

if you love me...

Actualities birthed in impossibilities—Kumasi Locomotive Shed and other lines along
Ghana rail tracks

by

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CERTIFICATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the MFA 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 acknowledgment has been made in the text.

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Student	Signature	Date

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Head of Department	Signature	Date

ABSTRACT

This text walks the reader through the process, production, and presentation of “if you love me...”, a collaborative exhibition that sought to approach curating as an artistic practice in and of itself. Channelling productivist strategies of “functional transformation”, the co-curators intervened in identified sites of critique, in an attempt to birth actualities from within impossibilities. Collaborative efforts bridged institutional, ideological, and economic lines, involving a cross-disciplinary group of artists, scientists, labourers and hustlers. Interventions occupied ecosystems of the site(s), and at the same time were inhabited by them. In our several curatorial roles, we were the paradoxical colonisers who strove toward freedom, and by analogy, invasive bacteria equally vulnerable to infestation. The exhibition was multiple-sited with roots at the Locomotive Shed of the Kumasi Railway, and surrounding city streets and other lines along Ghana rail tracks. Our “garden of forking tracks” calls to mind an open-ended labyrinth with portals and trails along which participant audiences construct their chosen routes (or roots). Through visual, aural and sensory resonances attuned to multiple modes of perception—bricolage, installation, projection, performance, imagery, event and ingestion—the invited artists and their collaborators reconstructed debris of our times, and reimagined their potentials. Material and semiotic reconfigurations created other worlds within their world, and other positions from which to enter them. The open-ended, cross-genre and non-hierarchical curatorial strategy resonates with the rhetorical prose style, lowercase titling and unorthodox chapter organisation of this accompanying text. The contents are not exclusively my own, but a shared initiative of numerous individuals who have been labouring over the years, and a number of whom came together for this brief moment in time in the name of love.

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To our friends from near and afar who visited, followed, shared, wrote, experienced...

To my beloved parents.

And to my favourite goat....the Silence between the lines... (Ibrahim Mahama.)

red and blaxTARLINES

In the 1920s and '30s Soviet Russia, a new railway line served an alternate purpose: as a network to produce and screen films to the masses of rural populations.¹ Train cars travelled from village to village, and films were projected inside cars and on stops at stations. These masses—peasants and farmers, mostly—started off as viewers, but also became makers of the cinematic projects. While the RED EAST 'agit-trains' directed by the state (as well as steamships, called RED STAR) promoted propaganda war efforts of the Red Army via pre-made “factographic” plots, Dziga Vertov's ensuing “mobile cinema” of the '20s involved not only showing but making films on the trains and steamers, resulting in experimental pictures that projected viewers' own realities.² In the '30s, Aleksandr Medvedkin took things a step further, with 'cine-trains' that involved would-be viewers as participants and producers of the films. They would shoot the films in 24 hours and screen them the next day, thus presenting people with a picture of their own work. Medvedkin's “film factory on wheels” aimed to intervene in proletarian production by exposing conditions and practices of workers' own labour, in order to jolt populations into better production, toward the construction of a greater Soviet state.



Fig. 1 'Agit-trains' of Soviet Russia's RED EAST Line from the 1920s.

Almost a century later, pivoting our point to Kumasi, Ghana, we trade the “RED STAR” line for a “blaxTARLINES,” with an exhibition at the Locomotive Shed of the Kumasi Railway titled, “if you love me...” blaxTARLINES KUMASI is the project space for contemporary art led by the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), and “if you love me...” is the first thesis show of the new M.F.A. Curating course of this Department. Co-curated by Robin Riskin, Selom Kudjie, and Patrick Nii Okanta Ankrah, the exhibition of 15 April–5 May 2016 was organised in partnership with blaxTARLINES KUMASI, the Department of Painting and Sculpture, the Ghana Railway Company (GRC) and Ghana Railway Workers’ Union (GRWU). The show presented work by 30 participants from in and outside the University, a collective effort of railway workers, occupants, engineers, artists, and students of KNUST.



Fig. 2 Locomotive Shed, Kumasi Railway
Colonial segment built early 1920s
9 December 2015.



Fig. 3 Locomotive Shed, Kumasi Railway
Industrial annex constructed early 1980s. 9 December 2015.

Housed in a British Gold Coast structure of the 1920s, with an industrial appendage added in the early '80s, the exhibition embraced intertextualities, polyphonies, and contradictions. Artists' work dealt with the debris, verdure, and veils of the 21st century, amidst neoliberal crises, swelling underclasses, and escalating accumulations of capital. Cross-disciplinary experiments and collaborations charted trajectories for parallax encounters. Reconfiguring codes and conventions of our times, these artists created other worlds within our world, and suggest other positions from which to enter them. The Locomotive Shed may no longer be used for the purpose it was built, and engines might accumulate dust until auctioned off for scrap metal. Yet the place has been inhabited by other bodies and organisms: surplus populations that are produced by and prop up capitalist systems; alongside flora and fauna that relentlessly germinate under sprinklings of rain and sun. Artists' interventions entered into conversation with the histories and materials of these architectures, and the wider tracks from which they were born.

The Ghana Railway connects our project to larger global narratives of exploitation in states birthed by capitalist expansions—conquests that have continually been countered by proletarian struggles for freedom. The Railway was once one of the strongest industries of the nation, and to be a “Railway man” was a point of pride and prestige. In Gold Coast times, the Corporation’s workers formed the largest coalition in the nation’s first trade union, and made up the bulk of comrades whose strikes brought independence under Nkrumah’s plan for “positive action”. Once a crowning achievement of what was first a colony and then an independent nation, today most of the Ghana Railway lines lie inactive, save for a few between mining sites and harbours (Tarkwa-Takoradi, Accra-Tema, and Accra-Nsawam). What used to be a public corporation was converted into a limited liability company in 2001, in the hopes that capitalism might save it. Ghosts of its former glory abound in the remains of colonial-era stations, magnificent rusting train cars, and massive locomotive shed halls. Yet even if the Company’s current conditions have deteriorated from former glory days, its workers remain filled with hope.³ We see these acts of courage as not only human-led, but biological, vegetal, and technological, inspired by the resiliency of roots, invertebrates, bacteria, winds, waters and machines.



Fig. 4 Sekondi Location (Locomotive Shed). 9 February 2016.

The legacy left by productivist artists of Soviet Russia serves as a critical backdrop in the construction of our project, vis-à-vis intervention in the means of production toward a transformation of present conditions. Bertolt Brecht called this approach “functional transformation” (*Um-funktionierung*): to transform the forms and instruments of production in order to actualise liberation within not only artistic practice but more importantly, politics, the class struggle. In contrast to the *proletkult* artists, a group of bourgeois intellectuals who created work that was sympathetic to the proletarian cause, the productivists sought intervene in mechanisms of production, toward actual political revolution.⁴ In analogous Benjaminian fashion, we seek not to symbolically assimilate revolutionary themes, but to materially question and reorient the relations of things.

As Vertov turned the train car into a mobile cinematic laboratory, and Medvedkin implicated proletarian comrades in the production of their own image and subsequently, their reality, we temporarily converted the activity of a non-operational locomotive shed, which has been out of service for almost a decade, yet appropriated for other uses. In our curatorial project, we aimed at birthing actualities within the timespace of impossibilities⁵: events that have no precedent, reason, or *a priori* logic, yet which suddenly emerge. Through strategies of “ironic overidentification”, as proposed and practices by *kaṛīḥkaḥä seid’ou*, we insert ourselves within the site of critique, in order to actualise its transformation.⁶ We attempted collaborations across institutional, ideological and economic lines; a deterritorialized time and space; and a rhizomatic contamination between the work and space. Independent projects staged by artists and engineers, working together with civil servants, labourers, and the

hustlers of the city, interceded in this place for a brief moment in time, and left residues which we hope may precipitate a more lasting shift.

Our interest in artistic practice lies less in formalist tendencies or avant-garde critiques than in Brechtian transformations, Benjaminian interventions, or Agambenian potentialities.⁷ We neither claim nor seek to complete our vision, but hope to prompt a starting point, or rather a line, which persists, laterally, in the middle. We offer not solutions but questions, and an open hand—for we are also trying to find our way through the darkness. The artist Agyeman “Dota” Ossei told us, “If you can see, you will not believe. So to be able to believe stupidly, is to be blind... The things I believe in, if I were not stupid they wouldn’t happen. Because I would know that oh, this thing’s impossible, don’t try it.”⁸ Thus like Dota, or like the *Phantom Tollbooth*’s young Milo, we were able to set off on this quixotic journey only, perhaps, because we didn’t know the task was impossible.



Fig. 5 Crashed train car lifted on crane by Sekondi Engineers for “if you love me...”.
Kumasi Locomotive Shed.
18 April 2016.

co-habitations



Fig. 6 Kumasi Locomotive Shed the morning exhibition opening.
16 April 2016.

The old turntable at the back of the Locomotive Shed, where engines that had come in for repair would be spun back round in the other direction, has flooded with water and overgrown with weeds. The cogs no longer roll, but other lives are burgeoning.

Teeming at the surface are algae, reeds, and thousands of mosquito larvae. These mosquito breeding grounds make food for fish that inhabit the depths, which in turn activate a habitat for the plants. The plants are perching grounds for dragonflies, in various breeds of grey, brown, and ruby. Frogs find shelter in the reeds, and flora thrive amidst millions of bacteria. An entire ecosystem has sprung up in a former industrial apparatus. One life transferred to another, a series of metamorphoses.

The turntable—or carousel, as Caterina Niklaus likes to call it—has ‘revolution’ implicated in its being. ‘Revolution’ in the sense of turning, motion; a revolution of the sun, or moon, or clock.⁹ Though the turntable cycles forward and back, in and out, in order to turn the engine from one side to the other, a carousel spins round and round in an infinite play of repetitions.



Fig. 7 Turntable at Kumasi Locomotive Shed
Sippah’s plants and Niklaus’s petals.
16 April 2016.

The projective space of “if you love me...” was organised around indoor and outdoor grounds of the Locomotive Shed (henceforth Loco Shed), as well as surrounding streets of the city and extensions along railway lines. The Loco Shed building itself is an open shell-like structure, more like a passageway, which flows from one end to the other without the barrier of an exterior wall. This sense of “flow” carried throughout the project, in which artists’ work, microcosmic ecologies, and edifices of the town merged onto and sprouted off of each other. The exhibition morphed through time and space, growing, rerouting, and decomposing—starting before the show began and continuing after it closed. “if you love me...” opened for three weeks in April to May, but its ends or roots may never really conclude.

For these three weeks, the Loco Shed was like an avatar of itself: an icon or idea of the place that seemed to superscribe the place. It was the same yet somehow different: infected, recoded. Viewers who entered the building often had a hard time identifying artists' works or discerning what constituted the exhibition, which attached to the space like bacteria on a cell, introducing genetic material that subtly alters it. Derrida has articulated this notion through the motif of the *pharmakon*: a medicine, or “philter” introduced into the body that “acts as both remedy and poison”.¹⁰ The *pharmakon* seduces the host with a cure, but this cure subsumes or replaces the hosting body, such that the body is no longer the host anymore, and has been transformed.



Fig. 8 “if you love me...” installation view
Work by Rex Akinruntan, Stephen Smart Sippah/Caterina Niklaus, and Francis Anim-Sakyi.
28 April 2016

At the Loco Shed, an industrial machine can transmute into a stagnant overflow, can transfigure into a floral pond. Niklaus and horticulturalist Stephen Smart Sippah worked with inhabitants of the Shed to clear out weeds and trash of the turntable and

introduce new plant species—Panama Hat Palm, Papyrus, Flowering Turmeric, Spider Lily, Heliconia, Bamboo, among others, and red rose petals Niklaus made of beeswax. In this line, works that injected into the space of the Shed generated a biological shift that made the place somehow other than itself. Timothy Affram’s mechanised “iris” shutter was situated within an old car window. Deryk Owusu Bempah’s manipulated railway photographs nestled inside cases for workers’ announcements. Francis Anim-Sakyi’s styrofoam plates and tin cans scattered along tracks and platforms, their blob-like black-and-white paint marking the only distinction from ubiquitous trash. A cloth quoting Pan-African poetry appeared to many as an art installation, but in fact sheltered the sleeping place of one resident. He also directs a conceptual “Garvey Memorial”, and runs an outdoor workshop for fashion items made of printed cloth, which he displays on reoriented railway tracks. Existing articles of the place thus changed through viewers’ perceptions of them. The exhibition ran as if the Loco Shed was still the Loco Shed, and yet its contents had shifted. Only someone intuitively familiar with the place might immediately notice a difference—most likely Loco Shed workers, residents, head porters selling goods, or regular commuters passing through. And yet, infection had begun.



Figs. 9 and 10 Timothy Affram. “Mimosa” (car window) 2016.
Installation view and detail. Scrap metal, wood, motors. 85 x 48.5 cm.
10 May 2016.



Fig. 11 Deryk Owusu Bempah. Part of the “Ghana Railway System” series. 2016.
Installation view. Photographs (diptych): blue-back print,
installed in cases for workers’ announcements.
18 April 2016.



Fig. 12 Francis Anim-Sakyi. “Takeaway Series”. 2016.
Installation detail. Acrylic paint on styrofoam plates and tin cans.
15 April 2016.



Fig. 13 Workshop area and Garvey Memorial site of Loco Shed resident.
1 May 2016.

At the same time as works attached to the space, the space also occupied the works; informing, altering, and sometimes literally inhabiting them. Derrida's pharmakon, which breaks into its host, is equally penetrated, consumed and substituted by that host. In likewise manner, grasses grew through orifices in Edwin Bodjawah's metal-plate masks. Chickens found a pecking place in Sippah's potted plants, and dragonflies fluttered around his papyrus. Moths and insects made homes in Dorothy Amenuke's reed mats hanging under platforms, while dirt gently tarnished her longitudinal red pillows, hung from beams in the ceiling and swung down to vines below. As Lawrence Baganiah's recordings of rain water, bird chirps, and heartbeats reverberated through platform underbellies, frogs, insects, and cows joined the polyphonic conversation. And despite all our efforts, polluted waters in the turntable pond kept Niklaus's petals continually sinking. Derrida writes that the pharmakon spawns its own disappearance; its self passes into itself. We might see this disappearance not as an absence but a silent presence—as in Agamben's potentiality, whose impotentiality likewise passes into itself in actuality, but is preserved within.



Fig. 14 Edwin Bodjawah. Untitled. 2016.
Installation detail. Masks of moulded lithographic plates and roofing sheets.
4 May 2016.



Fig. 15 Dorothy Amenuke. “Dreaming is a map”. 2012-16.
Installation process. Polyester fabric, kapok (silk cotton), twine.
14 April 2016.

Even before works entered the space, the Loco Shed pro-actively prompted penetration of artists’ practices, as participants developed their efforts in relation to existing structures and conditions. Yaw Owusu tested his *pesewa* coins on pliable canvas instead of metal or wooden board, so that they could mould to panels of platforms. Anim-Sakyi, in presenting his plates and cans tumbled about and not mounted to gallery walls, had to think about using all sides of the pieces, and not always leaving one end unpainted. Va-Bene Elikem Fiatsi (a.k.a. crazinisT artisT) conceived a performance that defied spectacle, pursuing a line of his more intimate studio practice. The work flowed with the rhythms of residents’ daily dressing rituals at the Shed, and contributed to an existing tension between voyeurism and exhibitionism. Adjo Kisser for the first time publically experimented with reproduction of printed media as well as large-format painting. She re-scaled her work to fit a billboard at the nearby overhead, and on poles of street-side lamps used for hanging political flags. Meanwhile, Owusu Bempah’s earlier engagement with the railway system has been reignited: since a photograph he took at the Locomotive

Shed last year, he has now picked up the subject as a more intensive project, and been traveling to different railway sites on research.



Fig. 16 Yaw Owusu. “Unwoven Pieces”. 2016.
Detail. Treated *pesewa* coins on canvas.
15 April 2016.



Fig. 17 Va-Bene Elikem Fiasti (crazinisT artisT). “x in red”. 2016.
Performance (inside lathing machine room).
15 April 2016.



Fig. 18 Adjo Kisser. Part of “The Billboard Series” (flag).
Installation view. Flexