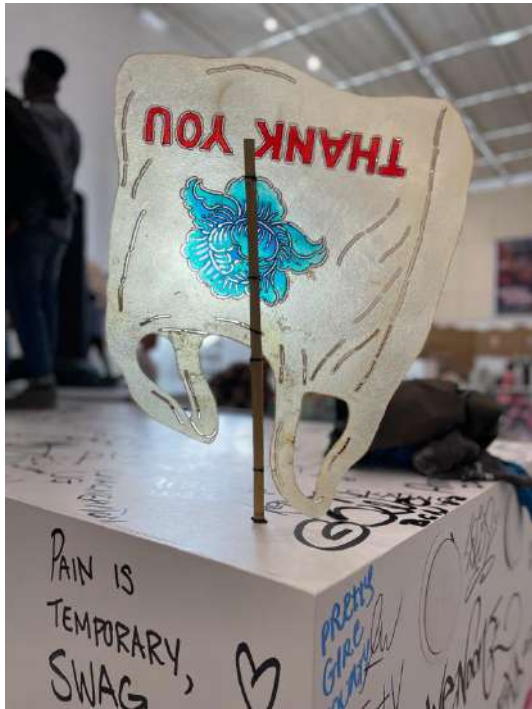


Figure 71 | Baan Noorg Collaborative Arts and Culture, Nang Yai, *Thai shadow puppetry*, installation view at documenta Halle, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 72 | Britto Arts Trust, organic palan close to documenta Halle, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 73 | Rasheed Araeen, *Shamiyaana - Food for Thought: Thought for Change*, installation view at Kotzia Square, Athens, 2017. Courtesy: the artist – www.thewickculture.com



Figure 74 | Jatiwangi Art Factory, *The New-Rural Agenda*, installation view at The Hübner, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: Frank Sperling. Courtesy: documenta fifteen



Figure 75 | Taring Padi, installation view at Hallenbad OST, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 76 | Marwa Arsanios, *Who is Afraid of Ideology?*, installation view at Hafenstrasse, Kassel, 2022. Image: still from video. Courtesy: www.mor-charpentier.com



Figure 77 | Gudskul, *Kelas Bareng*, 11 July 2022, Fredericianum, Kassel. www.documenta-fifteen.de



Figure 78 | Gudskul, *Kelas Bareng*, 11 July 2022, workshop, Fredericianum, Kassel. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 79 | Documenta fifteen, Fredericianum, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: blaxTARLINES KUMASI



Figure 80 | Fondation Festival sur le Niger, installation view at The Hübner, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 81 | Komîna Film a Rojava, installation view at Fredericianum, Kassel, 2022. The man in the video states: 'because, as we said, the nature is the source of this art'. People lying down on carpets watching the video. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 82 | Wakaliga Uganda, installation view at documenta Halle, Kassel, 2022. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

Running Practices. blaxTARLINES KUMASI

The unorthodox pedagogy of blaxTARLINES KUMASI fits the collective and collaborative posture, issuing a “positive action” by the emergent artistic practices and scenarios.

A path started at the Department of Painting and Sculpture at KNUST by kařĩ’kaçã’seid’ou introducing the Emancipatory Art Teaching in 2003, capturing and stimulating a current of dynamic and multifaceted sensibility that aims to transform art from a commodity to a gift (Bodjawah, et al., 2021). Let it be clear that it is not an artistic current but a current of sensibility which, while destabilising the ongoing distribution of the sensible, at the same time collects and spreads as a perpetual, immanent, non-linear process, immune from hierarchical or mono-centralised intentions, a sensitive attitude from which can arise a democratic re-distribution of the sensible⁵².

If, on a curricular level, this means extending the references of artistic production from the teachings imposed by the colonial past, to open them to every creative expression able to create new forms rooted in a variety of cultural traditions, on the production level, it means experimenting with every material, technique, aesthetic experience, extended to every actant, exhibited in a specular exchange. What does it mean? That what was classified in the past as ethnographic craftsmanship is art, in some cases still alive today; that co-authorship stretches apart, including those who in traditional artistic categories are relegated to a passive role (spectator vs. the artist), are neglected (microorganisms vs the artwork that should be protected), or are represented and catalogued by genres (agroecological practices, for example, vs still lifes, animals, landscape, etc.). And it means not worrying about canonical artistic intentionality, which would ultimately make reflection fall back into the Western epistemological structure; and that the forms of collective work are cardinal and political and try to chart other forms of the future.

⁵² Reference goes to Rancière (2004)

The forms of collective work, as well as being at the centre of theoretical research, are part of the practice of blaxTARLINES KUMASI, which methodologically experiments with ways of mutual reciprocity and endogenous and exogenous redistribution. The latter includes, for example, sharing processes such as Mixer with the Städelschule of Frankfurt (Germany) and Kelas Bareng (Joint Class), which, in addition to the two institutions already mentioned, includes Nordland Kunst- og filmhøgskole (Norway) and Gudskul (Indonesia). In 2022, these collaborations resulted in an invitation to blaxTARLINES KUMASI to take part in Frankfurt at Gasthof 2022, a multidisciplinary event that involves several international partners, and in Kassel (Germany) at documenta fifteen, a prominent art event that occurs every five years, for this edition curated by ruangrupa, among the founders of Gudskul.

In the same year, blaxTARLINES KUMASI entered the ‘Power 100’ *ArtReview*, an annual ranking of the most influential people in Art, that year headed by ruangrupa. Described as a “sprawling, decentralised platform of artists, artist-curators and teachers” that “has developed as an organisational network and incubator for art in Ghana, and as a template for independent art scenes around the world”, mentioning the “series of collectively curated multigenerational exhibitions that prioritised a dynamic, democratic approach over any specific media” (ArtReview, 2022), that prompted the rise of an extended network guided from the production of a critical and resilient post-Western art scene. That matches the ongoing re-definition of the idea of power in the art world that measures the diversity of expectation and effectiveness in the Global North and the Global South, not without the influence of the pandemic, during and after it. Or to say otherwise, a scenario that moves around two poles, the market, on one side, and on the other, the responsible inhabiting of the World, with social and environmental repercussion, to which art participate also elaborating different forms or as ruangrupa put it a new “operating system”. Themes that are currently widely debated.

Running Practices. SCCA and Red Clay Tamale

The drive to sow and nurture art where it is a stranger, and keeping it open to possibilities of what it can become, is at the genesis of the ambitious project by Ibrahim Mahama⁵³ to found an artist-run space in Tamale, his native town. An act of resilience, starting from its patient slow gestation. All of them are conditions I feel close to, having worked for more than ten years at the *Eco e Narciso* Art programme.

Initially imagined in 2010 when Mahama was a student at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, the idea has gestated for years, waiting for favourable conditions, coming with his artistic international acknowledgement. It deserves to be said because the process there seems fast, even immediate, but it is an act of strong-willed exposure to the risk of crisis and failure. That can be double-faced. The first premises, the Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art SCCA (Figure 83), opened in March 2019; the second, Red Clay, in September 2020; and the third, Nkrumah Volini, in April 2021. These last two were boosted by the opportunity of time freed by Covid-19 in a region that the pandemic had yet to make a strong presence, but only by the measure to keep protected from it. These spaces are devoted to the experimentation not only in terms of meaning, possibilities and forms of the contemporary arts, but also of the institution itself. Based on the re-thinking and re-signifying history and modernism, listening to the materials from the past, local or colonial, collected by Mahama, at work is a process of making knowledge from them, and at the same time, imaging new possibilities, otherwise. An act that takes many forms and materials in the flexibility of the space that can host exhibitions, workshops, research, art residency, screening in a pedagogical and experimental way, open to collaboration with artists, students, practitioners, locals and international permanent or temporal inhabitant of the spaces, that are open daily free of charge and for an extended time. Every part of the

⁵³ Born in 1987, Tamale, Ghana.

premises is permeable. Mahama's studio at Red Clay can be crossed, but actually it is not restricted to a specific perimeter, and the spaces in themselves are the studio in the understanding of it as a laboratory. Traces of this attitude are the several Soviet-era aircraft parked in the external area at Red Clay (Figure 85), transformed into classrooms where the students from the local schools can have classes familiarising with the broad understanding of contemporary art, with the aeroplane (frequently the first, and maybe only, possibility to enter one) and fly, from this device to the drone. In January 2023, another project pursued for nearly a decade was realised: the purchase and transportation—a monumental event—for almost seven hundred kilometres from southern Ghana to Tamale of colonial-era trains (Figure 84), set up in the same area, now waiting to become additional classrooms, library and space for accommodation, allowing student from Ghanaian schools to spend more time at Red Clay (Figure 85).

The attitude of people involved in this re-founded idea of institution is shaped by kinship instead of work contracts, roles and rules. The value of art and work resides not in its monetisation but in its inner property, the one of the mutual and emancipatory sharing, extended in a recent project—the construction of a greenhouse—to an ecological scenario. It was already part of past temporary exhibitions, like the one on the historical work of the Ghanaian artist Agyeman Ossei in 2020/21 titled “Akutia: Blindfolding the Sun and The Poetics of Peace” and “Existing Otherwise. The Future of Coexistence” in 2022.

A practice that echoed the Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto founded in 1998 by the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto⁵⁴ in his native town, Biella (North Italy), followed two years later by the University of Ideas, with which he brought art into active relation with diverse spheres of society aimed to inspire and produce responsible social change. Another artist, Theaster

⁵⁴ Born in 1933, Biella, Italy.

Gates⁵⁵, created the Rebuild Foundation in 2010, a non-profit organisation based in the South side of Chicago aimed to provide a collective culture-driven process in that under-resourced community and the related premises, now including the Stony Island Arts Bank, The Black Cinema House, the Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative, Archive House, and Listening House.

⁵⁵ Born in 1973, Chicago, USA.



Figure 83 | Exterior of the Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art SCCA, Tamale, Ghana. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

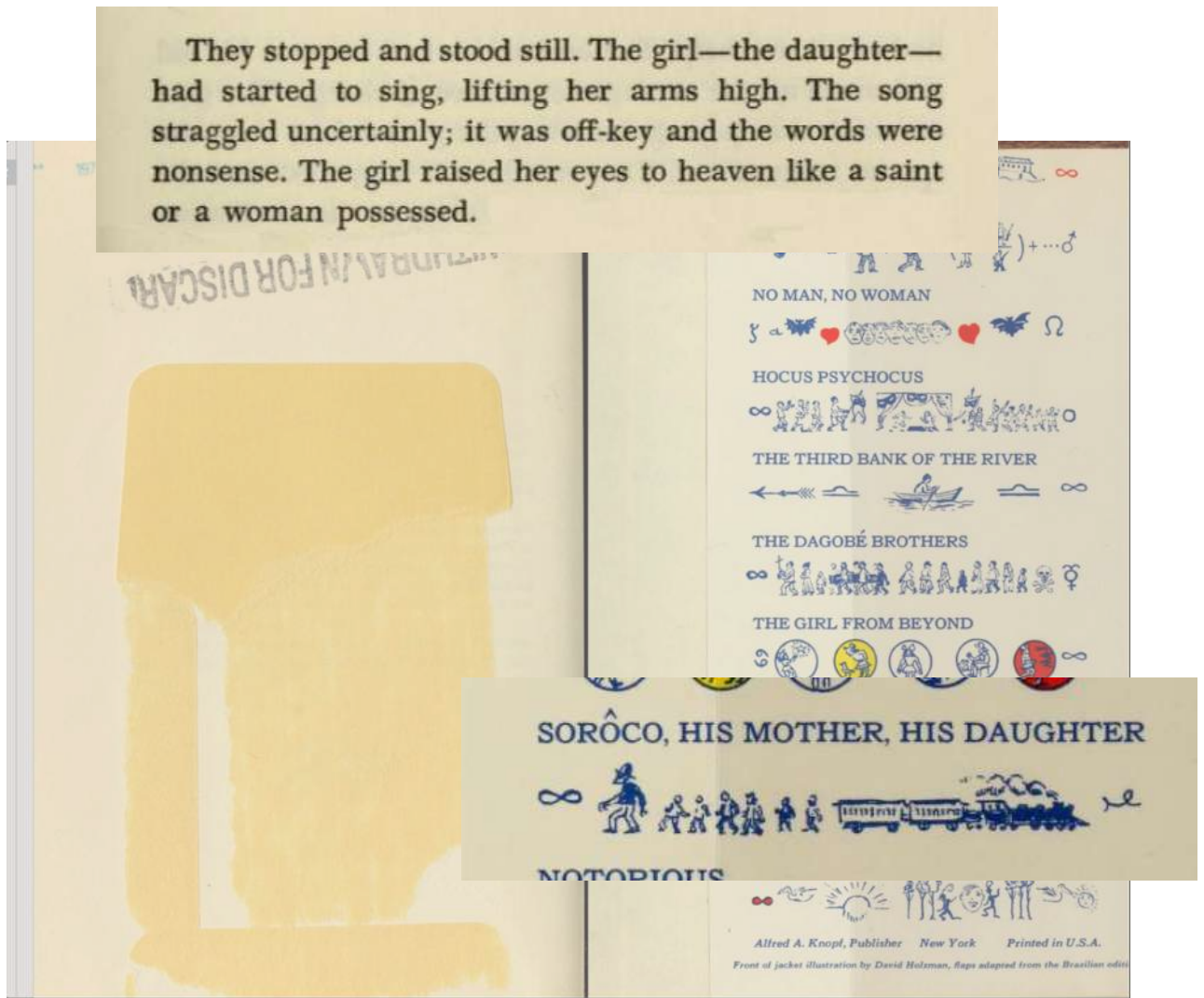


Figure 84 | The trains crossing the Yapei river in the Northern Region of Ghana on their way to Red Clay in Tamale, 2023. Courtesy: Ibrahim Mahama - SCCA Tamale and Redclay



Figure 85 | Aerial view of Red Clay, 2023. Photo credit: Ernest Sackitey. Courtesy: SCCA Tamale

Now We Were Really Taking Sorôco Home



When the train left with the Mother, whit the Daughter, Sorôco started to sing

Figure 86 | Excerpt from *Sorôco, his Mother, his Daughter* by João Guimarães Rosa in “The Third Bank of the River and other stories” (1968, p. 213-218). The short novel has been mentioned by Jacques Rancière in *Politics of Fiction* (2018, p. 280-281)

—and it was the same meaningless song the two women had sung, over and over. He sang on and on.

The crowd stiffened and was nonplussed—but only for a second. A whole crowd . . . and then, with no agreement beforehand, without anyone’s realizing what he was doing, all, with one voice, in their pity for Sorôco, began to accompany that nonsense song. And how loud their voices were! They all followed Sorôco, singing, singing, with those farthest behind almost running to catch up, but every one of them singing. It was a thing none of us will ever forget. There was never anything like it.

Now we were really taking Sorôco home. We were going with him, as far as that song could go.

FOLD D

Worlds in Common. Learning

New Ways of Folding

*Thinking is an Activity that All Organisms Do*⁵⁶

What does it mean to shape worlds? This is a crucial issue in research that, questioning the neoliberal domain, focused on the epistemic topic of how beings make experience and understanding of the Earth and, therefore, how through the elaboration of the knowledge, a variety of worlds are conceived, inhabited and used. Taking a post- de-colonial and posthuman posture, the enquiry is carried on under the lens of both academic and material-spiritual cultures. Wondering if and how they can be compounded. Shift from the Western categories triggers the analysis. As Mignolo states, “Eurocentrism is an epistemic not a geographic issue” (Mignolo, 2017, p. 287). Decentralise means also to escape cultural institutions that result in caging even the ability to figure out counter ways of elaborating knowledge. Kwame Nkrumah (1970, p. 95), Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2014, p. 40), Walter D. Mignolo (p. 294) and Bertolt Brecht (Benjamin, *The Author as Producer*, 2005, p. 777) underlined the castrating consequence of putting the people at the service of the institutions, instead of the opposite, respectively on the field of politics, anthropology, epistemology and culture. This last referred to the Epic Theatre. Unless Brecht, they roundly named decolonise not in terms of freeing a country from foreign control—even if in Nkrumah it is also that—but in terms of freeing the mind of people from prejudice. “Anthropology is ready to fully assume its new mission of being the theory/practice of the permanent

⁵⁶ The reference goes to Mignolo, who states, «Thinking is an activity that, at least, all organisms endowed with a nervous system do» (2017, p. 292), without limit it to the organisms whit the nervous system.

decolonisation of thought”, quoting Viveiros de Castro. In this process, taking another step behind, the question becomes: Who can do philosophy? Intending philosophy in pre-Greek meaning, to say—not institutionalised. This issue brings two considerations. First, due to colonisation, the colonised people suffer epistemic violence caused by the imposition of the Western canons and the condemnation, even deprivation of the indigenous culture. I say that not with an ethnographic position—that means not in hierarchic terms—but as parallel epistemai. And notably, it means that the colonised countries possessed the knowledge of the coloniser, blended with the indigenous ones. Second, the Western pretension of universality and superiority has stuck it in the narrow periphery of its exclusive knowledge. And here, a clarification is necessary. Western stays for the modern academic production of knowledge, because another colonisation took place in the West: the one over the material and immaterial cultures developed along millenniums in valleys and countryside, and later in the urban living energy. The claim for epistemic freedom entails many aspects. The one related to the role of non-Western academicians will be considered in the next Fold. Here the focus is on counter-discourses and how they, at one and same time, bring to other formulations of culture that bring to de-centralise also in the spheres of species, entities, and artefacts as nucleus of intentionality or said otherwise in the posthuman sphere. Philosophy has a pivotal role in dismantling Western supremacy as it is usually advocated cultural paradigms hinge on human being act and conceptualisation. The epistemic disobedience elaborated from the Global South culture, in fact, claims that not only the Western culture produces philosophy as the Western cultural institutions put it, but all human beings do, and have ever done. Rodolfo Kusch says it very clearly distinguishing between *filosofia* (philosophy as academic discipline) and *filosofar* (to do philosophy, which means that doing and thinking are the two sides of the same coins, as Mignolo underlines reporting the reflection of this Argentinian philosopher). But in the current posthuman turn, that is also touching the theme of life-death

continuity, the issue is pushed further, and the question is if the ecological intelligence of other than human entities, that I would refer to as ‘persons’ or centres of intentionality, is a form of thinking generating organised order in the life. Is it only a mechanical or technical gear that produces life in those ‘persons’, or is it the fruit of their ability to think, even of being wise? Anyway, I do not have the skills to analyse this topic, but I want to stay into the fascination of this organic knowledge and thinking, and highlight it. And so, because these generative and respectful forms of life can produce a tiny change of state, a circulation of sensibility, that push a little further the concept of the ‘distribution of sensible’ elaborate by Jacques Rancière (2006), taking the centrality of the effectiveness of aesthetic as a political act. So, how to tackle this issue? I will do a nomadic enquire through the reading of thinkers to let arise counter possible sensible worlds in common, on a planetary scale (a geographic and multi-trans-specific extension). Texts, conversations, and email exchanges are nourishing this going-on formulation.

The Fold is the metaphorical starting point, as a spatial reconfiguration of things that allows getting close parts previously far, to counter coplanarity, as a mixture to maintain all the components, to express the chaos, and to move through and connect impossible worlds as Deleuze stated referring to the Leibniz’s thoughts on monads (2004; 1993).

Supreme Substance

Insights from Leibniz’s *Monadology* (2001; 1898) have been inspirational to this project.

They come from his idiosyncratic description of the cosmos, from the distinctive concepts he deployed in his published texts and also in his manuscript kept at the Leibniz Archive in Hannover—from his handwritten signs, calligraphy, strikethrough erasures, side text, and lines of connection (Figure 87) that show the elaboration of thoughts from the mind to the hand to the page. His capital S would become in his math work the integral sign \int . In the

Monadology, where Leibniz summed up the concept he articulates in previous texts and correspondences, it is the first letter of the Supreme Substance. But what is the Supreme Substance? It is what is imperfectly mirrored by a simple substance, the Monad, that has no parts and acts or endures based on its level of perfection. Each Monad is full of life, “in the smallest particle of matter there is a world of creatures, living beings, animals, entelechies, souls” (Leibniz, 2001, p. 89), and death is a going back to a small stage of life, but life anyway. Each Monad mirrors the whole Universe, the one—among the infinite possible universes existing in the Supreme Substance—that has been chosen based on its degree of perfection, or, to say, the best one. Forcing the interpretation of Leibniz’s metaphysics under an immanent key, from the early eighteenth century a non-human-centred thought comes to the current time with the possibility of the rise of another best world. The hinge is the idea of perfection, a capacious one. Is the neoliberal system perfect? Without approximation, it is possible to say: no. So, there is the place for another impossible world.

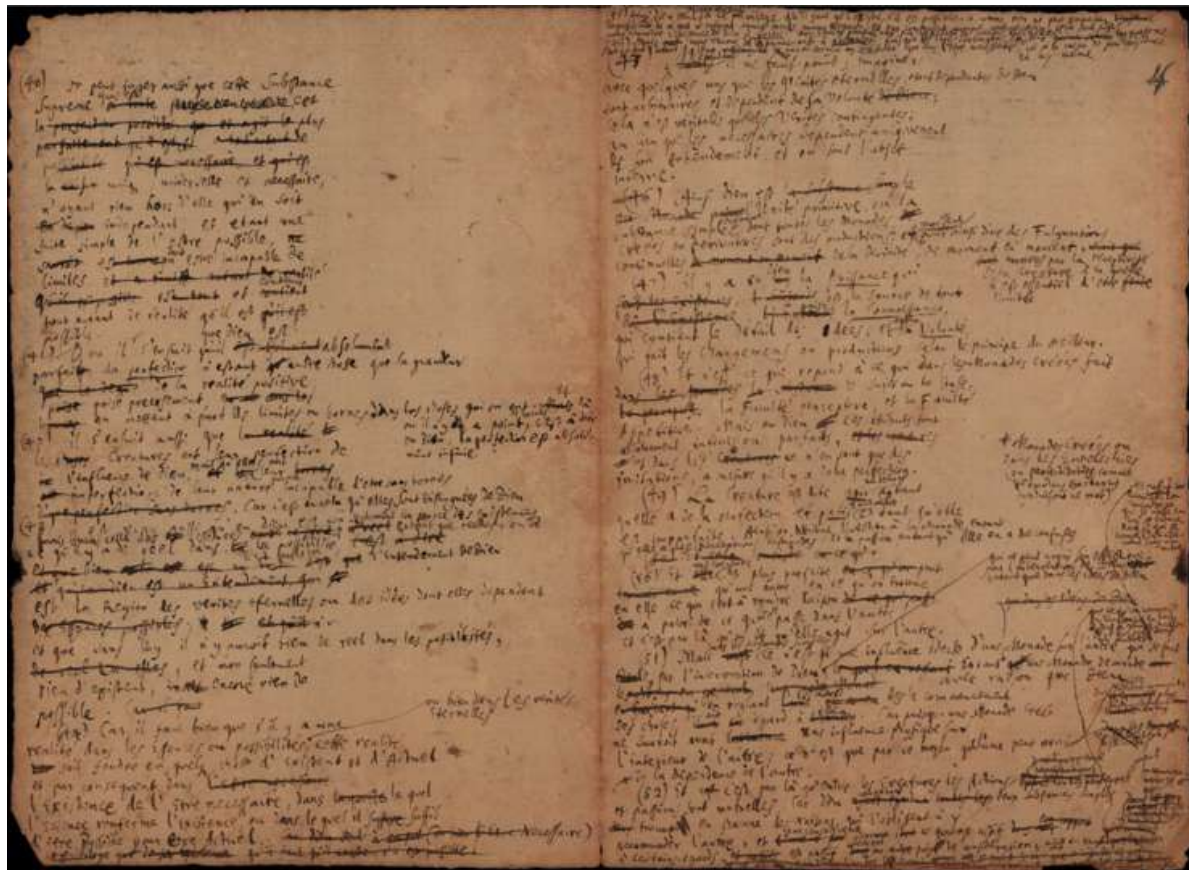


Figure 87 | Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 1714. Images of the first manuscript, written by the author in French. Courtesy: Leibniz Archive in Hannover

The Ontoegalitarian Tapestry

As Pauline Phemister underlines in her enquiry toward the ecological potentiality of Leibniz's philosophy, it "also leaves open the optimistic possibility of a general progression of both individual and world towards even greater perfection" (Phemister, 2016, p. 44). In the process of embodiment and ensoulment, things never stopped circulating. There is a form of sympathetic porosity. When eating, the outside becomes inside; the organs are part of a bigger whole and the whole of smaller parts. "Together, the creatures comprise a rich and varied tapestry" (p. 77). Even if Leibnizian thought is anthropocentric, she claims his philosophy has a second robust pole in nature. Conflict cannot be avoided, but Leibniz believed that preference should be given to the 'one who loves more generally' (p. 80). This promising glimmer allows Phemister to speak of *ontoegalitarianism* that goes beyond the concept of bioegalitarianism. But this 'world-bound' requires humility, empathy, and awareness of the ongoing relational instrumentality based on the fact that what is perceived is distinct from us, and in turn, we are the perceived other of others, regardless of their nature. How to respect the others in this multi- -species, -temporal, -spatial world?

In December 2022—as part of my research *Back to the Small Stage*⁵⁷—during conversations with Michael Kempe, Director of the Leibniz Archive in Hannover, and Prof. Enrico Pasini, Leibniz scholar at CNR in Roma, aspects of Leibniz, the philosopher and the man came out: a polyhedral cross-disciplinary researcher with interests covering different cultures, not uprooted by contradictions and compromises, especially on the transatlantic trade and slavery.

⁵⁷ The research has been selected by the Italian Council 2022 in the Section "Development of Talents - International research grant for artists. Its title is inspired by Leibniz's *The Monadology* and refers to an after-death state, less active, but not devoid of immanent life.

Discovering New Ways of Folding

A controversial reading of Leibniz's thought is articulated by Gilles Deleuze concerning the fold and the Baroque. A time that doubts the Renaissance centrality of the invincible man and folds the forms in a feminine contortion and corrosion of the transient miracle of love and death. The material sores itself, the sound twists into the depth of the soul, or of a cerebral heart, the palette turns dark, and the expressions are metaphysical arrows piercing the flesh and the faith. What is the outside that folds into the inside, that shifts the one into the multiplicity of the unknown? The outside is what cannot be said. Another way to say it should be found, scattered and vibrant—an allegory (Cowan, 1981). But before the strength of the outside—of what is not yet here—could blow into the thought, it is necessary to choose to think, behind the blindness of the dogma. And pump into the chaos, that cannot be framed, cannot be reduced to one (Deleuze, 2004, p. xxv) and form the galaxy of the chaosmosis. The coexistence of impossible worlds all possible, but not together. Or, we can imagine, there is one able to spread its shadow on all the others, that nevertheless are actively existing. They are subjectivising subjects in a perpetual precarious balance between the one and the many. Deleuze says, “For Leibniz ... perspectivism amounts to a relativism, but ... it is not a variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject. This is the very idea of Baroque perspective” (Deleuze, 1993, p. 20). And because all entities are subjectivising the whole, the inclusion of it is not based on an attribution but on a predicate, that in Baroque grammar is an event and a relation. The world itself is an event (Deleuze, 1993, p. 53). Or each world is an event. And, each entity is a world—an infinite abyss.

Not “the gold is resistant to melting and nitric acid”, but—as gold were gifted of speech—“I resist melting and nitric acid”. An infinite solipsistic mirroring of the whole. To say, the

world as an endogenous metabolic process of the exogenous world. A mise en abyme.

‘Everything conspires’ in the fluid and spontaneous mannerism that cohabit with dark depths and from which manners surge (1993, p. 56). Sextus lived infinite lives in the architectural dream of the *Théodiccée*, a Leibnizian literature world of theatrical pieces that recall or better inspired Borges’ narrative. The coexistence of impossible worlds that are distinct from impossibility or contradiction. “The best of the worlds is not the one that reproduces the eternal, but the one in which new creations are produced, the one endowed with the capacity for innovation and creativity: a teleological conversion of philosophy” (1993, p. 79).

Perception is a zoom-in and zoom-out between the cosmological and the microscopic, pulverising the world and mutually spiritualising the dust (1993, p. 87). Leibnizian philosophy is open to the material animality of the universe (1993, p. 95 and 120). Is it a natureculture state of things? As Deleuze said, “All consciousness is a matter of threshold” (1993, p. 88), and art can participate in that. As it is in the Baroque’s theatre expanded to all the scales and material or immaterial, permanent or ephemeral substance: from the urban plan to music, architecture, light, dance, and more. This is a monad, as it is the nocturnal experience that Tony Smith did along the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike (1966), or the *minimal art*. But something is changed from the Leibnizian monad model. Dissonances and divergences are excused from being resolved. The monad is moving along a spiral far from the centre, staying astraddle over several worlds, kept half open. “We are discovering new ways of folding” (Deleuze, 1993, p. 137).

You Should Feel that We Chance Upon Something

“That Tree is my Grandma” were Augustine Da Dapla⁵⁸’s words when he saw the image I chose for the poster of my exhibition at the Prempeh II library (Figure 100). That is: from a dead body grows a tree. I thought—I feel—amazed. At that time, I had already drawn sketches of a cashew tree plant on the top of a mound (after turned into a collage, (Figure 139), remembering in some, not precise way, a statement by Adolf Loos, addressed as the first modernist architect. Going back to his word, “If we find a mound six feet long and three feet wide in the forests, formed into a pyramid, shaped by a shovel, we become serious and something says, “someone lies buried here” ... Now that is architecture” (Loos, 1987).

Memory recomposes things, visions, and concepts. The message in my mind was: when you walk in a forest and meet a tumulus, it means someone there has been buried. You should stop and feel that you are in front of something: this is the first form of architecture. My mind chose to erase the technical information and keep only the emotional one. It stays on “the fold of the outside”, the death that enters the life-side, the death that shapes life. The death that is life? The Death that is the absolute outside of life, but that is not its opposite. The invitation is to be aware of having chance upon something. This time, Gilles Deleuze exhorts his student to pay attention to the death (of the individual, or of people) and The Death (the concept, or the absolute outside of the folded line of the outside). And, he said, mentioning Blanchot, something that brings us somewhere else: he said that only by committing suicide the death and Death converge (Astone, 2020). It is time, and it is urgent, to add a couple of meaningful information. In 1988-1989 he agreed to release the series of interviews known as *abécédaire* (Deleuze, 1988-1989), on the condition that they were made public only after his death. So he stated at the beginning of the first interview, “a” as “animal”. And that he took his life early on the day 4th of November 1995, launching his body, his lungs, his wonderful mind, his

⁵⁸ My husband, from Wa (Ghana)

tiredness in the void, the liminal space between the warm room of his private house and the cold of the public outside. When he became The Death, he became public. I mean socially public. In 1996 the eight hours recording of the *abécédaire* were released. That is not a shared immanence. And that sounds like a paradox to me. Or, I can suppose, the current immanence is so interlaced with the technological media, that it includes this kind of deposit in the flow of what things had been, are, and will be.

The Who of Things

The issue of what things are, needs in-depth consideration. And it requires searching into various geographies and listening to different entities. These entities can be the things themselves. At the core, there is ‘the *who* of things’ to use a powerful locution offered by João Guimarães Rosa in the inclusive disjunction of his warrior epic *Grande Sertão* mentioned by Viveiros de Castro (2014, p. 61). Let things come to us while we come to them. Even if not tuned. That, in terms of Amerindian multinaturalism, it takes the form of perspectivism that replaces relativism and is the mutual immanent metaphysic between the one and the cosmos. “But the things they see when they see them like we do are different” (Viveiros De Castro, 2014, p. 71). To put it more clearly, Viveiros de Castro gives the example of fermented drink: what is blood for human beings is the beer for the jaguars. To say, not what we see when we look at the same thing, but what we think—imagine—when we refer to the same concept. Perspectivism, contrary to relativism which limits itself to recognising the plurality of points of view between the subjects and the object, erases the division between the two and opens up to multiplicity.

Are they the fruit of different ontologies and their related paradigms of culture? And what do we see when the epistemological concept of culture, the production of knowledge, is the reference? How, on this basis, is the visual political? I brought these questions into the

conversation with the Chilean philosopher Andrea Soto Calderón (2022) as part of my research *Back to the Small Stage*, mentioning some of my artistic practice, namely the performative weaving of Kente (I will treat more extensively later in the text): the magnificence of the spider, the dance on his creation, the covering of the warp, the equivalence of left and right, hands and feet, the picking and the throwing. Many of these acts counter the Western narration, even the metaphor of narrating. It is a way of doing, making, and seeing otherwise. Of disclosing other worlds. It is a possible world, among many others, shaped by and shaping different philosophical avenues. The topic was—referring to no western-dominant paradigms—the natureculture attitude and its potentiality on re-pairing the Planet under generative, collective, and more than human positions. A theme amply analysed by Achille Mbembe (2021; 2020), who on the topic of the relation between technology and animism—on a path that links contemporary pervasiveness of immaterial multiverse of the technological items and the traditional mental and spiritual connection between human beings and objects—let arise the condition of becoming African of the current time. Another pole of our dialogue was Jacques Rancière thought on the distribution of the sensible, that Soto Calderón has enquired through the lens of the visual (Rancière, 2019).

I think that more than an ontological concept of culture, it refers to a material history of sensibility and of the material and discursive bases of knowledge. Visuality is also the fruit of a process of formation. Therefore, it is not only a matter of introducing one more perspective among others but of thinking how this perspective can transform the hegemonic ways in which knowledge has been understood. It is in this sense that the visual is political. (Soto Calderón, 2023)

Soto Calderón replies, continuing,

This dimension is very complex because it has to do not only with the norms that have been established, but with normativity, as Michel Foucault said. That is why it is so important to understand the regimes of the visual as a broader problem than what is seen, but to think about how the very conditions of visibility and invisibility are traced. Imaginary consistencies are powerful and, in the case of Latin American thought, for example, the referrals of images to the signifier do not make much sense, as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui or Ticio Escobar have worked very well. To create an imaginal diversity, we need new practices and other communities of knowledge that are not available. They have to be created in each case. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui

articulates an attempt from the search for forms of knowledge that are rooted in oral history, that of those who “speak better than they write and look better than they speak. They are able to perceive things because there is the issue of precise attention, creative attention”. From her worldview, that which is seen is not opposed to the word, nor does it establish with it a place of subordination. That which is seen needs to be prolonged, transformed by memory and the word so that the relationship between word and image adopts other scopes. The activity of creating images is moved in a detour towards visualisation. (Soto Calderón, 2023)

In underlining that in some cultures images are life-giving forces that open up potential spaces of relation and creation, Soto Calderón answers to the enquiring about natureculture saying

For the Mapuche culture, which is one of Latin American most important native peoples, the separation between nature and culture does not make sense. There is a concept that is relevant in this sense which is the '*az-mapu*', an ethical and moral code since it regulates the action and living of the Mapuche in connection with nature. The principle of reciprocity is observed, understood as the mutual correspondence between nature and the Mapuche, based on respect, solidarity, empathy, care and love. Associated with the above, the '*küme mogen*' is appreciated, which represents the way of life of the Mapuche, and occurs under a balanced relationship, from the way of thinking and acting on the basis of respect between Mapuche and otherness and, especially with nature, from a spiritual and material perspective. (Soto Calderón, 2023)

Poverty Comes Out of a Promise of Wealth

One of my teachers, Ampofo Sampson, who guarantees the security of the Prempeh II Library at KNUST, told me a story that I have not learned enough to repeat it. But my mind has titled that story with the sentence heading this paragraph. It is, actually, a warning. Or better, two. The flatter of economic richness is a fraud. Wealth, as value, is not synonymous with economic features. This regards all the threats of colonisation, material and immaterial, starting from the historical one. A theme runs, silent or outspoken, in the text of post- and de-colonial thinkers: the need to invent is nothing but the political rise of expressions of those who usually have no voice. As in the dissensus of the workers (Rancière, 2018), of the partisan resistance, of the diaspora–migrants, enslaved people and marrons. In the self-managing flock of sheep around Kumasi. In the small animals that eat the big animals. A

current that runs not constrained in the defined categories, that does not suit the neoliberal narration, but linked actants that are in tune. “Having a past in common does not necessarily mean sharing it” (2021, p. 4) states Achille Mbembe. There are many histories, and in a non-linear elaboration of time, they can be written and rewritten a multiplicity of times. For instance, as he underlines, the restitution of the objects stolen over the centuries from African countries and became part of the Western countries’ museums is not possible based under the juridical and patrimonial Western discourse, and need to understand the original deep meaning and value of that objects: “...is there any real restitution in the absence of what we must indeed call *the capacity for truth*” (2021, p. 171; 2020). And the truth gravitates around the relational power of these objects: they do not imitate nature but create events. So, what happens if the inflicted change affects the context in such a way that deprives the objects of their potentiality of being, of their magnitude? It is the same concept of culture to be under discussion. It is not aimed at creating identity, individual and collective. It is not functional to something else. It is the life itself, without caesurae, that with the objects constitute a ‘general ecology’, what has been called, even in a contemptuous way, ‘animism’. To say, radical immanence into which vibrate a metamorphic, endless and without calculus current, that does not recognise between active and passive axes, and so counter the Western paradigms of subject and object, life and death, before and after. A ‘being’ that is perceived not only in a cognitive way but also by the *psyche* (Mbembe, 2023). It is on this basis that Mbembe affirms the contiguity between the traditional African galaxy of object-thoughts and the current technological context, between animism and digital devices-data. In expanded beings and to be. For him, what should be invented is, actually, a planetary context of proximity between wandering beings on the Earth, without limit of their nature, humans, animals, minerals, water, air, virus, ancestors, data, etcetera, re-membered, aggregated, by a synchronic and mutual act of respect, solidarity and responsibility, that should draw from the pre-colonial

African and Amerindian attitude. A position that comes from Frantz Fanon's consideration about the need to invent a new man (but we can update it as a new being) that should free himself from the subjugation of the Western culture and the several waves of imposition, so as to be able to reconsider the strength of his own culture and, connected to the current time, found a different way of living on the Earth, to constitute different humanity and world, from the abstraction to the act (1965, p. 315; 2007, p. 265). And for him, the concepts of Nations and violence are cardinal in this act of foundation against colonialism and racism as a technology of dispossession. What stirs in all these discourses is to believe in the potentiality of an African manner. At the same time, what is banned is the extractive paradigm of the neoliberal system and its endless commodification that is transforming life itself, culture, and even the immaterial thoughts into substances to be consumed that recall the vocabulary of the addiction.

***To Write, or Cry, a Bit in Order to Force the World to Come into the World*⁵⁹**

Kwame Nkrumah clearly puts the crucial attitude of inventing and not repeating something stepping nostalgically back on the past. An attitude nurtured from the awareness that culture is an ongoing process, also build-up drawing from the negative pages of history. The focus, the intention, is on what makes the difference in composing in the current time and the one to come. The plasticity of time, which goes on pair with the plasticity of humans, metabolises the past.

During his studies and preparation towards Ghana's independence from British colonialism, Nkrumah developed a philosophical schema that he believed could trigger the economic, political and cultural emancipation of Africa and other colonies. Following some passages of

⁵⁹ The title is a manipulation of the sentence the author Sony Labou Tansi wrote in the preface of his novel *L'État honteaux*, quoted by Achille Mbembe (*Out of the Dark Night. Essays on Decolonization*, 2021, p. 211). He underlined how the work of imagination is rooted in reality, and to give birth to it is painful and joyful at the same time.

his thought drawing from *Consciencism*⁶⁰ allows to highlight the articulation (1970). With this text, Nkrumah retrospectively analyses philosophy and traces its relationship with society and ideology to outline a philosophy and ideology for decolonization rooted in the original humanist African principles that lead back to a socialist egalitarianism and to non-deterministic, dialectical materialism that is constantly under a non-linear redefinition.

Drawing from his words, “With true independence regained, however, a new harmony needs to be forged, a harmony that will allow the combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa, so that this presence is in tune with the original humanist principles underlying African society”, and continues “Such a philosophical statement I propose to name philosophical consciencis” that by gestation, will allow the “growth and development of that society” (1970, p. 70). In addition to this cultural convergence at the basis of a third political path, neither colonial nor traditional (into which Frantz Fanon echoes), there are two other determining factors: the egalitarian respect of all people and the absence of exploitation, or somewhat of any form of neo-colonialism. Topics that Nkrumah points out in these two passages: “The cardinal ethical principle of philosophical consciencism is to treat each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means” (1970, p. 95) and “I have said that a colony is any territory in which the interests of people are alienated from them and subjected to those of a group distinct from the people of the territory itself” (1970, p. 108).

The text leads to an unusual treatment based on formulas that appears as the last chapter of this philosophical treatise—“Set Theoretic Terms”—and elaborates the liberation schema. Premised on a dialectical relationship between positive actions (pa) and negative actions (na), a colonial territory is liberated if the sum of the first (pa) increases as the sum of the second

⁶⁰ The sub-heading of the first edition, 1964, of *Consciencism* is “Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution”. In the second edition, 1970, this was abbreviated to “Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization”.

(na) tends to zero. On the horizon of colonial freedom and the rise of neo-colonialisms, Nkrumah develops this schema by focusing on the progressive Union of liberated territories (GI...K) instead of the Unity of liberated territories, possible on the condition that, for each of them, the summation is positive (Figure 118).

$$U \quad G_{I \dots k} \longleftrightarrow (pa + na) \begin{matrix} \nearrow \\ \searrow \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} O \\ G_{I \dots k} \end{matrix}$$

We are moving from the ‘territories’ in Nkrumah’s schema that he elaborated on the horizon of modern post-colonialism to transspecies immanent in contemporary post-humanism, as intended by Rosi Braidotti (2013). The entanglement between territories and beings is seamless. Nkrumah himself offers the cue to complicate the recognised cultural centralities and linearity and to bring out an ecological intelligence, in a planetary perspective, underlining how the dialectical materialism at the base of the philosophical consciencism generates the spiritual phenomena and favours egalitarianism and consequently emancipation⁶¹.

Thinking of bodies as heterotopias (Foucault, 1984), that is, not as concluded and distinct units, cracks the position on the self and the other, on the self and the different, being basically never a self apart, but a sort of contiguous, multiple, multiplicity. Bodies without organs, nested in bodies without organs—that turns them into organs without body—whose essence is posthuman, in the sense of a substance that is organic and inorganic, material and immaterial, living and post-living, chemical, technological, neurological and much more. Bodies of perspectivist coexistence, in which epistemologically impossible worlds appear

⁶¹ His thought has been associated with the Manden Charter principles, which emanate from the way of existing as “I am because we are”. It is also evoked the pedagogical method of Jacotot at the base of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* by Jacques Rancière.

simultaneously, through which one can move by holding them open with pliers as Deleuze envisions in his reflections on the continuous exercise of folding, of reshaping that threshold between life and death, that is, to perform the ‘fold of the outside’. Yet this subjectivity is, at the same time, collective collectivity, which brings the risks of extractive exploitation of gender, species, race, class, and the potential of collective generative action—a process that places liberated territories and free subjectivities in a close relationship⁶². The becoming, a constituting and never constituted condition, keeps open the possibility of choice, which requires an ethical compass, or rather act—which for us human beings can only be human—respectfully and generatively based on care and sharing. This requires a revolution concerning the centralising and hierarchical moral categories of existing society. That is the emergence of *buen vivir* (good living) based on the sustainability of heterogeneous life forms in consonance with the Earth, regarding indigenous and African⁶³ cosmic visions (Gómez-Barris, 2017, p. 24). That Braidotti defines *Zoe*, stating that «as the dynamic, self-organizing structure of life itself stands for generative vitality» and recognizing the *Zoe-centered* egalitarianism as the core of the post-anthropocentric turn (2013, p. 60). A process of decolonization of thought (Viveiros De Castro, 2014) that opens the possibility to other worlds by interrupting the dominant prevailing extractive cultural centrality and linearity. Examining Nkrumah’s formula from this perspective, the greatest extent lies in not making the whole static, moving the relationship from ‘united’ to ‘union’. That is bound to the fact that for each entity, the positive actions tend to grow and the negative ones to zero so that in the union prevails the positive factors, and if and only if in the union the positive factors prevail, the territories are liberated, to say the positive actions in each unit are increasing with

⁶² Reference goes to Deleuze (1993) and Astone (2020), with an indirect quotation of Felix Guattari from his *Les années d’hiver* (1986)

⁶³ The “good living” is opposed to the “good life” of the neoliberal rhetoric. With this purpose, the “good (after)living” is introduced to extend this concept to its possible translations in temporal and territorial extensions.

the consequent decrease of the negative ones. They are communicating vessels without accumulation advantages by anyone of them. Therefore, a process not guided by the logic of profit but, could be said, by the cosmic generative extension of life, a current. Of the sensible. Before proceeding, it is still necessary to emphasize, by always using Nkrumah's words, that "Practice without thought is blind; thought without practice is empty" (1970, p. 78).

FOLD E

*Planetary Curriculum*⁶⁴

The Planetary attitude here does not counter only the universal and national claims of the colonial processes—to not speak about the threatening arrogance of current nationalist waves—but in embracing a multiversal position goes beyond the geographical and human-oriented understanding of the Earth, to listen to a wider source of knowledge also articulated by other actants, from the unthinkable smallest to unthinkable biggest. Surprisingly, human beings do not know many things. At the same time, they know many things that are not taken into consideration. That means that the way of knowing also limited the appreciation of the infinite library of knowledge and shaped a moral code of respect. To be a little less abstract: Western cultural dominance has hidden other cultures based on a professed superiority, and consequent promise of civilisation, and has intended knowledge not as an end but as a means to the advancement of selected people. A process that, despite the announcement of democratic aims, is based on gender, race, species, status, and religious hierarchy, and consequent discrimination. And, to control the vertiginous swarm of life—a multitude of forms of knowledge—has started to divide and categorise it, giving prominence to the scientific enquiry over the humanistic one. That is, to delve for the advantage of the same party of people, instead of the whole. A suicide attitude, as the current ecological situation is loudly showing: the climate crisis, the migration, the wars, the corruption are all signifiers. So, to claim a Planetary curriculum is a political act. But, how to act?

⁶⁴ Reference goes to Thoughts on the Planetary: An Interview with Achille Mbembre (2019)

*Method is a Digression*⁶⁵

What happens when we try to grasp and unveil the core of things? Walter Benjamin distinguished “between the *Erkenntnis*, factual knowledge, and *Wahrheit*, truth” the first “possessable and available for presentation” while the second, by contrast, “is unpossessable and impossible to present”. This impossibility of presentation invokes the need to re-present it, which is what allegory does: combine what exists with its absence. An “other-discourse” to go to the etymology of the word *allegoria*, that is to create a fictional and fragmented discourse to allude to the impossible possession of truth by knowledge (Cowan, 1981). Precisely wandering into the galaxy of the meaning and wisdom, or maybe foolishness, of events: social, chemical, geological, biological and more. It is not a puzzle to be solved, an impossible goal, but is an endless form of translation based on the potential translatability embedded into its body connecting it with its afterlife (Benjamin, 2007, p. 71), and on the controlled equivocation (Viveiros de Castro, 2014, p. 89). A digression which counts the linearity—perhaps rationality—of scientific understanding, and aggregating seeds of various stories that blow gently, freely interrupted and mounted, allowed another—perhaps humanistic—narration to emerge. The term humanistic is controversial, to start from its root—human—gendered connoted, to face the sad paradox of the inhumanity of the human. So, in the absence of something better, the word posthuman can be used as a concept contributing to the construction of the de-centring natureculture continuum, *Zoe*-centred, posture (Braidotti, 2013). To say, a posture that removes the man from the centre. Waiting to have a proper name for it. Alternatively, could ‘*personist*’ be used concerning Viveiros de Castro’s reading of the term ‘person’ as a centre of intentionality, heedless of its status: animate or inanimate, alive or dead (2014, p. 58)? Alive and death. The Baroque ruin. Where

⁶⁵ The title draws from Walter Benjamin’s formulation quoted in Binaid Cowan’s text on the theory of allegory in Benjamin’s thought (Cowan, 1981, p. 114)

the death, always with Benjamin, is the allegory of the *resurrection* (Cowan, 1981, p. 118), which I understand as immanent. At the core, there are the facts that while human beings shape the world that has at its centre some privileged human beings, and their beloved pets, an epistemic violent system is cast. It will have many implications hinged on race, gender, religion, status, species, and of course a combination of them. At the same time, ignored by human beings, other beings are shaping their worlds, living their life: the virus proliferates and runs in ‘symbiosis’ with the pretended perfect world cast by the privileged human beings, the world mentioned above. Geological slow processes go on and suddenly crash themselves in accelerated acts: earthquakes crack the terrestrial surface, above and under the sea level; glaciers melt themselves, exposing past times; the sky dries, seems forever, or pours copiously all at once, of course, these from the point of view of the human beings, this time not only the privileged ones. At the same time, the data seamlessly run, combine and recombine themselves in composites for the sake of human beings, mainly the privileged, and beyond that. The Galaxy shines and punches black holes, in processes of which we are unaware even when they already happened a long time ago. And, incidentally, always imbibed into the modernist paradigm and in its current neoliberal metamorphosis, it is the goal of conquest concerning the Earth’s satellite, the Moon, and the closer planet of the solar system, Mars. And many other processes are ongoing, and ongoing, that for our mental ecology we even avoid trying to think. How many worlds? How many epistemologies? The focus is not, of course, on the number but on the possibility of taking a position that allows meaningful worlds to appear. The institution, their creation and the potentiality of thinking them otherwise, have a relevant role. “Post-colonial thought asserts that if Humanism has a future at all, it has to come from outside the Western world and by-pass the limitations of Eurocentrism”, as Rosi Braidotti states (p. 25).

A Caravan of Walking 'Persons'

In depicting the decolonial process on a national consciousness basis, Fanon remarks it does not coincide with nationalism, and precisely for this reason, allows it to reach an international scale. That also means not acting against Europe but acting to create new 'persons' (in Fanon's words, 'man', but here updated in line with the ongoing discourse), with not extractive values and consequently goals, capable of shaping an always constituting, never constituted new humanism: "... if we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries" (1965, p. 315). If the role of culture is crucial, it should be found out how to be effective in this invention and discovery. In his analysis of epistemic violence, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni prizes that "colonialism was not so successful as colonialists presented it" due to the persistent reminiscence of what Africa was before. That is actually a surprising and promising fact. But then he becomes pessimist while speculating on epistemic freedom, noted that even decolonial discourse is an apanage of the Western. A shift from the Western episteme to radical epistemic articulations rooted in different, pre-colonial cultures is needed to go beyond the cognitive injustice. It does not mean sticking in the past but allowing to feel the present otherwise, that is under the light of the posture exposed till this point of the ongoing elaboration. Getting back to Ndlovu-Gatsheni's frustration, the problem of academy is that despite the accumulation of title "at the end of the day, nothing has really been produced, and we need really to engage with it, more carefully. Why is it like that? It might mean that maybe we are competent in something which is not helping us" and it is crucial to understand why it is that way (2022). In search of the answer, he hints at the speech Kwame Nkrumah took in 1963 at the Institute of African Studies opening at the University of Ghana, Legon. And it worth going through this pivotal elaboration. In searching for the African Genius, Nkrumah underlines the urgency to break the temporal, geographical, social,

hierarchic and gender boundaries. Very clearly, he states that African Genius is not an affiliation based on a criterion of ‘colour’ but, quoting him, “something positive, our socialist conception of society, the efficiency and validity of our traditional statecraft, our highly development code of morals, our hospitality and our purposeful energy” (1963, p. 6). Through his speech, he invites to rediscover the indigenous arts labelled by the colonialist as “primitive art”, saying, “we must re-asses and assert the glories and achievements of our African past and inspire our generation, and succeeding generations, with a vision of a better future” (1963, p. 3). In doing so, it is crucial the dialogue with the African diaspora to enhance cross-fertilisation. A topic I take deeply into account, considering migration as a fold of geography. In his reflection, Nkrumah refers to the African descent in America and the Caribbean, but now should be updated to the recent migration, prompted by a different socio-economic history that nevertheless shares the same roots with the previous. A dialogue that highlights the nuances of a variety of African cultures—in what they share and in what distinguish them—and should involve men, women, lecturers, students, as well as non-academic scholars, the people that detain the discredited knowledge. And invoke a need for responsibility also in the economic term, respecting the use of public funds, which also means not intending the education only as a means to personal economic security but, in itself, as the starting point to act ‘positively’, referring to the African Genius. In the line that connects the need to acquire new knowledge and the need to diffuse it, it is crucial to work closely with the people: “The time has come for the gown to come to town” (1963, p. 7). Echoed in “The Gown must go to Town” (2015)—one exhibition of the trilogy organized by blaxTARLINES in Accra, followed by “Cornfields in Accra” (2016) and “Orderly Disorderly” (2017)—which displayed the artwork of final-year students of the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, along with alumni of the same curriculum and already recognised internationally as artists (blaxTARLINES,

2015a). A political choral practice that gives voice to everyone, recognizing how the right to culture is not exclusively the access to Western knowledge and its institutions but the legitimacy of other cultural traditions, cognitive systems and learning practices.

At the centre of the attention here is not the exhibition, but the academic curriculum reformed through *kaŕi'kachä sei'dou's* (until 2004 known as Edward Kevin Amankwah) silent revolution which has been injected by the Emancipatory Art Teaching Project since 2003 into that Department (*sei'dou, Ampratwum, Kissiedu, & Riskin, 2015*), of which these exhibitions—among others—are the fruit. The revolutionary act is to work inside the institution twisting its orientation—from the colonial English apparatus of notions and canons, to an enquiry that spans along the centuries, cultures, perspectives, senses, materials, and philosophies—moving from the consolidated linearity of the elitist Western knowledge system to infinite spiral of the Moebius ring, and over. A planetary approach, operating a radical decentralisation that is neither universal nor national and includes all forms of episteme developed along the millennia, towards what Bonaventura de Sousa Santos and Enrique Dussel call a “pluriversity” (*Mbembe, 2021, p. 79; Mbembe, 2022*). This revolutionary act is nested in another revolutionary act, the Tretyakovian (*Benjamin, 2005*) decision made by *kaŕi'kachä sei'dou* to “stop making art” and embark on “making artists” (*sei'dou, 2019-2023; Akoi-Jackson, 2017*).

How We Know What We Know

To research at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Faculty of Fine Art is the consequence of a specific will in my artistic practice, focused on epistemologies enquired in the capitalistic ‘glocal’ time. Concerning the material and immaterial cultures and the migration, the practice has evolved in relation to the networks of demo-ethno-anthropologic museums and ecomuseums, as well as informal migration settlements, in

dialogue with people of different origins, ages and backgrounds, and other actants. The posture is expressly not ethnographic but oriented to the “demonic alliance” fruit of the traversalisation of anthropology and philosophy aimed at an “entry into a state (a plateau of intensity) of the permanent decolonization of thought”, in the terms delineated by Viveiros de Castro (2014, p. 91-92) in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateau*.

At the same time, research has been conducted without overlooking a continued exchange with contemporary arts practitioners and institutions: artists, writers, curators, art critics, museums, academies, networks, residencies, festivals, fairs, forums, and publications. Operating also from within the institutions, stretching their boundaries. An act of folding categories, institutions, disciplines, spaces and places, as a constituting process never constituted.

The topics of epistemic freedom and the role of the academies to be effective under this angle have taken in my research a pivotal relevance, practical and theoretical, welcoming the resonance of non-academic ways of producing knowledge. And it is why I started experimenting in dialogues with many Departments at Kwame Nkrumah University.

Disturbing them, maybe. What consequences has a decolonial and posthuman art enquiry on the circulation of sensible, including into the centre of elaboration of the official knowledge, the Universities? How to tend to the ‘multiversity’? Mbembe, quoting Dipesh Chakrabarty, says: “The project of decolonization can have appeal only if it refers to a set of continuous topological *folds of the whole*. For ‘decolonial acts’ to achieve their maximum effect, they must work through connectivity and elasticity, continuous stretching, and even distortion” (2021, p. 89). In the context of African universities, the theme of decolonisation takes the deepest meaning referring to gain cognitive and affective freedom from the Western episteme, or, to say otherwise, to rethink the way to produce knowledge based on a personal or ‘*personist*’ way to live on the Earth. To create worlds, at this very time.

In the debate about curriculum reform is crucial the issue of language, intended literally, because on it is grounded the knowledge elaborated in a specific context. And etymology caters tips, let arise intuitions, to foster the research. Can the same be said metaphorically when languages are the ones of the disciplines? To exit the “epistemic coloniality” can be effective in this context, mixing up the canonic disciplines as a way to re-inhale the “defeated, subaltern, or indigenous knowledges and life-worlds» considering that «world-wide, there is a recognition of the exhaustion of the present academic model with its origins in the universalism of the Enlightenment”? (Mbembe, 2021, p. 57-59).

To tackle this topic, to navigate through it, to let knowledges crash, collapse, and blossom, there is no method, or at least not for me, if not the potentialities of the encounters and the consequent digressions. Even the way the encounters manifest themselves does not follow a plot. Intuitions and will guide the scattered movement. And it is a malleable will, embodied in the confrontation between materials, scientists, actants, imagination, and respect. An act of ‘thinking’ together, injected by the practice. A circulation of the sensible. The output is left open, for sure driven by my insistence, but embracing what takes place, taking as compass only the original value, the one that caused the process to start. There is the indeterminateness of what happens later if this work of collective translation and invention leads to tiny changes of state in the hoped mood, or perhaps to appropriation for new exploitations. The risks of adulteration are always in ambush. But it cannot be a reason not to experiment.

Zoe KɔKɔ, a Curatorial Entity

In the interview with Edmund Obilo on Toyin Falola’s book “Counting the Tiger’s Teeth. Agbekoya Rebellion”, he mentions that every human being has knowledge—at least in their environment, stomach, relationships and politics (Falola & Obilo, 2018). It brought me to Rancièrian “ignorant schoolmaster” and the equality of intelligence, as well as to Antonio

Gramsci's (Gramsci, 2014) thought on the intellectual faculty of which everyone is equipped, and to Pier Paolo Pasolini's (Pasolini, 1975) vindication, referring to Italy, of the liveliness of a multiplicity of indigenous cultures, flattened by consumerism after WWII. Not only, every being, physical or imperceptible, breathing or breath less—to say alive, dead, rational or magic, animal, vegetal or mineral, physical or chemical—has knowledge. I would have preferred not to list them because it introduces contrapositions, mainly binary, and it is inevitably partial but can clarify what I am speaking about. This miscellaneous of knowledges are scattered all over. The few of them that reach me—few because of my obtuse senses—take care of me, literally curate me, curate my research.

Some of them came from far. An anecdotal insight illustrates the multiplicity of sources and the curvy path of the personal, limited production of awareness. It is Winter, it is Spring, it is Summer, it is Autumn. It is in a valley. From the window of my youth bedroom, the opposite mountain manifests itself. Rocks—as a totem of heads—communicate incessantly with me: my brain, my eyes, my flesh. That rocks are the sky reflected on them, the inner atoms in a non-stop rotation. The wind, the snow, the rain, the sun, the shadow, the taste of tasted soil, and the taste of untasted stone. The movement of a time that is not mine but is also mine. A slanting line of electricity trellis crosses the same slope. On the ground floor, my Grandmother is designing on clothes the geometry of a future coat, of a future shirt, skirt, pair of trousers. There I observe another knowledge mixed with her wisdom. Years later, in a squatted building in Torino, with a Malian-Senegalese tailor friend, we decide to transform some extra-size T-shirts into bags. It can help to support some expenses of precarious lives. (Can it help?) The orange garment is on the table. I take a ballpoint pen and start to trace the embryo of a bag.

“I did not know you were a tailor”, my friend tells me.

“I am not. I never went to school. I had learnt observing my Grandmother, who was a tailor, when she was working”, I reply.

“Your Grandmother was your school”, my friend told me.

Illumination.

It is time to introduce this collective curatorial entity I belong to: Zoe KɔKɔɔ. And to reveal something of this pseudonym. In these pages, the topic of collective and its transient and fluctuant features have been widely treated. So, the understanding of natureculture concept as *Zoe*, something that is related to the Earth escaping its interpretation as an inorganic rock. A world of nested worlds. Something should be said about KɔKɔɔ, a Twi word to express ‘fair’ and the colour red—the blood of the Ghanaian flag—that is in Italian ‘rosso’ putting it into plural a widespread surname, the one per excellence. So, Zoe KɔKɔɔ is all the encounters that let seamlessly the research going on, the projects come, and the exhibitions manifest themselves. In my speculation, the artist is a subject and, as such, immersed in the process of subjectivation. In developing the artistic practice, the artist enters a multiple curatorial entity that does not shape the subjectivity, but the projects of art, even contributing to composing the puzzle of the subjectivation process.

Zoe KɔKɔɔ, as far as I am writing, and regarding the path along the PhD process, is:

Dijallo Boukhari, Augustine Da Dapla, Olga Deligianni, Massimo De Marchi, Rebecca De Marchi, Martino Gamper, Valter Giuliano, Miha Sagadin, Olga Tonda Roc, Bianca Rosa Vair, Dario Voltolini; Prof ƙarɪ'kɔchɛ seid'ou, Prof Edwin Bodjawah, Dr. Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Dr George Ampratwum, Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, Dennis Ankamah Addo, Kofi Michael Adza, Frank Amankwa, Anita Amesimeku, Isaac Donkor, Paul Paakwasi Nkansah (Department of Painting and Sculpture – KNUST and blaxTARLINES); Ebenezer Boamah, Mr Isaac Gyasi (Department of Indigenous Art and Technology – KNUST, respectively at Leather and Textile Sections); Mr Etonam Cyril Adala (Department of Industrial Art –

KNUST, at Metal Section); Dr. Faustina Wireko-Manu (Department of Food Science and Technology); Dr. Mercy Badu (Department of Chemistry); William Appaw (Oldham Laboratory); Precious Siaw Kyeremeh (student at the Department of Wood Science and Technology); Mohammed Ameen Rasheed, Ampofo Sampson (Prempeh II Library – KNUST, respectively technician and security service), Emelia Tawiah (who takes care of the Campus external areas and makes palm frond brooms), Asafo Market’s electricians (Kumasi, Ghana), workers at the Bonwire Kente Shop (Bonwire, Ashanti Region, Ghana), visitors of the exhibition ‘A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking’, blue birds, cashew trees, flamboyant trees, termites, wax fabrics and the market women who named them, and all the authors mentioned in these pages.

FOLD F

When the Wind Blows Only in One Direction, This is What Happens: The Tree Falls Down. Its Body was Full of Pain

It is a matter of encounters. Of winds blowing in different directions. To entangle a variety of episteme articulated by many entities: human, other than human, more than human. Wonder how they can coexist and, under the sign of generative value, how they can let emerge another possible world in common, among the impossible ones. How do we learn new ways of folding that allow that world, that Planetary togetherness, to come into the world? How could we keep this practice of folding unframed?

This enquiry guided myself in the curatorial definition of the “Eco e Narciso” art programme, hinged on the dialogue between contemporary art languages and material cultures. A continuous folding to practice an ongoing decolonisation of thoughts, introducing tiny changes of state. Temporary communities of practice agglomerated themselves and dissolved. Some topics, preoccupation, kinship, and postures have design lines of ongoing exchange of thoughts, practices and friendship. Sometimes, meetings happen running away from something else. Sometimes things run away from us. It is a circulation of sensibility based on causality and fortuity. Art, among other things, injects that flux. Provides a political voice in the whole choir. Aesthetics is there, even if you cannot see it. Listen to the bluebird song. It is modulated among many other sounds, of which human beings cannot grasp the meaning. The shortcut to pretend they have no meaning. So, for the things human beings do not know. Listen to them. They have.

Were You Aware?

Familiar concepts in an unexpected context. The epistemic freedom materialises itself in the words of migrants speaking of the natureculture topic, of the respect between human beings and nature, and among human beings. They came from cultural institutions where observation, orality, nature and ancestors teach immanent metaphysical ethics, as part of a circulation of sensibility rooted in an ongoing exchange of making and doing, listening—as feeling—and speaking. It does not prevent bloody acts but is not made for the sake of cruel profit. Even if advantages are not banned or avoided. Those words resonate inside a squatted building, in a European country. Those words come from young African men searching for dignity denied by Western societies. The one pretending to export democracy and the very knowledge. The paradox is evident. As an artist, the issue reached me and did not let me stay quiet. My attitude is not to criticise, complain, or denounce situations. Rather, to let the deep and hidden other voice arise as a form of dissent. So, to inflate the circulation of different sensibilities, to trigger a tiny change of state. If art can do something.

It was 2017 in Italy, where migration from the Global South is a politically exploited issue, and migrants are discriminated. My artistic practice is always slow and long-lasting. In this epistemic enquiry of how knowledge is produced and its consequences on inhabit the Earth, the artwork starts to take form. Inlaid in a decolonial perspective, through the double lens of Western academic culture and the material-spiritual (or, in other terms, cosmic) culture, it prompts a comparative ethical reflection, wondering if the two cultures are a dichotomy or if they can be a pair.

Voicing both the Western cultural canon—positivist, individualistic, anthropocentric—on the one hand, and the cultural elaborations of other traditions—spiritual, emphatic, intersubjective—on the other hand, the work testifies the dense value and potentiality of these last, after a long period of imposing quiescence.

Into the compelling words of the African people, I heard resonate the wordy thoughts of Western philosophers. The work of fiction started, combining the factuality of daily life and the montage of texts extracted by books; mixing genres, documentary and figment, audio and video, contemporary art of different times and provenience, drawing and textile. Enquiring how we know what we know, and, if we know. In the end, the artwork was formalised as a double-channel video installation, *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, concluded at the beginning of 2020, just before the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Along its unrolling, these two realms of knowledge are compared with regard to learning, power, the relationship among human beings and between them and the environment, delving the origin of these relationships starting from spiritual and material culture as a fertile basis to re-think how to live into the world in a planetary perspective, developing a counter-discourse, political and generative, based on respect and care, opposite to the current and hegemonic one driven by profit (Mbembe, 2020).

One video is focused on the thoughts of some philosophers, such as Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, and Michel Serres, while African oral narrations shape the other video.

The storytelling construction is layered and uses different shooting and editing styles for the two videos, which share the same length (16'). The one referring to academic culture (Figure 88 and Figure 89), shot in a university classroom, is a long take in which the cold photography and the audio fragmented between the “choir” off-screen, a female digital voice, and the actor’s voice on stage, comments on the assertive and diachronic tendency of that knowledge. The other (Figure 90 and Figure 91), shot in a mountain landscape, uses a coarse-grained photograph and transmits the immanence of the message through the plurality of points of view on the same subject. So, restoring the cosmic knowledge synchronicity conveyed by the words of the voice-over, which is revealed only in the final scene. The audio

records with a non-professional device, a male voice speaking in a—for him—foreign language, suggesting the theme of migration, leaving arise the potentiality to which it opens, rather than the critique on it. The silent protagonists of the two videos are both a Kente stole and cloth, which, through colours and patterns, gives rise to a linguistic code, creating philosophical texts to wear. They entrust the creation to the visual art canon and technique belonging to the living tradition of the Ashanti Region in Ghana. That decision derives from the punctuality of the themes and values treated by Kente tradition, which focuses on human beings' relationship with nature and their fellow. The adoption by the academics of Kente stoles to celebrate the completion of the study—the path of acquiring knowledge—in a time axis that binds seamlessly different cultural structures has made the Kente, in the two forms, the characters of both videos.



Figure 88 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, double-channel video installation, colour, audio, 16', 2020. Video on the academic culture. Image: still from video



Figure 89 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, double-channel video installation, colour, audio, 16', 2020. Video on the academic culture. The Kente stole appears on the desk. Image: still from video



Figure 90 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, double-channel video installation, colour, audio, 16', 2020. Video on the material-spiritual culture. Image: still from video



Figure 91 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, double-channel video installation, colour, audio, 16', 2020. Video on the material-spiritual culture. The Kente cloth appears worn by the narrating voice. Image: still from video

The Circulation of the Sensible

A current of sensibility runs across time. The words of a friend, Augustine Da Dapla, triggered the very idea of the artwork, time before focusing on how to formalise it. Words part of a dialogue on shared topics and positions. With the friend's consent and partaking, the decision has been made to elaborate those words into an artwork. Going back to books read in the past, I selected excerpts echoing the friend's words (Heidegger, 1973; Foucault, 1994; Serres, 1997; Derrida, 2008; Arendt, 1998). It was the time when doing research online on Kente, the idea to have them as a third philosophical voice came to me, and the project of making two parallel videos took place. Other friends were involved. An author and philosopher, Dario Voltolini, was invited to co-write the video screenplay on academic culture and choral punctuation. Then, based on the plan for the production of the videos, he introduced me to his friends, an actor, the director of a local academy for writers, the head of communication of a company specialised in artificial voice, and a location on the mountain corresponding to the one I was looking for shooting the video on cosmic culture. A conversation started with another friend, Miha Sagadin, the soulmate of my video projects. He invited other friends, technicians of the sound and image, to develop the work. The slow production machine began to move fed by kinship collaboration instead of economic-based engagement. Meanwhile, I started the path into Kente (of which I will say later). Months later, in Ghana, I realised that the language of Kente is unknown to many and, during the Covid-19 time, I did a series of eight paintings, using poster colours on local graph books, displaying the vocabulary of the patterns and colours I selected for the two Kente part of *Lo Sai?* (Figure 125). Back in Italy, a friend carpenter, Claudio Rizzolo, helped me to make the valet stand I designed to show the stole.

Lo Sai? began to be shared. Criticized because too long, too much spoken, and for its dualistic form. And appreciated for his structure, stylistic formalisation, decolonial discourse and powerful ability to let arise decentred anticapitalistic voices. BIENALSUR 2021 selected the two-channel video for the exhibition “A New Order. Breaking Down Borders”, curated by the director of the biennial Diana Wechsler, at the Fundación Francis Naranjo in Canarias, Spain. The work spoken in Italian and with English subtitles for that presentation has been translated into Spanish (Figure 92 and Figure 93).

The criticism of duality against *Lo Sai?* influenced the setup of the exhibition at the “Metal Department”, in fact, the Metal Product Design Studio of the Department of Industrial Art at KNUST, which took place in February 2021 (Figure 94). The artwork inhabited temporally that premises, part of the original core of the University. The classrooms, homes of learning, welcome the installation spatialised between inside and outside, evoking the themes that deal with the artwork, activating its performativity and fostering an experience of the work that involves the body in addition to the eyes and the ears, to provoking the mind and linking all the components of it as well as them with relevant current issues, namely the post- and decolonial and posthuman discourse. Hanged under the trees on a gold-like stick, the Kente cloth is the incipit, the first document of a polymorphic discourse (Figure 95). Beyond, a dark room appears as a protrusion of the wall. A curtain gives access to the space, or alternatively, the open door of the building invites to enter the primary location. As soon as the threshold has been crossed, a warm male voice comes from the left announcing a video, the one on the cosmic culture of which the Kente cloth is a silent protagonist. Walking in that direction, it appears on the small screen of a computer, while the sound insists on the left. Another turn of ninety degrees and a big window frames on the top the foliage of the outside trees, and down the depicted images of nature running into the video, the same seen into the screen of the

computer, but expanded on a wider dimension, and projected into the protruded dark room (Figure 97). Someone is already there sat, watching the video, before entering the building or after having left it. Inside, while the lizards chase themselves along the concrete walls, the people move among the table where the paintings and the drawings are nailed (Figure 121, Figure 122 and Figure 125), positioned and oriented in a way that allows them to get closer with their eyes to the depicted details of the Kente cloth and the texts that provide information on the name and meaning of the motifs and the colours. The visitors are invited to approach matching with their body the semi-circular hollows that shape the horizontal surfaces of the workbenches (Figure 96 and Figure 98). Proceeding to the back of the hall, the paintings of the Kente stole are in view, and the sound of the first video becomes feeble while the voice on the second video starts to become audible. Three steps up, introduce to the other room where the video on the academic culture is displayed on a screen (Figure 99). Scattered here and there are some stools to rest watching it, and before leaving on the valet stand the Kente stole faces an open window that frames, down, the first space (Figure 100). The path ends exiting the room through a twin door that leads to twin steps of the ones came up entering. Downstairs, just before reaching the outside, a small photograph claims, “This land is not for sale”. A ‘basso continuo’ of my research, part of the series of works that re-enact reality, re-signifying found images that include sentences, with a shift of meaning (Figure 101 and Figure 102).

What happens if the performative montage creates a different sequence? If it picks up only some part of the work and leaves apart others? If the Kente fabrics that are into the drawing, the paintings, the videos, and the spaces diverge instead of converge? Is it true, as desired, that the time melts, that the work is a heterochrony? The tradition is contemporary; the man in the cosmic video meets the man who is showing through his smartphone the exhibition to friends who are living far away, and the two men are the same at distance of two years, and

are the same man that three years before narrating the story triggered the artwork. That is the same that in his life has elaborated these concepts, through his inclination to feeling, listening to and speaking. This makes him a subject who escapes the distribution of the sensible that, in Europe, wants the migrants, who become immigrants, arms for heavy works, the ones avoided by European people. What is relevant is not only the personal act of being able to speak, but in this context of the system of art, the becoming a meta-subject who reverberates the political power of the aesthetics and allows a tiny change of state in the sensible to circulate. Subject and subjectivation, the self and the multiple, the literal and the mirrored, the point of junction of utopia and heterotopia are going on seamlessly. And they are quite more than only words spoken in a variety of languages—the words, the symbols, the icons—, they are the manifestation of a counter-voice.

It should be noted that the attitude spurts from the work, and around the work, in the global North and in the global South is different. If the concern in the first case is frequently that current attention span is too limited for artworks whose message is not immediate, in the second, the people even watch the videos more than one time, and in some cases, contact the artist to see the videos again, or to ask for having the texts, so to be able to go through with an ease of time. There is a crucial difference in these two attitudes: in the first case, those who speak are curators, while in the second are people attending the exhibition (that does not exclude art practitioners). It can be proof of my complaint about the lack of ‘participant’ voices in the Bishop’s critique of relational and community-based art practices (2004) (2006) (2012).



Figure 92 | 'Otro orden. Derribando fronteras' (A New Order. Breaking Down Borders). BIENALSUR 2021. Curated by Diana Weshsler. Fundación Francis Naranjo in Canarias, Spain. Opening 28th of August 2021. View of the entrance. Photo courtesy: BIENALSUR 2021



Figure 93 | Rebecca de Marchi, *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, two-channel video, colour, audio, 2020. Display at 'Otro orden. Derribando fronteras' (A New Order. Breaking Down Borders). BIENALSUR 2021. Curated by Diana Weshsler. Fundación Francis Naranjo in Canarias, Spain. Photo courtesy: BIENALSUR 2021



Figure 94 | Poster of the exhibition *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, 2021, at KNUST 'Metal Department'. Designed by Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 95 | The exhibition *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, 2021, at KNUST 'Metal Department'. Installation view: the Kente cloth display outside under the tree. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 96 | The exhibition *Lo Sai? (Were you aware?)*, 2021, at KNUST 'Metal Department'. Installation view: the inside, first room. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

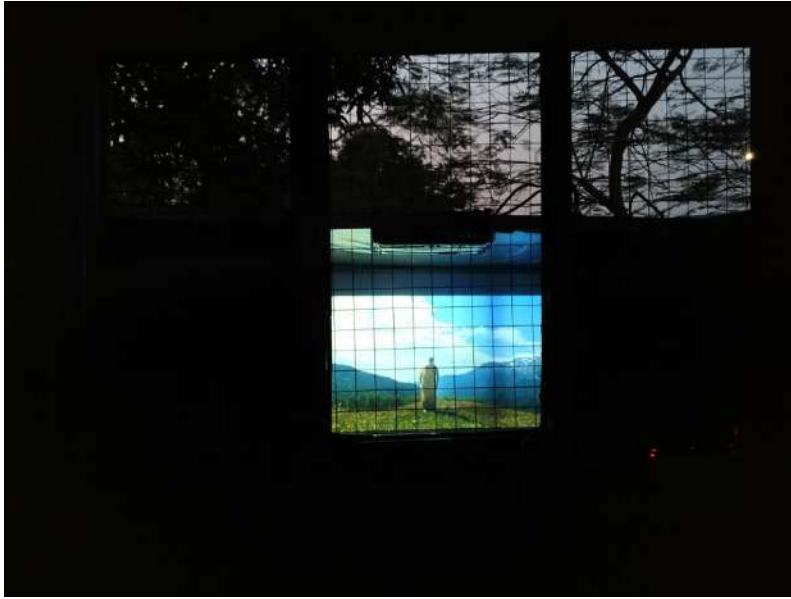


Figure 97 | The exhibition *Lo Sai?* (Were you aware?), 2021, at KNUST 'Metal Department'. Installation view: the video on material-spiritual culture seen through the window. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 98 | The exhibition *Lo Sai?* (Were you aware?), 2021, at KNUST 'Metal Department'. Installation view: the inside, first room with the painting on the table. Ulla Deventer is watching the video on material-spiritual culture through the window. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 99 | The exhibition *Lo Sai?* (Were you aware?), 2021, at KNUST 'Metal Department'. Installation view: the inside, second room, the video on academic culture. Prof. *kārĩ'kachä'seid'ou*, artist Ibrahim Mahama, Rachel van Haver, Lisa C. Soto, and others are watching the video. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 100 | The exhibition *Lo Sai?* (Were you aware?), 2021, at KNUST 'Metal Department'. Installation view: the inside, second room, the Kente stole in front of the window overlooking the first room. Artist Bright Ackwerth is watching the video. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 101 | Rebecca De Marchi, *This Land is Not For Sale*, 2021, photograph, cm 13 x 13



Figure 102 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Objects are Closer than they Appear*, 2023, photograph, cm 13 x 13

Art as Pedagogy on the Campus

That exhibition also told me something else. There are laboratories in the same campus area, and I came to one devoted to Western textiles, asking if I could find someone weaving Kente at KNUST. The answer was, “No”. And they sent me to the Kumasi Cultural Centre. Short later, when I was collaborating with Mr Cyril Adala, in charge of the Jewellery Section, I mentioned I should go to the Cultural Centre to develop my research on Kente, and, surprised, he told me that at KNUST there is a traditional weaving laboratory, in the same area. We were walking between the two premises of the metal laboratories, and he stopped close to a building and said, “Let me introduce you to Mr Gyasi”, the principal technician at the Fibre and Fabrics Section. Three irregular steps up, we entered the long room filled with Kente and wider looms. I realised that even inside the same subject—the textile—and in a space not broader than three hundred square meters, students ignored the wideness of the educational syllabus inside the Campus. And maybe, with an ethnographic bias taking that what is traditional is relegated to the City’s Cultural Centre and is, in some way, only part of the past, then preserved in devoted institutions instead of being an alive, and so ongoing, knowledge. A theme I deeply care and shaped the “Eco e Narciso” art programme. It was at that very moment that I decided to set up another exhibition hinged on *Lo Sai?* at the main Library of the University during the exam period, when it is open seven days per week, twenty-four hours per day, and crossed by thousands of students and lecturers, and do so in collaboration with the textile section of the, at that time, Integrated Rural Art and Industry Department IRAI.

Months later, having met Mr Isaac Gyasi again, who meanwhile started his first year as PhD student at the Department of Painting and Sculpture, I began to frequent the textile laboratory and practice the weaving, initially on the wider loom (Appendix 1). The conversations with Prof. k̄arĩ’k̄achä’said’ou and Mr Gyasi encouraged me to go ahead with this idea of an

exhibition, that becomes more concrete (Appendix 2, 3 and 4). Visits to the Library guided by this aim, designed in my mind how to display the artwork. Modernist desks in the second-floor reading room caught my attention as perfect displayers for the paintings, drawings and books. The first collage sketches came out. The core was not specifically the Kente, but the blurring of cultures and the ecological respect to shape a counter epistemology concerning the Western dominant one, with decolonial and posthuman posture, embracing academic and material-spiritual cultures. The Kente was the pretext. An allegorical subject, whose meaning is impalpable and broader than its historical value and mythological narration, the practical skills it requires to be made, and the philosophical and social discourse it can spread. Anyway, it was a subject of expression, and I should unfold to let it speak all these topics. In parallel, visits to the Library and the textile laboratory occupy my mind, my time. They were eloquent. Searching for books on Kente, I have been introduced to the Ghana Collection section of the Library on the second floor. There I met for the first time Clement Adai and Emmanuel Baiden. Months later, we agreed to have photocopies of the cover of those books as part of the exhibition downstairs in the hall, sharing the information about the existence of that section and book heritage, inviting people to consult it. Some of these books were mentioned earlier by Mr Gyasi, who told me that having them at his Department Library would be helpful. With him, we established that moving some Kente looms to the main Library was possible. He could set up them, and in collaboration with some of his students, the Kente could be woven there. As a contribution, I would have bought an amount of yarn double compared to the need for my Kente clothes, so to contribute to the students' needs of the following academic year and everything necessary to the setup of the looms, and I would have provided to the purchase of some of the books indicated by him.

On September 2022, the 12th, the exhibition “A Place Where Only Salt is Laking” opened at the Prempeh II Library (Figure 103), presenting three artworks articulated around the research on the epistemological topic of how human beings make experience and knowledge of the Earth and how they consequently conceive worlds and use and inhabit them. The works contribute to fabricating an archive of the future (Gómez-Barris, 2017), assuming a planetary, posthuman and decolonial critical posture. In other words, a posture aimed at undermining modern cultural supremacy and bringing out other sensitive and possible worlds in common. In my work, folding is the metaphorical and metamorphic act that complicates the historical, geographical and cognitive linearity and redefines contiguity in a fleeting field of existence in which “the fold of the outside” ruminates, to recall the reflections on the death elaborated by Gilles Deleuze⁶⁶ (Astone, 2020) and those on the afterlife by Rosi Braidotti (2013).

There *Lo Sai?* put in place a pedagogical system that performed the artwork as an open, generative device for meetings and reflections. Reflections that investigate non-linear temporality and make possible to deepen both the cultural and philosophical horizons. The two videos were shown in the atrium, respectively, on the screen already on the left side and projected in the frame-shaped on the right wall. In the middle position, on modernist tables, the series of poster colour paintings on Ghanaian graph books were displayed, revealing the meaning of the symbols part of these Kente, and their drawings (Figure 107, Figure 108, Figure 121, Figure 122 and Figure 125). Books for in-depth knowledge of the Kente were available to be consulted sitting on the pouffes scattered in the hall. In addition, the photocopies of the covers of the books in the Ghana Collection Section were shown to invite

⁶⁶ References goes to the Gilles Deleuze course at Paris VIII University on Michel Foucault in 1985-1986.

people to consult them upstairs. Outside, under the portico, three traditional looms for Kente production diagonally cut the space with the solid pictorial-sculptural presence conferred by the long-coloured tail of the warp (Figure 104 and Figure 105). There were differences in similarity. One was the very traditional loom, the indigenous Ashanti one with the low stool and the like-buttons to steer with the big toes and their near toes. Another version was the adaptation of the Bonwire loom by the inventor Mr Lionel Idan, called Boku loom and created in the 70s at the IRAI laboratory to improve the efficiency of the traditional one, with pedals to operate the weaver, and the warp rolled to reduce the encumbrance of the machinery (Asmah, Okpattah, & Dominic, 2005). Then, the third was a mix of the two.

The Kente fabrics that appear in the videos were woven on the looms, creating a temporal short circuit. The students of the IRAI Department, with whose collaboration the exhibition was finally organised, trained by Mr Isaac Gyasi, wove and transferred Kente's technical and historical notions to those who approached and asked for information (Figure 105). The artist started in that period a performance, learning herself to weave (Figure 106). The time required to produce the fabrics was expected to determine the exhibition's duration.

Nevertheless, a strike was announced on the 17th of October, 2022, and the Library was closed. One loom was moved to TecSec, where the artists and students at the Department of Painting and Sculpture have their studios, and she continues her daily-based performance, sharing the knowledge about Kente with the people passing there (Figure 109). Some students decided to try to learn how to weave Kente, at least the motifs composing *Lo Sai?*: John Paul, in his first year, and especially Francis, in his third year, who resumed his previous knowledge on the field, gained as a child in his neighbourhood in Bonwire, and help the going on of the work.

It should be said clearly. Here, the attention on Kente is not ethnographic. On the contrary, what is going on is the elaboration of contemporary art. And the political work of the aesthetics.

During the period of the exhibition, an in-progress meet-up programme was expected to take place and provide public moments as an in-depth study on the technical, historical, mythological and philosophical aspects and contemporary perspectives relating to Kente, held by Prof kaŋi'kachä seid'ou, Mr Issac Gyasi, and other invited bearers and extenders of knowledge. There was no an already scheduled calendar but a whiteboard under the portico, close to the Library entrance, where the meets-up were announced (Figure 110). The first, and only one, due to the strike, took place on the 22nd of September 2022, titled “Kente Weaving and Resilience” held by Mr Gyasi, that disclosed technical and historical insight on the subject (Figure 111).

The experimentation on yarns and the weaving, address postcolonial and patriarchal issues. Some Kente motifs have been made using threads unravelled from cheap scarves mass-produced in China and from ‘obruni ba waawu duku’ (second-hand scarves, whose literal translation from Twi is ‘the dead white woman’s scarf’) (Figure 112). It recalls the use of the precious yarn obtained from silk fabrics from the Far East at the time of the colonial transatlantic trade, critically updating it in global neoliberal key referring to the circulation of new and recycled goods. At the same time, the Foucault theme of the death of the white man is subtly referred, reinforced through the presence of woman weavers—who take the place of the men, traditionally the only ones allowed to weave Kente—in a superimposition of making and doing. Among them is the artist who embodies the producing and the acting, the basso continuo of art. What is produced is seamlessly the concrete and the abstract forms of knowledge, staging through the artistic device a counter distribution of the sensible that triggers a decolonial current of the sensible. Of course, they can sound like empty words, but in the theatre of the artworks, they espouse and expose a planetary critical thought and aim of reparation⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ Reference goes to Jacques Rancière and Achille Mbembe

As Achille Mbembe puts it, “‘Make-cosmos’, uninterruptedly was to traffic into reversibility, reticularity and fluidity. With human beings and other living entities, objects maintain reciprocal causal relationships. This is what the first anthropologists called ‘animism’”⁶⁸ (2020). This elaboration introduces another exhibited artwork, *In the Shadow of Fresh Palms in Flower* (2022), an allegory of ecosystem-based intelligence activated by the seamless collaboration between natural, chemical, technological and cultural elements (Figure 113). A form of “animism” unites different forces and knowledge. The title recalls the one of the second volume of Marcel Proust’s “In Search of Lost Time”, the time of the promise suspended between the past and the future. Powered by a solar panel, a battery sets a palm frond in motion. In the background stands out the wax fabric called “Kofi Anan’s Brains” (Kofi Anan trimu adwene) made in 2006 on his final speech as United Nations Secretary General⁶⁹, found in Adum, a commercial area in Kumasi, thanks to the help of the dressmaker Juliana Nyamedor. Nothing is what it seems, everything requires a continuous perceptual repositioning: the brain depicted in the fabric is formed by the meeting of three trees, a metamorphic figure that alludes to an extended intelligence that goes beyond the strictly human dimension; the leaf is a vernacular broom made by Emelia Tawiah, who takes care of the external areas of the Campus; the movement mechanically simulates that of the leaves in the wind, and that of the fans waved by the servants represented in the historical iconographies that reveal class scenes then loaded with colonial significance, and here

⁶⁸ My translation of the original text from Mbembe, Achille (2020), *Brutalisme*, Paris: La Découverte («Faire-cosmos», c’était trafiquer de façon ininterrompue dans la réversibilité, la réticularité et la fluidité. Avec les êtres humains et les autres entités vivantes, les objets entretenaient des relations de causalité réciproques. C’est ce que les premiers anthropologues nommèrent l’«animisme».)

⁶⁹ The five lessons with which Kofi Annan took leave of United Nations Secretary-General were summed up as five principles, he believed essential for the future conduct of international relations: collective responsibility, global solidarity, the rule of law to safeguard human rights, mutual accountability, and multilateralism. The wax fabric pattern goes beyond the anthropocentric frame of his speech and the international horizon to move toward a planetary vision.

released from these implications; the base is a cage, made in collaboration with Mr Cyril Adala of the KNUST Department of Industrial Art, which mimics those that protect air conditioners from theft and which in this case instead houses a second-hand engine reactivated by Asafo Market's workers. In its being a 'bachelor machine', it celebrates the know-how and energy of labour, the ongoing process, rather than the affirmation of the product.

A charm for the pulsing subjectivity of life opposes the disembodiment produced by the attempt to control the risk, intended as a mathematical concept pertaining to populations rather than 'persons', as elaborated by Ivan Illich (Cayley, 2020). A relevant insight, even if he refers it to a transcendental and Christian discourse, while here, the position is shaped by the immanent materialism of the life-death cycle that does not belong to the divine, being, however, sacred.

Inspired by the Covid-19 pandemic, *Healing Trousseau* (2021), the third artwork exhibited, subtly treats the contradictions that accompany health security measures in modern society (Figure 114). That is the precarious balance between public welfare, the reduction of personal freedoms justified by the state of exception, and the medical protocols forged on a statistical basis around the protection of bare life. The work comprises twenty-four small-format paintings arranged in a timetable based on the speeches the Ghanaian President addresses periodically to the nation between March 2020 and February 2021. On these occasions, he wore a shirt with the same creation but different wax fabrics each time. Fabrics that are part of Ghana's cultural tradition and have specific names and meanings assigned mainly by women at the market. The shape of the tables-frames, inspired by the ones at the Metal Section, invites a performative vision of the paintings. The ambiguous relationship between bio-politics and multinational drug companies is condensed using colours extracted from

medicines, and their side effects. A reflection that takes up the considerations conducted by Ivan Illich since the 1970s on the various forms of iatrogenesis, the systemic “ritualisation of the crisis”, and the dehumanising pervasiveness of statistics, as well as the one on bare life by Giorgio Agamben. Researching through various sources and direct or remote dialogue with Ghanaians, the artist is reconstructing the name and meaning of the fabrics to grasp the nuances of the President’s messages, whose contents are not entrusted only through the verbal canon. As part of the exhibition, it was possible to contribute to the collection of those names. Many people added their knowledge, and a person asked for a printed copy of the document to collect the information outside campus, in their neighbourhood. Unfortunately, he never came back with the desired information.

Along with the research-based practice and realisation of the artworks, I activate multiple collaborations open to a variety of actants, favouring the exchange and circulation of knowledge, which takes new and unexpected forms and generates tiny epiphanic changes of state. The choice to exhibit at the University’s main Library during the autumn exams period has fed the dialogue with a multiplicity of questioning subjectivities through the magnifying glass of the artworks. Being there engaged in the daily performative act of weaving strengthens the relationship with some people and prompts the meeting with others. The works were more than backgrounds for selfies. Hundreds of people stand close to the loom, before or after having visited the exhibition, sometimes before and after, asking questions about the artworks, suggesting meanings, and offering readings. People studying languages, medicine, engineering, environment science, social science, architecture, chemistry, math and some of them art, and people temporarily at the Campus for conventions at the Great Hall, hairdressers and religious congregations. People passing there, living not far away, fathers with their children, girls, boys, older men and women. Military patrolling the premises. People working at the Library passing daily to greet and observe the progress in the work.

Aside from some comments about the economic value of Kente, and allusions to the extractive goal of human beings, the majority were opening the epistemic topics and the potentiality of a generative attitude. And they were elaborating discourse starting from artworks. Among them was the extraordinary and continuous presence of security guard Ampofo Sampson, who came asking questions about the artworks or explaining them to me. “Come, I should show you a work of art”, his words inviting me to leave the loom and tour the exhibition of my artworks—became shared artworks—inside the Library to start a conversation around one of them. If I mention these encounters, it is not because of folklore, but because they are witnesses of the circulation of thought that works of art can trigger, easily if not relegated in the art system institution: galleries, museums, art fairs, art schools. Other witnesses are the tens of written comments people left about the artworks, their topics, and reporting lines on them (Figure 115). All these manifestations are an expanded form of participation, not given. Are events. The usually lacking voice in the rhetoric of participation concerning the art process and its critiques. All of them are Zoe KɔKɔɔ, a mutual, fair and asymmetric community in continual evolution.

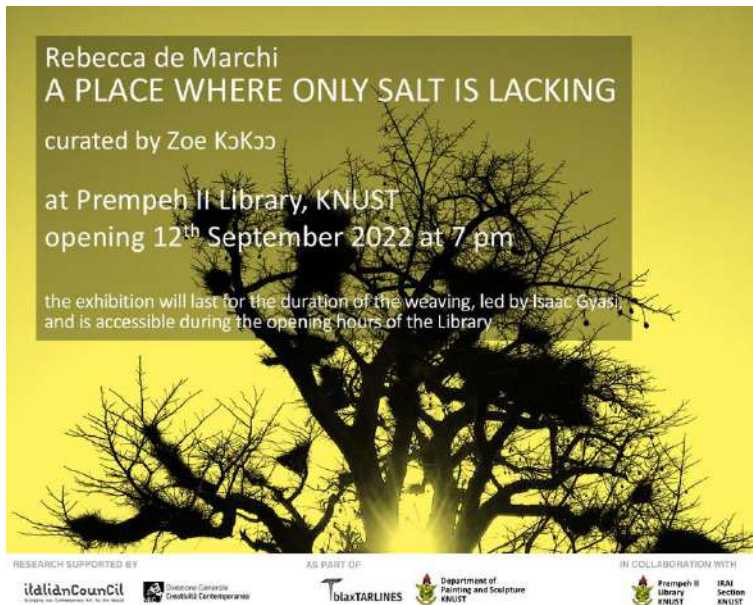


Figure 103 | Poster of the exhibition *A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking*, 2022. Designed by Rebecca De Marchi, using a picture taken by herself in Wa in January 2021



Figure 104 | The exhibition *A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking*, 2022, at KNUST Prempeh II Library. *Lo Sai?* Installation view: the Kente looms outside under the portico. Photo credit: blaxTARLINES KUMASI



Figure 105 | The exhibition *A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking*, 2022, at KNUST Prempeh II Library. *Lo Sai?* installation view: Jennifer Aidoo, IRAI student, at the Kente loom under the portico. Photo credit: Isaac Donkor



Figure 106 | The exhibition *A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking*, 2022, at KNUST Prempeh II Library. *Lo Sai?* installation view: Rebecca De Marchi at the Kente loom under the portico during the daily performance. Photo credit: Maria Panta



Figure 107 | The exhibition *A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking*, 2022, at KNUST Prempeh II Library. *Lo Sai?* installation view: the videos, painting, drawings and books inside. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 108 | The exhibition *A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking*, 2022, at KNUST Prempeh II Library. *Lo Sai?* installation view: Ampofo Sampson and Frank Amankwa looking at the work. Photo credit: Isaac Donkor

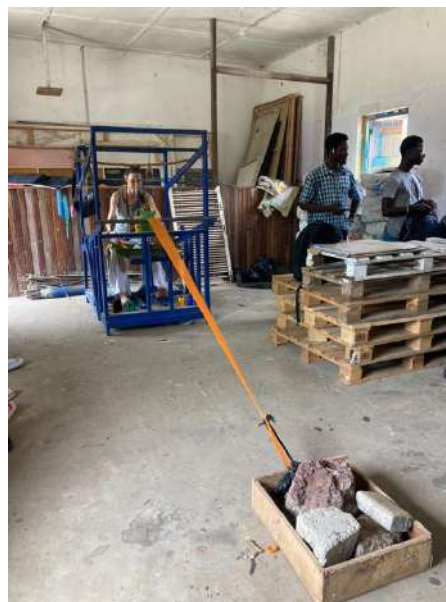


Figure 109 | Rebecca De Marchi at the Kente loom at TecSec during the daily performance. Photo credit: Ulla Deventer



Figure 110 | The exhibition *A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking*, 2022, at KNUST Prempeh II Library. The first meet-up announced on the whiteboard. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 111 | The exhibition *A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking*, 2022, at KNUST Prempeh II Library. The first meet-up with Mr Isaac Gyasi. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 112 | *Lo Sai?*, detail of the Kente showing the motif woven with the unravelled yarns from second-hand scarf. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 113 | Rebecca De Marchi, *In the Shadow of Fresh Palms in Flower*, palm frond, engine, metal structure, wax fabric, solar panel, dimensions variable, 2022. Installation view. Photo credit: blaxTARLINES KUMASI



Figure 114 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Healing Trousseau*, 2021. Painting, medicine colours, series of twenty-four, cm 5 x 5. Installation: three time-tables, wood, cm 80 x 130 x 90 (h). Photo credit: Isaac Donkor

Artworks Besides Art Exhibitions

Besides the art exhibition apparatus, I have envisaged other devices to foster the circulation of the sensible. *Carousel of Sentences* is an ongoing artwork started in 2021 (Figure 116), intended to bring into daily circulation phrases extracted from the texts of thinkers who have elaborated critical reflections on systemic capitalism, outlining new generative scenarios of reparation and redemption. These handwritten sentences are reproduced with silk printing technique, and therefore, as multiples on handkerchiefs. In Ghana, everyone uses these cotton tissues daily to wipe sweat, and they are sold along the streets hanging from umbrellas or metal structures such as the one designed as part of the artwork and made in collaboration with the KNUST Metal Section of the Industrial Art Department. The series, destined to grow over time, includes, for now, phrases by Hannah Arendt, Gilles Deleuze, Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe, Kwame Nkrumah, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. In the cultural and economic circularity triggered by the work, handkerchiefs are bought, printed, and donated to the same street vendors who sells them as cultural agents at the exact cost as normal handkerchiefs, retaining the economic surplus value. The price policy stresses that the value of the transformed item resides in the content printed on it and not in his economic quotation, countering the artistic system of estimating the artworks made on a symbolic basis. Those who buy the handkerchiefs are invited to suggest other sentences by African intellectuals, posting them on the ‘*carousel_of_sentences*’ page on Instagram.

Another ongoing project, also started in 2021, is *Grief-stricken* on Instagram (Figure 117). Instead of claiming to take control of the events through computation—based on links between human intelligence and artificial intelligence, always pushed a step further—the daily corruption of a digital image happening on social media (manifestation of the digital extractive capitalism), humanise the digital data undergoing them to an ageing process. Even

if it is a process affected by an anthropocentric attitude, it is based more on feeling rather than on a cerebral level. It is not a question of the distribution of contents, addressed by Hito Steyerl (2009), but of the distribution of the sensible articulated by Rancière: the loss of quality is not transformed into accessibility but into sensibility. A sort of “anterior” future, which anticipates not only the time when the planet will be again the brain of humankind⁷⁰, drawing the way of being in life—and death— but the time in which this will be thinkable, helping to delineate it. Without practical consequences, the artwork highlights the fallibility of data in an evolutionary process that tends to erase the image but not the digital essence, like the mystery of life. Exposing oneself to the imponderable of this process demythologises the omnipotence of technology, revealing its vulnerability. Moreover, paradoxically, time passes faster on the document than on the actual context, indicating how much the former has an ephemeral grip on the latter. That is, how this extra-sustainable approach to planets carries with it the promise—even if hidden—of an accelerated catastrophe.

In 2022 when blaxTARLINES KUMASI was invited to join the other members of Gudskul in Kassel, Germany as participants in documenta fifteen,⁷¹ I decided to create the artwork, I noted a year earlier, inspired by the reading of “Consciencism” and precisely from the last chapter entitled “Set Theoretic Terms”⁷². After two years of imposed social distance due to Covid-19, it

⁷⁰ Reference goes to Sékou Touré

⁷¹ Before Kassel for documenta 15, the blaxTARLINES team was at Städelschule Frankfurt to participate in Gasthof.

⁷² Kwame Nkrumah’s “Consciencism” features in blaxTARLINES classes and activities (Diallo & blaxTARLINES, 2015). The fifth chapter, “Set Theoretic Terms”, also inspired the blaxTARLINES exhibition “The Gown must go to Town: Of Art and Philosophical Consciencism”, held in 2015 in the Museum of Science and Technology, Accra. See seid’ou (2015a) and blaxTARLINES (2015a; 2015b).

Also, in “Out of Bounds”, seid’ou references “Set Theoretic Terms” in his critique of the Cultural Studies hegemony in postcolonial theory:

With its proliferation in postcolonialist and Liberal-multiculturalist discursive sites, it is easy to see why many readers of Kwame Nkrumah, for example, could have skipped the fifth chapter of Consciencism, namely, Set Theoretic Terms predominantly written in Predicate Calculus but which theorizes the liberation of a colony by positive action.” (2015b)

was finally possible to meet personally and share ideas, art and friendship. Through an experimental production of a woven piece of cloth that features a synoptic line from the schema summarising that the becoming-Union is possible if and only if —put in abstract terms—the positive action increases and the negative ones tend to zero, for each component of the compound, the artwork, titled *De-familiarised family* (2022) (Figure 118), excavates, resurrects and reassesses the emancipatory potential of Nkrumah’s vision which seems buried under many layers of code. The cloth is a towel hand-woven in collaboration with Isaac Gyasi, merging Kente and Western techniques on symbolic polychromy. When mirrored—in the conjunction of utopia and heterotopia—the two-faced palindromic Kwame Nkrumah’s formula of the progressive Union manifests itself fully. When calling to mind the colours of the Ghana flag, the yellow, green, red and black refer at the same time to their symbolic meaning (therefore not articulated in Ghana-specific context): the mineral, the vegetation, the blood, the African voice. This last is intended as a paradigm, referring to African thinkers like Nkrumah (1970), Fanon (1965), Enwezor (2009) and Mbembe (2020) and the potentiality of doing otherwise. And in a similar attitude to “the black hole mascot [of blaxTARLINES, that] takes the place of the black lodestar that the artist Theodosia Okoh placed at the center of the Ghana flag at the dawn of political independence. The black star is a symbol of solidarity, a coalition of the demos, the part-that-is-no-part, and allies solidarizing in common struggle” (Akoi-Jackson, Mahama, Ohene-Ayeh, Thompson, & seid’ou, 2022, p. 20). It is ongoing a perpetual translation thanks to an embryo translatability that—with Walter Benjamin (2007, p. 71)—links the original to its afterlife, taking up “residence in the space of equivocation” (Viveiros de Castro, 2014, p. 89). The Union becomes a generative fruit of continuous exchange, possible only—worth repeating it—increasing the positive actions while decreasing the negative ones, with an attitude of “good afterliving”⁷³. The formula and the sentences, as underlined during

⁷³ Reference goes to Macarena Gómez-Barris (2017) indigenous "good living".

the performance that took place later at M.Bassy in Hamburg during the nomadic art residency *Back to the Small Stage* supported by the Italian Council, are intended not only in Kwame Nkrumah's horizon of modern post-colonialism but in contemporary post-humanism, a transspecies immanence in Rosi Braidotti's formulation (2013).

Kakra Kakra

Echoing Frantz Fanon, *Kakra Kakra* (2022), which in Twi means slowly, is an act of care: to walk (Figure 119 and Figure 120). The artwork translates my daily practice into a performance. Time is an unsolved theme, and here—I mean in Ghana—more than ever. It is not only the convergence of times coming from different times. The heterochrony on the contemporaneity that art as an act of folding let arise. It is also how the daily time is managed. The collision of personal expectation and facts. That requires repositioning social habits and re-evaluating values. To decolonise the theme. And because I am here, my inclination to the relation and scheduling. Let me start with the perpetual lack of time, which brings to the mandatory need to respect the time of others, and, as consequence, ours. Surrounding this belief and posture is a cultural—to say constructed—value. Do not postpone to tomorrow what you can do today! What a stress when this imperative meets the attitude of 'waiting' and 'coming', as indeterminate manifestation. Nothing to grasp, just the space for frustration. But what if time is not the efficiency of our planning, if time is—for instance—the convergence of fortuity, meet by chance? If the bus leaves when it is full, instead of a determined time, is it not an ecological (even if the reason is economic, but sometimes the two things coincide) instead of inefficient criteria? Transpose to interpersonal relationship: if, as part of collaborations, the scheduled meetings do not happen because the other person is not at the agreed place at the agreed time, and does not pick up your calls, is that person rude? If your work is mainly based on collaborations, and you start to send messages in advance to try to receive feedback on time to

organise your time, are you bothering the other people? Are you rude? If, as a consequence of these conducts, the programmed works are postponed for months, indeterminate months, is it a tragedy? I do not have a theoretical answer. I put on an act a practical reply. I weave. Allowing things to happen at the due time. That does not mean not taking care of things, they are always with us, but learning to wait for the right moment. It starts as a form of context-specific practice. But it says more. Why do not institutionalise a form of flowing of time and events? Like during the exhibition “A Place Where Only Salt is Lacking” where it was expected that a series of meet-ups would take place, randomly, without a pre-scheduled calendar, but only having a board under the portico of the Library to give notice of the events (Figure 110). The first, on the 22nd of September 2022, titled ‘Kente Weaving and Resilience’ was held by Mr Isaac Gyasi, started as a frontal talk on the historical subject to move close to the looms to observe them technically and to follow weaving practice (Figure 111). Meanwhile, I contacted the KNUST Pre-school to invite the children, with their teachers, to visit the exhibition and listen to *The Spider Weaver. A Legend of Kente Cloth* by Margaret Musgrove, a book illustrated by Bat Favitsou Boulandi (Musgrove, 2015) that was among the others available at the Library as part of the setup of *Lo Sai?*. This meet-up on mythology did not take place. After some negotiation, meetings, writing of a formal letter, and other meetings, the verdict was that the Library, nine-hundred-fifty meters away from the Pre-school inside the safe campus environment, is too far. The only possibility to let the meet-up happen was to provide a bus for the children, which I refused, considering it against the aim of the exhibition. Then the strike came, the Library shut down, the exhibition was interrupted there, one loom moved to TecSec—nine-hundred-fifty meters away—and my daily performative practice of weaving continues with new, more, not forced encounters and talks (Figure 109). And save me from the discomfort of waiting in my path through the other research, the one on cashew, of which I will say later. Art is art only when it is recognised as art?



Figure 116 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Carousel of Sentences*, silk-printed fabric, paper, plastic envelop, dimensions variable, 2021-ongoing. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

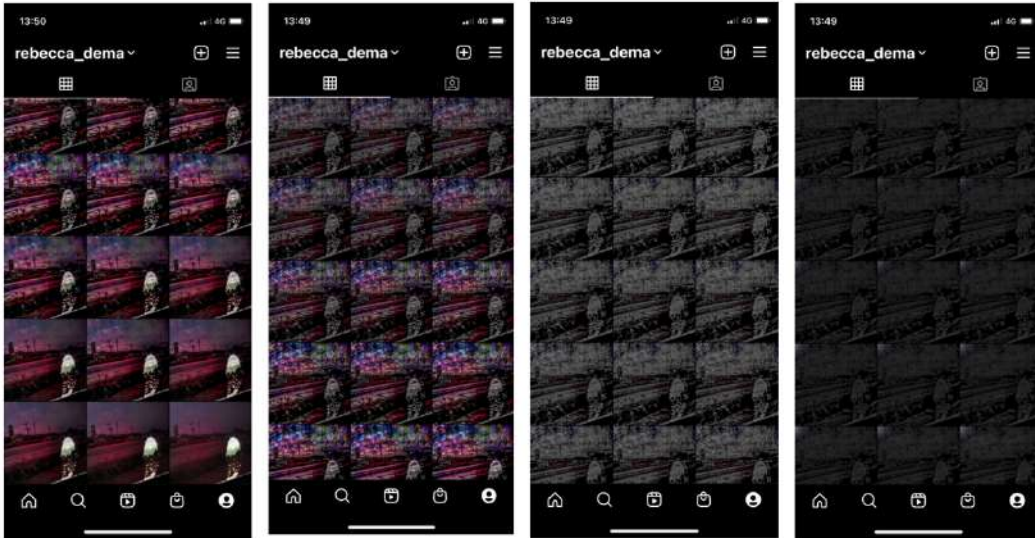


Figure 117 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Grief-stricken*, digital photographs, Instagram, 2021-ongoing. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 118 | Rebecca De Marchi, *De-familiarised family*, cotton, cm 90 x 60 (h), 2022. Weaving in collaboration with Isaac Gyasi; and performance. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 119 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Kakra Kakra*, wood, rubber, leather, prototype, cm 29 x 12 x 6, 2022. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 120 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Kakra Kakra*, 2022. Performance: Kakra Kakra printed on the Earth walking. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

FOLD H

PART 1

Broom

The Sacred Tree

La Domenica delle Palme (literally ‘The Sunday of the Palms’, but the Easter Sunday in English) and *le Palme d’Or* (The Golden Palm), religion and cinema, make familiar a tree where it is so rare to require in the first case the use of a different species for the rite, that becomes the olive despite the name. The iconography introduces the servant who fans the chief with a palm frond, a hierarchic social theme even before the colonial period. Free it from these references, and let it move activated by a solar panel becomes a recurrent image in my mind. But, which palm frond? One morning, early on my way to campus, I saw a lady using a palm frond as a broom. I stopped. “Good morning, please, where have you bought the broom?”. “Good morning, I did not buy it. I made it”, she answers. Then we introduced each other, and decided to meet the following Saturday to allow me to learn how to make them. Emelia arrived with the machete and started to cut the foliage of a palm tree. Then overlapping three fronds, freed the lower portion of the spine from the small leaves, and braided the ones immediately above. The broom is made. These brooms work better than the industrial ones provided by the University for the maintenance of the external area of the campus, she explained to me. She learnt how to make them from an elder colleague, now retired. During the dry seasons, they last a few weeks, but when it starts to rain, the brooms are more tough.

FOLD H

PART 2

Kente

To Fold the Fold

The research on the Ashanti culture and the production of Kente fabrics led me to select them as silent protagonists, a philosophical text crossing the two *Lo Sai?* videos and displayed in the form of a coded language that accompanies the verbal, media and environmental ones. They are the material traces of an artistic process that counter the epistemic criteria that categorise knowledge in major and minor and separate themes, as distinguishing Western from indigenous, artistic from ethnographic, and contemporary from traditional. Dichotomies that do not help to embrace the political capacity of the aesthetics, deeply articulated by Jacques Rancière (2006), who claims that art is not a matter of cultural ‘-ism’ but of the potentiality of taking voice, and is not a separated field but participate to the life of people. A practice based on studies, experiments and collaborations, that shapes all my research. As is also evident in the art programme “Eco e Narciso”.

Based in Torino, I started online research on Kente’s history, symbolism, and technical production. Selecting colours and patterns based on their meaning, according to the source I studied (Lloyd, 2017), I designed the cloth and the stole (Figure 121 and Figure122), and in July 2018, I went to Bonwire, the town in the Ashanti Region devoted to the production of Kente, to have them made. There, I met John Nimako-Kodua (Figure 123), with whom I started a WhatsApp exchange months earlier, having found his contact on the Internet, and I realised I had misunderstood aspects of the patterns that we corrected sketching on a photocopy of the original drawing, defining the dimensions, and with the help of Augustine Da Dapla negotiating about the time of production, the price, the payment and the deliver. After having paid half the amount, we left with a handshake. At the beginning of August, the

first image of cloth sample came via WhatsApp, and with a close exchange of messages, we worked to fix some mistakes. On the 29th of August 2018, I received a photo of all the strips made, not yet stitched together. On the 6th of September, also an image of the stole came (Figure 124). On the 12th of September, the Kente fabrics were packed, and based on mutual trust, I paid part of the amount. He delivered the clothes to a friend on his way to Italy, who paid the ending balance, and on the 25th of that month, I received them in Torino.

Later, in Ghana, I painted the motifs on graph books, enlarging the miniaturised drawing made in Italy on graph paper. Regularity is a convention, not a fact. It was said by the different dimensions of the green squares—not square-shaped—on the paper. I continued to study the Kente. In Accra at the Artists Alliance Gallery, where I went following a suggestion by Prof seid'ou in search of a poster that summarises historical, symbolic and technical aspects of Kente, I discovered they stopped producing it due to a diatribe with Ewe, who claims the partiality of the information provided in that document, based only on Ashanti Kente without mention the Ewe Kete. Nevertheless, at the Gallery, they allowed me to take pictures of the poster “Kente is more than a cloth. History and significance of Ghana’s Kente cloth”, which I finally recomposed in my notebook and studied (Ofori-Ansa, 1993). Advised by Prof seid'ou and Mr Gyasi I bought and read “Kente Cloth. History and Culture” (Asamoah-Yaw & Safo-Kantanka, 2017), “Wrapped in Pride. Ghanaian Kente and African American Identity” (Ross, 1998), “Kente Colors” (Chocolate, 1996) and “The Spider Weaver. A Legend of Kente Cloth” (Musgrove, 2015). The difference between the more figurative Ewe Kete and the abstract geometry of Ashanti Kente started to become familiar with their technical particularities. But the hours at the loom taught more, a practice of doing and undoing, throwing and picking threads, drawing with the yearns. A dance of the hands and the feet, displaying that the more stubborn design, when drawn with pencils or brushes, is the easier motif, and the small birds—blue, brown and yellow parallelograms on a green

background—are the most challenging for an inexpert weaver. Hours of learning—seated in the frame of the small house of the loom—that to intersect and to cover are part of the same practice, of the same outcome, and none of them is absolute, that the front and the back look the same, that even the Western metaphor of narration, as weaving, is countered. Learn to be patient.

Intensive Practices

The inhuman nature of the artistic object consists of a combination of non-functionalism and ludic seductiveness. This is precisely what the surrealists meant by the ‘bachelor machines’ – an idea that Deleuze and Guattari adopted and transformed in the theory of ‘bodies without organs’ or a-functional and un-organic frames of becoming. Art, not unlike critical philosophy, is for Deleuze an intensive practice that aims at creating new ways of thinking, perceiving and sensing Life’s infinite possibilities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). By transposing us beyond the confines of bound identities, art becomes necessarily inhuman in the sense of nonhuman in that it connects to the animal, the vegetable, earthy and planetary forces that surround us. Art is also, moreover, cosmic in its resonance and hence posthuman by structure, as it carries us to the limits of what our embodied selves can do or endure. In so far as art stretches the boundaries of representation to the utmost, it reaches the limits of life itself and thus confronts the horizon of death. (Braidotti, 2013, p. 107).

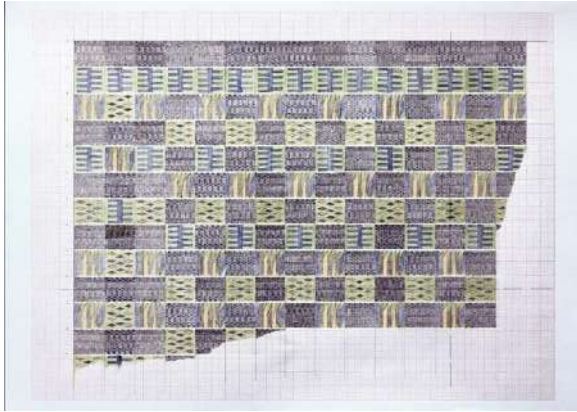


Figure 121 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Lo Sai?*. Drawing of the Kente cloth, colouring pencils, paper, cm 42 x 29,7, 2018



Figure 122 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Lo Sai?*. Drawing of the Kente stole, colouring pencils, paper, cm 29,7 x 42, 2018



Figure 123 | *Lo Sai?* in Bonwire with John Nimako-Kodua to start the production of the Kente, 2018. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 124 | *Lo Sai?* in Bonwire the Kente cloth and stole finished, 2018. Photo credit: John Nimako-Kodua

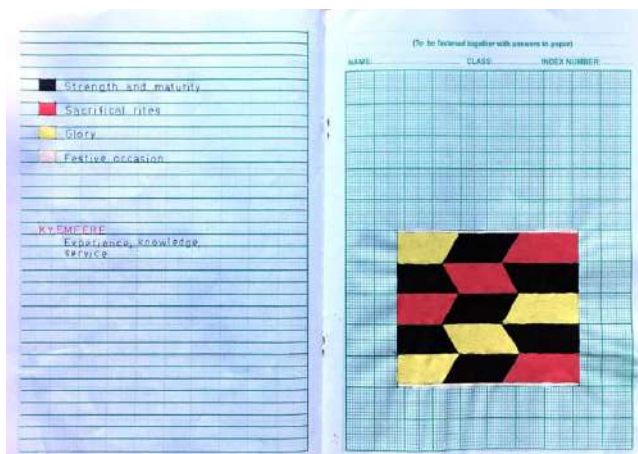


Figure 125 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Lo Sai?*. Painting of the Kente cloth and stole, poster colours, paper, cm 42 x 30, 2021

FOLD G

Archive of the Future

What fascinates me is not what human beings know, or think to know, but what escapes their knowledge: as a consequence of the failure of the scientific and extractive-driven desire of knowing, or of the lack of interest. The vertiginous knowledge inside things, a sort of tribute to that immanent and material knowledge: an organic, ‘personist’, archive of data and wise. So, in this obscure place, untamed by human knowledge, I devoted my care, to finding the current void, the inhabited cradle of a generative imagination. That, being into the border of an Academy, I try to encounter—more than investigate—through the convergence of forms of already here, and experimental ways of enquiry, in the company of students, people around the campus, lecturers, laboratories, departments, materials, techniques, insects, and others. Stopping for a moment to think based on what is visible, or what is transcendent, we collapse in the endless nested world depicted by Leibniz, to re-emerge in the chaosmosis of the pulsating life. That is too much for our cognitive and psychological possibility of perceiveiving, but not to try to feel otherwise. Pauline Phemister, in her reflections on Leibniz and the environment, introduces the concept of ecophilosophy that «allows us go beyond the confines of experimental, natural-scientific quantitative methodology and to reintroduce teleological, ethical and aesthetic relations to our assessment of the condition and wellbeing or flourishing of things that comprise the natural world» (2016, p. 115).

Pushing this perception toward creating an archive of the future means moving from an extractive posture to a generative one. This is a premise for the research that has occupied my interest during the last two years. I need to be anecdotal now to introduce the theme: the cashew. In Italy, where I grew up, the spread of cashew nuts came only at the beginning of

this millennium, praising its health properties: antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, analgesic, cardio-protective, bones-strengthening, and even anti-cancer, and for providing proteins and essential minerals, like copper, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc and vitamins B and K. And because of its fat rate, to avoid the risk of gain weight, the daily recommended intake is ten to fifteen nuts. A sensitive detail considered that it is expensive, which means only wealthy people can afford to buy those nuts and be advantaged from the diet benefit. But unfairness does not stop there, as I would have discovered later. Anyway, it is an impactful quantity when considered from the point of view of production. It was clear that it is food for privileged people, mainly in privileged countries, but then the critical sensibility stopped there, attenuated by the rhetoric of its being healthy. Even for activists engaged against the exploitation of the agricultural industries that affect the land, the soil, the water, the air, the migrant workforce, as well as the storage—cities of crates—and the availability and transportation of items, chemicals, poles, plastic nets, to name some of them, the locally harvested food and its packaging going away and all the other food—not anymore grown there—coming. In other words, an unsustainable market raised and fed by financial reasons⁷⁴. So, cashew was too far to be questioned. Then, moving to Ghana, the encounter with the cashew tree! The magnificence of its canopy, its shelter, the shining of its green leaves, the contortion of its branches, and the surprise of its fruits. When walnut, hazelnut, almond, and chestnut trees are in your surroundings, how can you imagine that their fruits are so different from the cashew nut? Or better, why to imagine so? Why do not only think it would be some shell, embracing the kernel, hanging from the branches among the leaves? But this is not the case for cashew nuts. A comma at the bottom of a pregnant yellow-reddish pulp. This last, actually, a false fruit. Thousands of them colour the tree shortly after the dry season.

⁷⁴ Reference goes to *In Erranza* (2022) by Luigi Coppola and Marzia Migliora, a project part of the art programme Saluzzo Rural Happening that I curated from 2017 to 2022.

Thoughts bundle up. Each nut comes with this big ‘fruit’ at its top. Is this flesh edible? Is it eaten? Is it used in some way? This is the incipit to start to research on the cashew. A sort of scientific research that introduces to the knowledge of this plant, to the knowledge on this plant, to its organic library and the invention of ritual archives for the future.

Accumulating data gives cognition of a plethora of contradictions. The research covers historical, geographical, economic, etymological, nutritional, and chemical topics. A way to get closer to the plant, not only the nut. To become kin.

Drawing Data

The geo- bio- politics of the market-based mass production of cashew runs along the world’s tropical belt, between 25° N and 25° S at the Equator. Native to Northeastern Brazil and Southeastern Venezuela, during the slave trade cashew was exported by the Portuguese and taken between 1560 and 1578 to Goa, in India, from where it spread to Asia and Africa. Centuries later, the global market has prompted the extensive cultivation of cashews, which affected Ivory Coast, Burundi, Vietnam, Philippines, Tanzania and Benin, besides the second position kept by India, listing the countries based on the rate of production of tonnes in 2019 (Wikipedia/English, 2022; Wikipedia/Portuguese, 2022). But not only. If in the countries from where the cashew is native, or has a long story of cultivation, besides the nuts, the apples and wood are used, is not the same where it has been recently implanted, for the sake of the market, that also means on massive way. Focusing on the case of Ghana, among the new producers, only the raw nuts are currently of interest to the global market and the farmers, and are mainly exported—over 90%—to India and Vietnam where shells and kernels are separated and finally these last are re-exported to «the US, Europe, the Middle East, China and Australia, where they are in turn roasted, salted and packaged prior to consumption» (Boafo & Lyons, 2021). This is also a consequence of a lack of governmental

policies that, on the one hand, do not tax foreign companies as other African Governments do, like in Ivory Coast, Mozambique and Tanzania, and on the other hand, do not support Ghanaian investors to start the processing activity locally. With the aggravating circumstances that the Asian processors come and pay cash while the few locals often purchase on credit. This reverberates to the cashew apples that are affected even more heavily due to their high perishability and are perceived as a leftover.

Wondering about the properties of this apple, and its fermentation, in June 2021, I went to the Department of Food Science and Technology, and there I was introduced to Dr. Mr Faustina Dufie Wireko-Manu, who devotes her research also to this fruit. Illustrating the nutritional qualities of the apple, she explained how it could be used liquid or dried—as flour—and then opened a cabinet, took a sachet containing brow-yellowish fibres, and let me taste some: a full and luscious flavour. Quite different from the fresh fruit's astringent tannin one, which I already tasted during a visit to the Techiman area. In turn, Dr. Wireko-Manu also introduced me to her PhD candidate (now Dr.), Yaw Gyau Akyereko, who was studying the production of non-alcoholic cashew apple wine (Akyereko, Wireko-Manu, Alemawor, & Adzanyo, 2022). My mind was captured by the idea that the microorganism involved in this kind of fermentation would not enjoy it. I asked, but I never received an answer. Probably, the question referring to feeling instead of scientific observation has never even been caught, and I was reassured that they can process the sugar without transforming it into alcohol. And even if it was, how to know what they feel? How to perceive it from their point of view, instead of that of human beings?

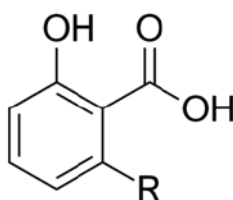
In January 2022, thanks to Yaw Akyereko, who helped me to organise, I went to Wenchi and Tromeso, in the Bono Region, one of the areas where cashew plantations are mainly concentrated in Ghana, to meet some farmers, processors and officers. Mr Twum welcomed Augustine Da Dapla, who helped me with the translation of Twi into English, and me to his

company in Wenchi, where he produces a sweet cashew drink, and underlined the problems related to the high perishability of the cashew apples and the lack of infrastructure and funds to keep them. In Tromeso, we met a lady, Faustina, in her food shop, and later a man on a bench in the shade of a tree, both farmers who illustrated the challenge of raising cashews, in their case not the exclusive agricultural product, the difficulty of selling all the crop, the use of the cashew apple as a fertilizer and to feed the ruminants. With Michael Moussa Ibrahim Guattel, the Wenchi Extension Officer, the conversation moved to agricultural aspects, and answering my questions, he explained that the extended plantation in the area is composed of small plots owned by different families; at the traditional cultivar, which can reach the high of fourteen metres, is preferred the more profitable dwarf ones that can grow up to six metres and has a greater yield; the risk related to the intensive agriculture; and on permaculture, the fact that it can be helpful, and partially matches the traditional methods of farming, but, even if encouraged, there it is not known as such, and is not apply, or at list not exclusively. Going toward Wa, I noted that new plantations of cashew are spread in the Northern drier area of the country and gathering information, I found some studies that underline how climate change, which is increasing the rainfall in the central area of the nation, is impacting the growing of cashew—a tree that does not like water—in Ghana, as well as in Ivory Coast (Decision and Policy Analyses program, 2011).

My interest was moving closer toward the tree—not the product—the being and its knowledge. Naming is a way to say about the relation between a subject, an event, and human beings, their perception. Something deposited during millenniums, in different contexts, an epistemic process with profound implications on culture. «Language inevitably grounds knowledge in a particular culture and influences what we know and how we know it», as Mbembe reports Ngugi w’a Thiong’o’s belief (2021, p. 58). How is it called that tree?

The etymological enquiry started from the native country—asking Brazilian friends and searching on the Internet—where in Tupi, the name is *acaju*, from *acaiú* (*a-* fruit + *'ác-* that looks + *aiú-* fibrous, ‘fruit that looks fibrous’). It influenced the Portuguese word, *cajueiro* or *caju*, from where the English cashew derived. The scientific name, *anacardium occidentale*, close to the Italian *anacardo*, is composed of the Greek (*ἀνά-*, *ana-*) ‘upward’ and (*καρδία*, *kardía*) ‘heart’, literally ‘the heart up’, and the Latin suffix *-ium*, followed by *occidentale* that means Western. Learning that Carl Linnaeus adopted the name previously used for the *semecarpus anacardium*, another fruit of the same family, known as ‘the marking nut tree’, has given me a cue to try to experiment on canvas with colours from the tree, as we will see later. Different people in Ghana told me that the local name in Ga or Twi, depending on the source, is *atiāa*, and others that rarely in Twi, it is called *alakadin*.

From where come the properties of this tree, of its components? People processing the fruit get dermatitis due to an allergenic contained in the shells. People who are mainly women in India and Vietnam, who to improve their ability to extract the kernel do not use gloves. At the same time, the aggression of the human skin by this liquid is why the nuts are sold already processed. What is this liquid? Why is it there? Trying to answer these questions, I learned it is a phenolic resin, the anacardic acids, chemically related to another toxic allergenic oil, the urushiol.



This compound, which is also in the bark and the leaves, has antibacterial, antifungal and seems anticancer properties, and actually protects the kernel, regardless of human beings. It is the main component of the cashew nut shell liquid CNSL that can be used in the chemical

industry to produce cardanol, found in resins, coatings and frictional materials. This material is known for its anti-termite ability, and the abundance of tannins and flavonoids gives reason for its employment in indigenous medicine (de A. Royo, et al., 2015; Anacardic Acids, nd).

*Objects Speak and Communicate Without Words*⁷⁵

Do you have a car?

The tree answers, «No, I haven't».

How do you move?

Don't worry, I move.

The objects, which are subjects, communicate. But how listen to them? All the notions accumulated and categorised based on disciplines, which are Western modern academic disciplines, are saying many things about the entity we have in front of us. Are speaking into, and creating a world, an epistemic system. But a tizzy mood does not allow to rest. There is the puissance of other worlds that are speaking. Impossible, and as such all possible, worlds. Leibniz says, no together. Deleuze replies, together folding in a different way. Along this path, I ask again: How listen to them? In the search for answer, I encounter the ritual archive as an aggregate organism of words, images, sounds, spaces, performances that let arise the organic libraries of entities that are all at once part of the visible and invisible worlds, material, spiritual, chemical, magic, wise, foolish, bad, good, female, male, sacred, and profane, listing them to try to dissolve the dichotomies, echoing Prof. Toyin Falola (2017). They reveal organisms, that are organs without body. An African epistemology, that does not relegate the elaboration and preservation of knowledge to express places, like

⁷⁵ The title is a quotation from Toyin Falola's "Ritual Archives" (Afolayan & Falola, 2017, p. 710)

universities, museums and archives, recognising their “pluriversity”. And today does not counter modernity as such, but as a means of discrimination (2017, p. 214).

In the emancipative path of narrations and translations (Rancière, 2008), of creating texts gazing without talking, «The politics of images lead us to the pregnancy of culture ready to give birth to social issues» (Falola, 2017, p. 712). Transported by ‘fulgurations’ and equivocations, I started a correspondence with Prof Falola, who kindly replied, aimed to reflect on how the production of knowledge based on the understanding of the Earth generates a variety of worlds and ways of inhabiting and using them, taking inspiration by Leibniz’s “Monadology” and the immanent life after death—an oxymoronic paradox—looked under the lens of the fold metaphor that Deleuze used to suggest the discovery of connections between impossible worlds. The enquiry was: What is the contemporary potentiality in a decolonial and posthuman scenario of worlds shaped by ritual archives, organic libraries and African sciences and technologies? The generous and generative answer by Falola came along an email exchange and culminated in an art talk part of my research, *Back to the Small Stage*, that took place on the 12th of June 2023 at blaxTARLINES at KNUST and on Zoom to reverberate the content as a pedagogical device (Falola, 2023). “We cannot talk about the Earth without ethical consideration” he said, underling the necessity to promote holistic ethics, to meet the needs of all individuals in a perspective that “transcends the conventional understanding of our own mortality” and question hegemonic narratives. It is a process of decolonising the mind, of acknowledging the value of the oral system besides the one written down. Two systems that, in their diversity, share commonalities. The inability to interrogate the organic library and the ritual archive, which both predate the arrival of the homologising Western episteme, imposes now to ignore them, to throw them away. A problem that affected also the foundation of African academies.

If it still matters to interrogate eighteenth-century immanent metaphysics, it is because it invites “us to talk about the view of life after death in relation to the Earth”. As the fold metaphor challenges the conventional notions that separate the universe of the living beings from the one of the dead, and allow to grasp the connection between these impossible worlds, “the afterlife nature of immanence”.

Referring to the organic libraries and the ritual archives, Prof Falola displays their potential to depict possible worlds by creating new narratives, recovering lost agencies, and providing ideas about a sustainable future. Look at how, in African history, a settlement would never be created if not connected with an environment says about the unity of the Cosmos, in which the Earth is the means of bonding people and places. And the organic libraries, the festivals, the rituals, the metaphors, the mythologies—the ritual archives to summarise—merging particles, inter-relational fields of knowledge and practices, influence and shape people, and at the same time give them the insight to interact among themselves and with the planet, to evaluate historical relevance and modern potentials. This traditional, indigenous, way of inhabiting the Earth, of using resources, of merging sensible and practices, shapes a sustainable management of the environment, aware that human beings’ decisions create global consequences, affect the ecosystem, generate climate change, and, in turn, affect themselves. “We are humanities and must recognize our connectiveness to create approaches that will produce ethical stewardship”.

“In an essay, I look at the ritual archive as a repository of culture and religious practices, of beliefs and knowledge” recalled Prof Falola, and preserving them can enable “us to reclaim, revitalize, receive knowledge, indigenous knowledge, practices, and they allow to overcome the limitation of marginalization that has been imposed on us”.

What is a river when it is approached in terms of organic libraries? The river that can be studied as part of an ecosystem or of the environment, can also be studied based on the knowledge embodied in it.

[The river] is a system of knowledge, as part of the accumulation of information over centuries, that is derived from the water system, from the trees, from the living organisms, from the weed, from the grass, from the plants. But we throw away this knowledge because we do not know how to process them. (Falola, 2023)

And Prof Falola continues, “This library is based on the concept of using organic materials as storage systems. They are storage systems, inspired by nature’s ability to preserve information through biological mechanisms” and it is particularly compelling in the posthuman scenario, as they can say about the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Between the human beings and the world that cannot be seen. In the same way, plants, trees, and living organisms store collections of knowledge and information that are organic libraries.

He reinforces these concepts by talking about the Yorùbá culture and the spiritual Orisha, who says “that human beings are a small part of a larger ecosystem, a very small, like the head of the pin, and if you are not larger than the head of the pin, you imbalance yourself disrupting that ecosystem”. Ceremonies and festivals celebrate the natural world and interrogate the cosmology, a unity of human beings with the Earth, the plant, and the invisible world. Indigenous medicines, too, are a medium of these connections. Neither scientific nor humanistic approaches fit it. It is another way, the way of the other we should become for a possible be in common in a postcolonial and posthuman scenario.

*The Other's Place*⁷⁶

The information I collected on cashews has been elaborated as part of the Western knowledge system, oriented to improve capitalistic expectations. A condition that it is not my aim here to contest, besides my criticism about it. Not here, in Ghana. It would be a wrong goal to question the planting of cashew in a country that is only a weak ring of this value chain. So, what does data say about the organic library of cashews? How to move from what that data says to the tree? How to create an archive of the future—from a posture not yet, or not anymore, mature—listening to the knowledge embodied in the plant? Starting from the whole tree, not only the kernel, the worldwide well-known fruit. And locating the research here, in Ghana, a country that does not even have a long tradition of cohabitation with the cashew tree, which came only in the 60s last century, and then massively spread during this current one (Boafo & Lyons, 2021). Fascination with fermentation, corruption, corrosion, and germination, as knowledge, lead me towards a different posture, open to others' epistemology.

Revelations came from the encounter with the plant. All its parts. Observing them, eating them, tasting them, magnifying them, touching them, planting (failing) them, squeezing them, imagining them. The plant is stable, its roots do not lift up the soil, its canopy shelters, its leaves greenish shine, its fallen leaves soon dried, brown in the air, black if covered, its apple fruits tans, its nuts shells liquid protects, and it hurts. How does the plant stand? A long root, with some smaller ramifications, goes straight toward the centre of the Earth, it gives stability, it offers access to deep water, to deep nutrients, it allows the plant to live in harsh environments, at least for human beings, to turn them in less harsh environment, at least for human beings. How to say of the good (after)living? Of sprouting buried bodies? (Figure

⁷⁶ In her book on 'Leibniz and the Environment', Pauline Phemister specifies that the eighteenth-century philosopher, in trying to understand the point of view of others on the perception of the world, advanced the act of 'putting oneself in the place of the other'. At that time the word 'empathy' was not conceived. (2018, p. 148).

139). How does the apple fruit behave? The heart-shaped body soon releases its juice when it loses connection with the branches. The liquid bubbles, expands its volume, the volume of the container that contains it, when the container is closed, when it is a plastic container. It quenches thirst with its tannin property. Its pulp turns brown and dusty when left in the air, for the enjoyment of the midges. How does the kernel behave? Its butter consistency caresses the mouth, if processed. It itches when raw. How does the nutshell behave? It is pale, bluish-green, kidney-shaped when close. It is brown oily shining when open. It takes care of the nut. It affects the human skin. It is smoking, a deep, dark, unbreathable smoke, when toasted. It pours a brown oil when heated. The harmless residue pound is soluble in water. Its brown oil is avoided by the moths on the wood benches in the studio, partially coated with it, turning a 'holes storm' into a storm of brown dots. Its brown oil expands widely on canvas, on paper. What is the legend of the cashew-head persons? (Figure 126, Figure 127 and Figure 128). It started to take shape with sketches and collages, then prompted collaborations, to try to leave the cashew to say about itself.

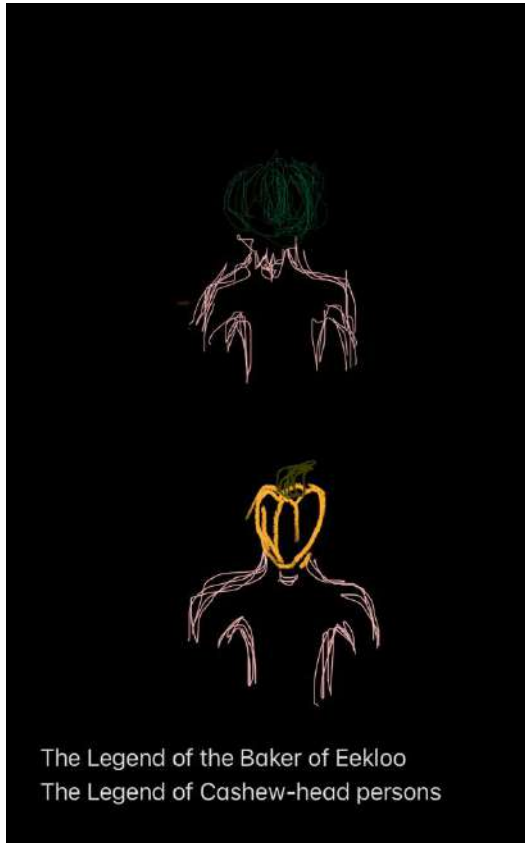


Figure 126 | Rebecca De Marchi, *The Legend of the Cashew Head 'Persons'*, digital sketch on iphone, 13 April 2022



Figure 127 | Rebecca De Marchi, *The Walking 'Person'*, collage, paper, colour photocopies, glue, cm 29,7 x 42 (h), 2023



Figure 128 | Flemish painter, copy from C. van Dalem and J. Van Wechlen, *The Legend of the Baker of Eekloo*, Oil on wood panel, end of XVI century, Musei Reali di Torino, Galleria Sabauda. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi. "A startling and intriguing scene takes place before our eyes. A group of people, their hands joined in prayer, sit waiting in the foreground. Some have had their heads cut off and replaced by a cabbage to stop them from bleeding. An assistant has just decapitated a patient, another with a raised axe is preparing to do likewise. On the right, a woman awaits her turn and looks at us somewhat anxiously. In the background, other assistants are kneading, greasing and baking the severed heads, which, once baked, will be reattached to their bodies. The painting illustrates a Flemish folk legend according to which a baker from Eekloo, a village near Bruges, had invented a miraculous substance that would change facial features and transform people's characters. If someone was unhappy with their appearance or character, they simply had to stop by his shop and have their head chopped off. However, beware! The baking process was not always perfect, and this early plastic surgery procedure would occasionally result in deformed or flawed heads! So the moral message applied equally to the people of the time as to us today: accept yourself and strive to do your best despite any shortcomings and imperfections" (from the description at the Museum)

Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory

“Doing history, philosophy, and theory without basing them on our own unique data and experience is the equivalent to talking about a forest without trees” (Falola, 2017, p. 719).

On the 11th of July 2023, the artworks were displayed at the KNUST Department of Animal Science in the presence of five cashew trees, a rare plant in Kumasi. The seven works of art inspired by the ‘organic library’ of cashew trees (atiāa) confer in the exhibition, curated by Zoe KɔKɔ, to compose an a-signifying allegory, unveiling conditions without reproducing them (Benjamin, 2005).

The approach of working and the artworks that emerge contribute to the fabrication of an archive of the future. At the core of the research is the epistemic enquiry, coupled with an elaboration of knowledge and the conception of worlds that take a decolonial, posthuman and generative posture. Furthermore, the enquiry interrogates the extraction-driven consumption of the neoliberal system. The constituent works of art appear as an epiphanic announcement of a ‘good (after)living’, alluding to the immanence running across and through impossible worlds.

The artworks have been produced in 2023 with an experimental research process in collaboration with several actants, students, artists, practitioners and public institutions, including the KNUST Department of Painting and Sculpture, Department of Indigenous Art and Technology, Department of Chemistry, Department of Food Science and Technology, Department of Wood Science and Technology, the Faculty of Agriculture Laboratory, The Oldham Laboratory and the Kumasi Abattoir respectively, and with the support of blaxTARLINES KUMASI.

For the exhibition “Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory” (Figure 129; Appendix 7), Zoe KɔKɔ is the cashew plants, termites, flamboyant trees, bluebirds, Kofi Michael Adza, Believe Butsome Agbeke, Anita Amesimeku, Dennis Ankamah Addo, Augustine Da Dapla,

Massimo De Marchi, Rebecca De Marchi, Paul Paakwasi Nkansah, Giovanna Tissi; Dr. Faustina Wireko-Manu (KNUST Department of Food Science and Technology); Ebenezer Boamah (KNUST Department of Indigenous Art and Technology, Leather Section); Prof. kaŕi'kachä seid'ou, Prof. Edwin Bodjawah, Dr. Bernard Akoi-Jackson (KNUST Department of Painting and Sculpture); Dr. Mercy Badu (KNUST Department of Chemistry); William Appaw, Chris Asare (KNUST Oldham Laboratory); Stephen Gyamfi (KNUST Department of Fisheries and Watershed Management), Precious Siaw Kyeremeh (KNUST Department of Wood Science and Technology); blaxTARLINES Kumasi; Helin and Fati (Club B). The poster depicts the magnified view of the cashew leaves' inside, repository of knowledge.

In the external lawn area, close to the cashew trees that flunk Mango Road, around the termitarium, is set up *Sound Out* (Figure 131 and Figure 132). Following a scientific procedure to test the properties of substances—to which I have been introduced thanks to Precious Siaw Kyeremeh—the work presents a sensible point of view. Sixteen *Alstonia* wood sticks are painted with cashew nut shell liquid, having preservative properties. The modularity of the scientific technique and minimalist art is notched metaphorically and literally. The coat decreases from covering the wood entirely to a small central portion, reproducing the xylophone shape. The wood buried at the beginning of June 2023 in the forest side of KNUST Campus, close to a termitarium, is set up for the appreciation of the insects, with a weekly performative observation by human beings. Based on the consumption of the wood sticks, which also included eight pieces of *Ceiba* timber as control, their weight and, consequently, sounds will pass from plain to modulated.

Slightly further, *If I Become Foolish* (Figure 130 and Figure 131) stands out. It is a big size painting diptych—arranged forming a ninety-degree angle to be visible from the street as

from the garden—depicting a detail of a human being’s face on a *mise en abym* meta-self-portrait, made using pigments obtained from different parts of, and through various processes by, the cashew fruits (apple and kernel). The canvases hung on long bamboo poles—provided by Kofi Michael Adza and Paul Paakwasi Nkansah, who cut and set them up—are presented as a fence exposed to the flow of the day and the weather changing over time due to the natural colours and the effects of the sun, rain and pollution. The facial detail is a personal attempt to reproduce a familiar gesture of a loved one, initially portrait by myself on black paper at a small scale, and later expanded on canvas in collaboration with the artist Dennis Ankamah Addo. On my request, he finished *en plain air* one of the paintings during the opening. The sun passing through the cashew’s oily colour, through the depicted pupil, turns it into gold.

Moving toward the building, open air in the small courtyard surrounded by the portico in the office area, appears *Cashew Head Persons* (Figure 133), a sculptural installation of seven mop braided subjects—made in collaboration with Anita Amesimeku—that conveys the healing knowledge of the cashew. Using the braid technique, the magnified views of the inside of cashew leaves—which appear abstract to human beings’ senses—are reproduced. The impossibility of depicting them rigorously abstracts the reality underlying the knowledge production process. The artwork alludes to magical female power and the spread and protection of wisdom embedded in the relationship between humans and plants in the diasporic processes and in Marron’s redemption. Sort of Medusa, with their petrifying glaze, they metamorphose the visitors metaphorically into stone, inverting the roles of beings and sculptures. The artwork included cashew branches cut at the premises in June by the Department of Animal Science.

Following the portico, a classroom laboratory is reached. There, the cashew teaches, poetically, its wisdom. What happens is opposite and complementary to John Baldessari's *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet*, a 1972 video that shows the artist's, impossible, attempt to teach the alphabet to a plant (Figure 140).

On a counter, in front of a series of sliding windows, five calabash cups are filled with cashew nutshells as a bed for a kernel. In each cup, a photo depicting hands whose skin has been attacked by the CNSL. As a base, the dark-blue front covers of Master dissertations—whose content is no longer on pages, on texts—printed on gold respectively with the words: care toxicity; coating peeling; oil acid; protect corrode; stick silk. The artwork introduces a world of consistent contradictions allocated inside the cashew nut. Something that simultaneously protects the seed and erodes the human epithelium. It depends on the point of view, or dx/dy (Figure 136 and Figure 137), printed on each cover and is the title of the work. To say with Gilles Deleuze on Leibniz's philosophy, the work refers to “No longer matter, but something “real” in matter that fills extension (to be sure, a “possible” reality)” as intensions and intensities (Deleuze, 1993, p. 43). A different formulation of theses. A neon, close to the windows, lights up the sentence ‘if I become foolish’ winking at the big painting outside.

In the middle of the room, two wooden seats with flip-open desks host the sculptural installation *Listen, How Quickly Your Heart is Beating In Me*⁷⁷ (Figure 135 and Figure 138). Following the etymology suggestion that came from the description of the cashew apple taste—as tannin—and the procedure of preserving the skin and transforming it into leather—to tan—the artwork takes the appearance of a knowledge machine, led by the chemical

⁷⁷ From Wislawa Szymborska's poem, *Any Case*

process of fermentation and conservation. In collaboration with Ebenezer Boamah, at the Leather Section of the KNUST Department of Indigenous Art and Technologies, internal organs of small ruminants and a cow have been tanned experimenting with unconventional materials to allow the breath of fermented cashew juice to expand.

On the laboratory counter along the left wall, a family of seven collages depicting cashew head ‘persons’ were displayed under transparent Plexiglass sheets shaped as slides (Figure 134), which Elolo Bosoka, artist and peer of the PhD programme, helped me to find in Kumasi. On the square central counter at the right-centre of the room—the teaching counter—under other ‘slides’, two collages having as a subject the cashew plant were exhibited (Figure 139).

Projected on the right wall, in front of lines of school desks, *We Insist!* (Figure 1 and Figure 138) is a video on the silent “dissensus” of the cashew to the profit-driven production system. By way of confirmation of Michel Serres’s statement, “I have to say to my grandchildren that I still remember a childhood in a calm countryside that provided plenty of delicious fruit. Choose: empire or Earth? Up to now the latter has won” (Serres, 1997). Magnified views of the fruit, leaves (Figure 141) and CNSL (captured with the collaboration of Chris Asare at the Oldham Laboratory, and Stephen Gyamfi at the Department of Fisheries and Watershed Management), a sort of internal still life that is in motion, run accompanied by the sound—surrounded on the laboratory—of flamboyant beans opening sonorously in the Harmattan season, composed merging, in some kind of improvisation, excerpts of the “Triptych: Prayer, Protest, and Peace” soundtrack and Abbey Lincoln wheezes from the Album by Max Roach, that in search of freedom also inspired the title of this artwork.

Along the production of the artworks, the collaboration with Anita Amesimeku, Dennis Ankamah Addo, Ebenezer Boamah and Precious Siaw Kyeremeh has been dense and deep, triggered by my intuition leading the making of the works and fed by a continuous exchange. Speaking with them, we agree that on the day of the opening, they would have been the ones presenting the work, speaking from their point of view. Unfortunately, Ebenezer Boamah could not take part that day due to a concomitant studio field trip outside Kumasi. At his place, Owusu Fordjour, the colleague also involved in the tanning experiments. Moreover, Ebenezer introduced me to Believe Butsome Agbek for any assistance needed on the work. The aim was not, is not, delegate but to put the practice of appropriation to work. The cacophonous situation of discourse between art and science, speaking, asking, and taking a stand, generates a circulation of thoughts, and maybe of sensible, of what art is, can be, and can do.

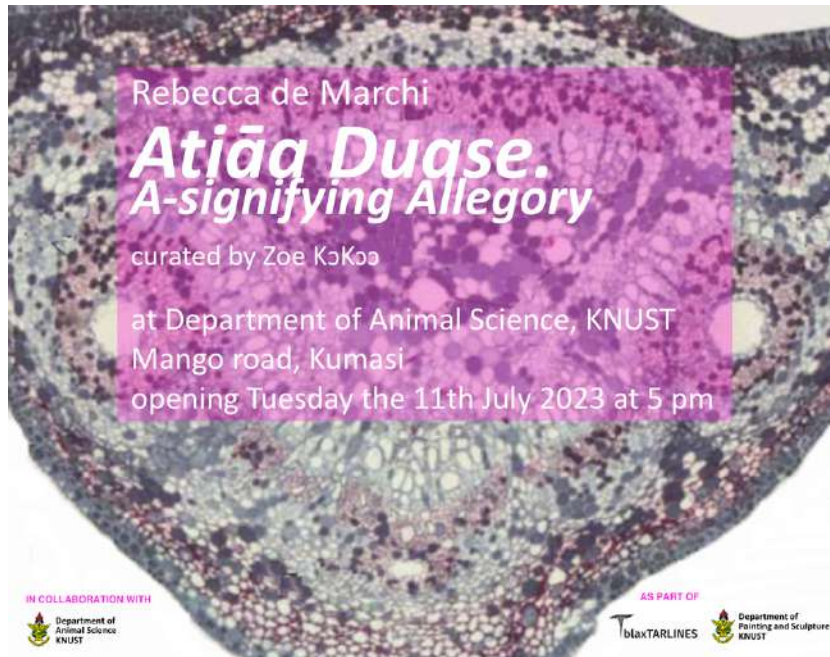


Figure 129 | Poster of the exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory*, 2023. Designed by Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 130 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory*, 2023, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Rebecca De Marchi, *If I Become Foolish*, cashew pigments on canvas, dimensions variable, 2023. In collaboration with Dennis Ankamah Addo. Installation view. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 131 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory*, 2023, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Outside. Installation view. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 132 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Sound Out*, CNSL, wood, termites, 2023. KNUST forest. In collaboration with Precious Siaw Kyeremeh and KNUST Department of Wood Science and Technology. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 133 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory, 2023*, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Rebecca De Marchi, *Cashew-head Persons*, mop, braid, series of seven pieces, dimensions variable, 2023. In collaboration with Anita Amesimeku. Installation view. Dimensions variable. Photo credit: Rebecca De March



Figure 134 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory, 2023*, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Rebecca De Marchi, *Cashew-head Persons*, one of the collage series display inserted into slides. Series of seven, each cm 43 x 64. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 135 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory, 2023*, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Rebecca De Marchi, Listen, *How Quickly Your Heart is Beating In Me*, tanned organs of cow and sheep, calabash, dimensions variable, 2023. In collaboration with KNUST Indigenous Art and Technology Department, Leather Section, Dr Kwabena Asubonteng, and his assistants Ebenezer Boamah and Owusu Fordjour, and Kumasi Abatoir. Installation view. Dimensions variable. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 136 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory, 2023*, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Rebecca De Marchi, *dx/dy*, cashew shells, cashew nut, photos, calabash, Master thesis covers, 2023; and De Marchi, *If I Become Foolish, 2023*, neon, black marking pen. Installation view. Dimension variable. Photo credit: Shadrack Opoku Agyemanga-Ayisi



Figure 137 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory, 2023*, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Rebecca De Marchi, *dx/dy*, cashew shells, cashew nut, photos, calabash, Master thesis covers, series of five, each cm 21,5 x 30,5 x 25 c, 2023. Photo credit: Gianluca Floris



Figure 138 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory, 2023*, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Rebecca De Marchi, *We Instist!*, video, colour, sound, 5'44", 2023. In collaboration with Dennis Ankamah Addo. Installation view. In front one of the piece by Rebecca De Marchi, *Listen, How Quickly Your Heart is Beating In Me*, 2023. Photo credit: Gianluca Floris



Figure 139 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Grandma*, paper, photocopies, cashew apple juice, 40 x 40 cm, 2023. Collage series on cashew. Made after a first sketch on the same subject

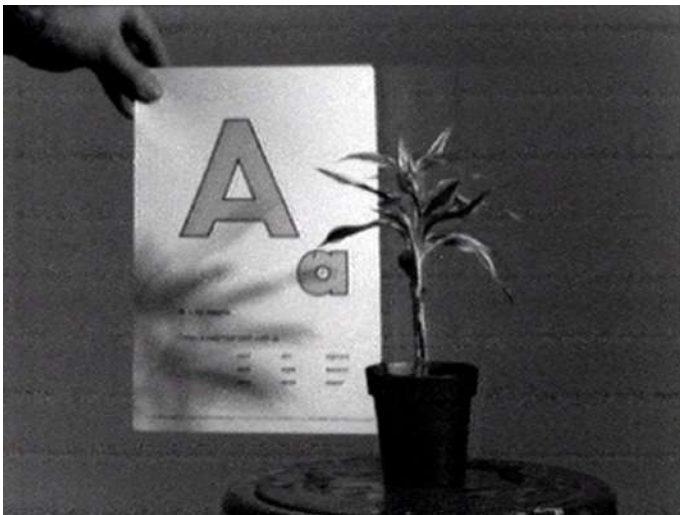


Figure 140 | John Baldessari, *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet*, single-channel video, black and white, sound, 18'40", 1972. Courtesy: Collection Buffalo

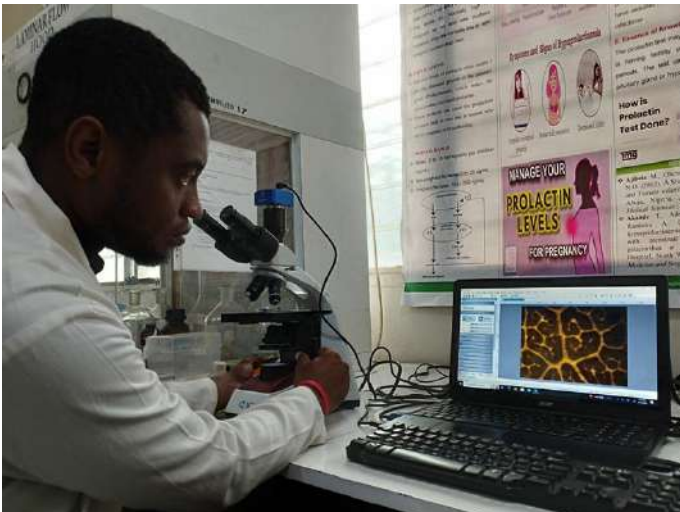


Figure 141 | Magnified view of cashew, 2023. At Oldham Laboratory. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

FOLD H

PART 3

Braid

My Hair, My Veins, Growing Sites of Care or else Hairdressing, Veining, Caring

Walking in Kumasi, hundreds of mops hung at the sun to dry, or stood at the shops on sale, populate the landscape. At the same time, hundreds of hairdresser saloons oriented their doors to the street. There, coloured and packed hair extensions covered the walls, or were quickly animated and braided on the heads of people or dummies. All around, women passed with their long-coloured hair. It is a tradition; it is—constantly innovated—fashion. And wandering, I wondered, would it be possible to “paint” braiding? And depict the section of cashew leaves observed under the lens of the microscope, to say, its knowledge? An invisible world, magic in its obscurity, brings to mind the image of the witches flying on brooms. And the wisdom and foresight in the hiding of seeds in the braids by the enslaved people forced to leave a continent and deported to another, an organic library. There, this potential archive of plants supported the Marrons in their brave self-emancipation from slavery.

With Anita Amesimeku, an MFA student at the KNUST Department of Painting and Sculpture and a professional hairdresser, it has been possible to experiment (Figure 142). She had never braided with the fibres of the mop at that time, and never “painted” with synthetic hair. We went to Adum and Kejetia Market in Kumasi to search for the decided colours—some of which I had already bought at Makola Market in Accra. And back in the studio, we tried, we experimented. Hair overlaps mop ropes or, in different colours and frequent alternation, other hair to portray the magnified cashew leaves. Then, they were burned, to be fixed, and washed with hot water to become flexible. Before the exhibition, as a head among the others, I had my hair braided (Figure 143), with the insert on the back of the same depicted image, that was also the one used for the poster of the exhibition (Figure 129).



Figure 142 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Cashew-head Persons*, 2023. Anita Amesimeku is braiding the mop explaining Ester how to do. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 143 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Cashew-head Persons*, 2023. The artist has had her hair braided as a cashew-head person by Anita Amesimeku. Photo credit: Anita Amesimeku

FOLD H

PART 4

Tanning Organs

Dinpa Ye Sene Ahonya – A Good Name is Better Than Riches

The fermentation on the plastic bottle of the cashew juice I squeezed out from the apple fruits, and the blowing of the inside of the container, said about transformation, turning, excitation. May it inflate an organic container? What could be this organic container? Could this tannin fruit tan skin? Can it be that the etymology unveils a hidden knowledge? That it holds science and prompts technology? Could it be instead of the skin, internal organs, intestines and bladders of ruminants? Organs without bodies? Organs that I imagined were leftover, maybe because I am vegetarian, and maybe because I did not grow up in this country, but soon I discovered being eaten and quite appreciated, unless the bladders of the small ruminant that are thrown away. Bladder became a word that attracts my attention, and in narration, on the Internet, and other topics reading, I learnt that the ones of cow were used as a ball by children in low-income families, that they are currently used in festivals and carnivals like the one in the Dominican Republic, and the painters centuries ago used the bladders of small ruminant as containers for the pigments. But I should find out if cashew could tan internal organs.

One Sunday, while I was weaving, a man came close to the loom, and I mentioned the intention of doing an artwork with leather. He told me I should speak with Dr Kwabena Asubonteng at the KNUST Department of Indigenous Art and Technology DIAT, close to TecSec, the premises of the artist studios on campus. So I did the following week. He encouraged me to proceed with the research, warning that it would compete with the food-driven interests since in Ghana, every part of the animal is considered edible, skin included, and saying we should go to the Kumasi Abattoir, visit we planned for Saturday the 8th of

February 2023. An exchange of letters (Appendix 5 and 6) then formalised the collaboration, and we went there many times to speak with the Production Manager, Michael Tongban and the vets. Finally, on the 23rd of March 2023, we collected some organs of goats and sheep and, also, skins due to the fact that at the Leather Section they decided to start to research tanning. It is at that time we discovered that there is a part of the small ruminants that is thrown away, the bladder, and this comforted my initial intuition and determined my intention to pursue the goal of tanning it, of re-enact what would be discarded, maybe in the current industrialise system not entering the organic generative circle of transformation. With Owusu Fordjour, a technician at DIAT, we went to many chemical laboratories on campus to find who could help us measure the pH of the materials we would have soon used to experiment on tanning: cashew apple juice, cashew dry leaves, cashew green leaves, acacia from Bolgatanga and acacia from Burkina Faso, these last two the ones usually employed for the process. Eventually, we met William Appaw, a chemist at the Oldham Laboratory, who kindly, generously and enthusiastically supported me in the research. On Saturday, the 25th of March, we met to test the pH and discovered that all the substances we were supposing to use for tanning are acid (Figure 144 and Figure 145; Table 1).

Table 1 | pH measurement at Oldham Laboratory, made with William Appaw

Sample	pH
Squeezed cashew apple from Kumasi (Giovanna), tested 15 days after the harvesting	3,67
Centrifuged cashew apple from Kumasi (Mango rd) diluted 1/10 on distilled water, tested 1 day after the harvesting. Sample 1	3,73
Centrifuged cashew apple from Kumasi (Mango rd) diluted 1/10 on distilled water, tested 1 day after the harvesting. Sample 2	3,96
Centrifuged cashew apple from Kumasi (Mango rd) diluted 1/10 on distilled water, tested 1 day after the harvesting. Sample 3	3,85
Centrifuged cashew green leaves from Kumasi (Mango rd) diluted 1/10 on distilled water, tested 1 after the harvesting. Sample 1	4,23

Centrifuged cashew green leaves from Kumasi (Mango rd) diluted 1/10 on distilled water, tested 1 after the harvesting. Sample 2	3,92
Centrifuged cashew green leaves from Kumasi (Mango rd) diluted 1/10 on distilled water, tested 1 after the harvesting. Sample 3	4,01
Centrifuged cashew dry leaves from Techiman diluted 1/10 on distilled water	4,19
Centrifuged cashew green leaves from Techiman diluted 1/10 on distilled water	3,96
Centrifuged cashew nutshells from Wenchi diluted 1/10 on distilled water	4,40
Centrifuged decomposed cashew apples, black on the surface, diluted 1/10 on distilled water	7,79
Squeezed cashew apples from Wenchi, stayed for one month outside fridge under decomposed fruits	4,64
Squeezed cashew apple from Techiman, tested 1 day after the harvesting	4,26
Acacia beans with seeds from Burkina Faso, diluted 1/10 on distilled water	5,12
Acacia beans with seeds from Bolgatanga, diluted 1/10 on distilled water	5,10

Based on the availability of DIAT technicians, the tanning process was started on Monday, the 27th of March. Ebenezer Boamah finally joined the team and constantly, generously and friendly collaborated with me from that moment on a practical basis. “Dinpa ye sene ahonya” (A good name is better than riches), an Akan proverb, said to me one day. Each sample of the internal organs and skins was divided into three parts to be tested with different alkaline substances to remove the fat: ash, lime, and a combination of the two. On Thursday, the 30th of March, the samples were put into water and pounded papaya leaves to de-alkaline them. The day after the proper tanning started, dividing the samples into five parts to test different substances: cashew apple (Figure 146), cashew green leaves (Figure 147), cashew dry leaves, and, as control, acacia from Burkina Faso and acacia from Bolgatanga. They were put in five different closed containers, adding one measure of water to one measure of active substance for each of them (Figure 148). We checked on Monday, the 3rd of April, and saw that the tanning process was slightly started, unless the sample with dry cashew leaves which was smelling bad. That day, we added the active substance to each container. The day after, the

samples were washed, and the process restarted with fresh active substances. On the 5th of April, speaking with Dr. Asubonteng, he suggested the samples in cashew active substances should be stabilised by adding Acacia, the one from Bolgatanga for the samples on cashew dry leaves and cashew apple juice, and from Burkina Faso, the one on cashew green leaves. The samples tanned with cashew ended to be whitish, while acacia turned the samples brown. At that point, we were ready to tan the intestines and bladders for the artwork, using cashew green leaves and adding some acacia from Burkina Faso to strengthen the output. Young girls were observing us when we were working with the fresh, long cow small intestine. I was worried they could be scared, but amazingly, one of them exclaimed, “It is so beautiful!”. After the tanning, we inflated air into the organs to check the presence of holes and then left them to dry. After a few days, we added oil to prevent them from shrinking. The intestine, bladder and calabash bottle—that meanwhile Christopher Kwabena Nchor bought for me in Bolgatanga and delivered at TecSec—were jointed: one piece made with cow organs and the other with the sheep ones.



Figure 144 | pH measurement with William Appaw, samples. At Oldham Laboratory. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 145 | pH measurement with William Appaw. At Oldham Laboratory. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 146 | Cashew apples squeezed to extract the juice. At the KNUST Leather Section. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 147 | Cashew green leaves pounded for the tanning process. At the KNUST Leather Section. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 148 | Tanning process with Ebenezer Boamah. At the KNUST Leather Section. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

FOLD H

PART 5

CNSL

In a nutshell

In May 2022, visiting the Science and Technology exhibition at KNUST Great Hall at the desk of the Department of Chemistry, I asked for information about the cashew nut shell liquid CNSL, and I was told that Dr. Mercy Badu researched that topic. I contacted her, explaining my interest in that material for its protective property on wood and its whole behaviour, including the apparent contradictions. I had already tried to get some CNSL roasting cashew seeds, based on a tutorial seen on the Internet, but I failed, obtaining only a lot of toxic smog. On the 27th of February 2023, in her studio, besides explaining the chemical properties of this compound, she told me to acquire a big bag of cashew nutshells so we could proceed with the extraction. The word scared me! But that is. Thanks for the help of Yaw Gyau Akyereko, from the Department of Food Science and Technology, I got two sacks of them from Wenchi. It arrived at Dr Mensah Lorry Station on the 8th of March in the afternoon, as I learned from a call by Yaw, who told me to go immediately there to pick it up. After a round trip with Uber and the help of the driver Isaac, the bags were in the studio. On Wednesday, the 15th of March, Dr. Badu visited me at the studio to see the nutshells, and she told me to dry them under the sun for one day (Figure 149). I did, putting them on canvas with my naked hands. Sure, I read of the dermatitis it can cause, but finally, I did not care. And I underestimated it. The day after, my fingers softened, a good sensation, and soon after, they start to peel, completely and unpainfully (Figure 150). On the 21st of March, a call from Dr. Badu said I could move the nutshells to the Laboratory of the Agricultural Faculty, and two days later, with the help of Castro, one of the Lab technicians, the oil came out, leaving also a promising residue (Figure 151 and Figure 152).

‘You are doing my same research!’ a person said. Precious Siaw Kyeremeh, a final year Department of Wood Science and Technology undergraduate student, jumped on my path. Perfect, why not collaborate? Actually, the bodies of research were at once the same and different—his from a scientific point of view, mine from an artistic perspective. How to combine the two? He introduced me to his supervisor, Dr. Charles Antwi Boasiako and, talking with him, his ecological concern became palpable. Guided by Precious, I learnt some aspects about how to test wood, the kind of material needed, the dimensions, and the procedure. We went to Sokoban Wood Village on the 8th of May to buy the alstonia and ceiba timbers. For my research-based artwork, I needed sixteen pieces of the first, and eight of the second as control, all cut 2x2x60 cm. On the 30th of May, I weighed the pieces and coated them with an increasing design, recalling the one of the xylophone (Figure 153, Figure 154 and Figure 155). The day after, I did the second layer of coat, and on the 3rd of June, we buried the woods around a termitarium in the KNUST forest, leaving them at the appreciation of the termites, with weekly visits to observe them (Figure 156, Figure 157 and Figure 158; Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4).



Figure 149 | Cashew nut shells dry at the open air. At TecSec. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 150 | The artist hand after having touched the cashew nut shells. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 151 | Extraction of the cashew nut shell liquid CNSL. At the KNUST Laboratory of the Agricultural Faculty. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 152 | In the middle on the floor, the dark residue from the extraction of the cashew nut shell liquid CNSL. At the KNUST Laboratory of the Agricultural Faculty. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 153 | The weighing of the wood. At the KNUST Department of Wood Science and Technology. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 154 | The CNSL, ready for coating the wood. At the KNUST Department of Wood Science and Technology. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 155 | The wood painted by the artist. At the KNUST Department of Wood Science and Technology. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

Table 2 | Visual ratings keys

Visual ratings of durability of timber classification according to EN 252

Rating	Extent to deterioration
0	No sign of attack
1	Slight attack
2	Moderate attacks
3	Severe attacks
4	Failure

Visual ratings of desirability of timber classification according to termites

Rating	Extent to eating
0	Poison
1	Slight appreciation
2	Moderate appreciation
3	Normal appreciation
4	High appreciation

Visual ratings of mould (blue stain)

Rating	Extent to attack
*	Slight
**	Plenty

Table 3 | Cashew Nut Shell Liquid CNSL, Weight (gr) and visual observation, buried in the KNUST Forest on Saturday the 3rd of June 2023, Moved to the Department of Animal Science on Tuesday the 11th of July 2023. Alstonia timber

Sample number	not coted 30.05.23 weight	Week 1 visual 10.06.23		Week 2 visual 17.06.23		Week 3 visual 25.06.23		Week 4 visual 01.07.23		Week 5 visual 10.07.23		Week 6 visual 22.08.23		notes
		with CNSL	no CNSL	with CNSL	no CNSL	with CNSL	no CNSL	with CNSL	no CNSL	with CNSL	no CNSL	with CNSL	no CNSL	
C1	221.49	0	0	0	0	*	3	*	3	*	3	0	4	
C2	182.56	0	0	0	0	*	1	*	1	*	1	0	1	
C3	149.99	0	0	0	0	*	1	*	1	*	1	0	1	
C4	236.80	0	0	0	0	*	1	*	1	*	1	4	4	
C5	244.73	0	0	0	0	**	4	*	4	*	4	4	4	
C6	192.27	0	0	0	0	**	1	*	1	*	1	0	4	
C7	210.66	0	0	0	0	**	2	*	2	*	2	3	4	
C8	232.40	0	0	0	0	**	0	*	0	*	0	3	4	
C9	195.15	0	0	0	0	**	0	*	1	*	1	0	1	
C10	240.74	0	0	0	0	**	1	*	1	*	1	4	4	
C11	251.07	0	0	0	0	*	0	*	0	*	0	3	4	
C12	236.59	0	0	0	0	*	1		1		1	4	4	
C13	281.36	0	0	0	0	**	0	*	0	*	0	0	0	
C14	231.34	0	0	0	0	**	0	*	0	*	0	4	4	
C15	233.63	0	0	0	0	*	0		0		0	0	0	
C16	220.07	0	0	0	0	**	0	*	0	*	0	1	1	

Table 4 | Cashew Nut Shell Liquid CNSL, Weight (gr) and visual observation, buried in the KNUST Forest on Saturday the 3rd of June 2023, Moved to the Department of Animal Science on Tuesday the 11th of July 2023. Ceiba timber, control

Sample number	not coted 30.05.23 weight	Week 1 visual 10/06/23	Week 2 visual 17/06/23	Week 3 visual 25/06/23	Week 4 visual 01/07/23	Week 5 visual 10/07/23	Week 6 visual 22/08/23	notes
CC1	129.23							
CC2	133.53	0	0	4	4	4	4	not coated
CC3	144.25	1	1	1	1	1	4	not coated
CC4	120.73	0	0	1	1	1	disappeared	not coated
CC5	130.60	1	0	3	4	4	4	not coated
CC6	152.05	0	2	4	4	4	disappeared	not coated
CC7	121.10	0	0	1	1	1	4 (broken)	not coated
CC8	121.91	0	0	0**	0**	0**	disappeared	Completely coated
CC9	128.06	1	1	1	1	1	4	not coated



Figure 156 | The burying of the coated wood for the artwork *Sound Out*. At the KNUST forest. With Precious Siaw Kyeremeh. Photo credit: KanKam BigCedi



Figure 157 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Sound Out*, the buried coated wood set up around the termitarium. At the KNUST forest. With Precious Siaw Kyeremeh. Photo credit: KanKam BigCedi



Figure 158 | Rebecca De Marchi, *Sound Out*, the no-coated wood appreciated by the termites. At the KNUST forest. With Precious Siaw Kyeremeh. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

FOLD H

PART 6

Painting

On Death and Good (After)living

Following long research on fruit colours, I started collecting pigment from cashews: the yellow fruit liquid (Figure 159), the dark and dusty dry flesh of the fruit, the brown oil from the nutshell (Figure 154), and the brown dust from the residue of the nutshell after extracting the oil (Figure 152). I tested them on paper and canvas, and then I asked Dennis Ankamah Addo, artist and member of blaxTARLINES KUMASI, to collaborate with me for expanding to a large scale, a miniature painting I had done on black paper, with a lyrical subject. We went to Adum, in Kumasi, to buy the white fabric, and then stitched in the middle to reach the dimension of 3 x 5 m, keeping two smaller samples apart to test the drawing and the colours (Figure 160 and Figure 161). The fabric proved to be slightly elastic. The oil homogeneously spread in all directions, absorbed by it, and took a long time before drying. The juice worked like traditional watercolour, in this case, on canvas instead of paper. On the back of one sample, painted like a negative, was applied the brown powder dissolved or suspended in water that conferred a brown tone on that side and a slighter one on the other side. Meanwhile, we decided to make another painting without coating the back. The same kind of fabric was not available, and the new one was not elastic. The colours on it reacted differently. The juice needed more layers to appear, and the oil spread less. Another decision was made: to set up both paintings at the exhibition premises, finishing the second during the opening, *en plain air* (Figure 162). There, the sun passing through the canvas changed the brown oil into a shiny gold, while on the side directly hit by the beam, the design remained sharp and of its expected colour (Figure 163).



Figure 159 | Apple cashew juice from different plants and time, processed by the artist. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 160 | I - Experimenting cashew pigments with Dennis Ankamah Addo for the painting *If I Become Foolish*. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 161 | II - Experimenting cashew pigments with Dennis Ankamah Addo for the painting *If I Become Foolish*. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi



Figure 162 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory*, 2023, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Dennis Ankamah Addo exposes about Rebecca De Marchi's painting *If I Become Foolish*. Photo credit: Shadrack Opoku Agyemanga-Ayisi



Figure 163 | The exhibition *Atiāa Duase. A-signifying Allegory*, 2023, at KNUST Department of Animal Science. Rebecca De Marchi, *If I Become Foolish*. The sun turns the CNSL pigment into gold. Photo credit: Rebecca De Marchi

*Department of Divination*⁷⁸

Along this path, the dynamic and centreless source of knowledge, questioning, researching, appreciation, disagreement, causing and being caught, exhibit and being exhibited, on a seesaw movement, has let encounters happen, currents run through impossible worlds, avoiding framed participation. It is an attempt to decolonise the mind, to freeing the epistemologies, to take a posthuman posture, and to let the sensible circulate. And through art, folding in perennial new ways, to found and to fund the Department of Divination. The political potentiality of the aesthetics.

The Academy has been a place of cross-experimentation to bring immanent experiences outside, share and reinvent them with and from others. The process is too slow to be done before the end of this path. To be caged in this path. *Ka kra ka kra*, it happens somewhere, somewhen.

Scaling up, as scaling down, is an infinite process, are infinite processes, with implications, without applications.

⁷⁸ The title has been inspired by Toyin Falola's Art Talk on the 12th of July, 2023

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APPENDIX



Kwame Nkrumah
University of Science
and Technology, Kumasi

College of Art and Built Environment
FACULTY OF ART

DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

DPS/DM/Vol. 1

8th March, 2022

The Head
Department of Industrial Art
Faculty of Art
CABE
KNUST

PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN YOUR DEPARTMENT

In the spirit of collaboration between our Departments, I inform you that Rebecca De Marchi, a PhD Candidate at the Department of Painting and Sculpture under the supervision of Prof kaŕi'kaçhä seid'ou, is delving into traditional fabrics and is beginning to learn weaving techniques from Mr. Isaac Gyasi at the IRAI Section as part of her artistic research.

Any courtesies extended to her would be highly appreciated

Best regards,


Prof. Edwin Kwesi Bodjawah
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



**Kwame Nkrumah
University of Science
and Technology, Kumasi**

DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

DPS/DM/Vol.1

14th June, 2022

The Head
Department of Industrial Art
Faculty of Art
CABE
KNUST

PERMISSION TO COLLABORATE WITH YOUR DEPARTMENT ON TRADITIONAL WEAVING

In the spirit of collaboration between our Departments, and following my letter dated 8th March, 2022, I write on behalf of Ms. Rebecca De Marchi, a PhD Candidate at the Department of Painting and Sculpture who aims to exhibit her Kente-inspired project, *Lo Sai?*, at the Prempeh II Library at KNUST. The project is supervised by Prof. kari'kachi seid'ou,

With the assistance of Mr. Isaac Gyasi of IRAI, Ms. De Marchi would like to involve three or more students of the IRAI Weaving Section for live weaving sessions at the Prempeh II Library, where three traditional looms would be installed. Ms. De Marchi will bear all costs for the project's realization. As part of the collaboration, she will also donate some books on kente weaving to the IRAI Section's library.

Please find attached a synopsis of the intended project.

Any courtesies extended to her would be highly appreciated.

Thank you


Prof. Edwin Kwesi Bodjwah
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



Kwame Nkrumah
University of Science
and Technology, Kumasi

DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

DPS/IE VOL.1

14th June, 2022

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN
KNUST

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR USE OF SPACE AT THE PREMPEH II LIBRARY FOYER FOR AN ART EXHIBITION

Rebecca De Marchi is a PhD candidate of the Department of Painting and Sculpture. As part of requirements for completion of her program, she intends to hold a public exhibition of her artwork. She has expressed interest in exhibiting an iteration of her work entitled *Lo Sai?* within the space of Prempeh II Library Foyer which takes place in a period covering the second semester examinations in September, 2022, estimated one month to intercept the greater flow of students.

The objective of this exhibition is to further her artistic research and heighten the cordial relationship between the Departments on Campus.

Please find attached the description of the exhibition project.

I would therefore be grateful if you could approve her use of the space.

Thank you

Prof. Edwin K. Bodjawah
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

26th August, 2022.

The Head of Department
Painting and Sculpture
KNUST


Dear sir,

APPROVAL FOR THE USE OF SPACE AT THE PREMPEH II LIBRARY FOYER FOR AN ART EXHIBITION

Approval has been given by the University Librarian for your request to use space at the Prempeh II Library Foyer for an art exhibition.

You are kindly requested to contact the Head of Student Support Services Department for further arrangement.

Thank you.


Anthony Mensah Idan
Head, Student Support Services Department
Prempeh II Library, KNUST
0248784421



Kwame Nkrumah
University of Science
and Technology, Kumasi

College of Art and Built Environment
FACULTY OF ART

DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

DPS/IL/1

22nd February, 2023

THE MANAGING DIRECTOR
KUMASI ABATTOIR COMPANY
LIMITED

Dear Sir/Madam,

PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN YOUR PREMISES


Based on the collaboration between our Institutions, I write to inform you that Rebecca De Marchi, PhD candidate at the Department of Painting and Sculpture under the supervision of Prof kaŕi'kaçhä seid'ou (Dean, Faculty of Art, KNUST) is seeking on the tanning of internal organs of animals, as part of her artistic practical research, assisted by Dr Kwabena Asubonteng of Indigenous Art and Technology Department, Leather Section.

Thereby, please support her in the research by providing information in dialogue with Vets and other workers having their activities there, and helping her to collect the materials she needs for the practical experimentation.

Any courtesies extended to her would be highly appreciated.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,


Prof. Edwin Kwesi Bodjawah
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

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KACL/ADM.56/047/23

23rd March, 2023.

The Head of Department,
KNUST
Department of Painting and Sculpture,
Kumasi.

Attention: Prof. Edwin Kwesi Bodjawah

Dear Sir,

APPROVAL TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH WORK

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 13th May, 2022 and have the pleasure to inform you that Candidate Rebecca De Marchi has been accepted to undertake her research work with this Company.

She will be attached to the **Production Department** and would be required to abide by the **Rules & Regulations** of this Company.

We do hereby confirm that she will receive all the assistance she requires to enable her achieve her goal.

Yours faithfully,


ALHASSAN A. MAHAMADU
MANAGING DIRECTOR

cc: HR Manager
Production Manager

Aam/ea



Kwame Nkrumah
University of Science
and Technology, Kumasi

College of Art and Built Environment
FACULTY OF ART

DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

DPS/EXH./1

26th June, 2023

The Head
Department of Animal Science
KNUST

REQUEST FOR SPACE FOR AN ART EXHIBITION

Rebecca de Marchi is a PhD candidate of the Department of Painting and Sculpture under the supervision of Prof. Karikacha Seid'ou, Dean of Faculty of Art.

As part of the requirements for the completion of her thesis-project, she intends to hold a public exhibition of her artworks at the Department of Animal Science premises along the KNUST Mango Road. The research backing this exhibition project focuses on the "organic library" of cashew and related ecologies.

The candidate has expressed interest in exhibiting in the following spaces at the Animal Science premises: the open-air area close to the cashew trees, the small courtyard encircled by the portico, and one of the classroom laboratories. The exhibition is intended to open on Friday, 7th July, 2023 and stays for one month.

I would therefore be grateful if you could approve her use of the respective spaces for her exhibition project. Please find attached the candidate's description of the exhibition project.

Thank you.

Prof. Edwin K. Bodjawah
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT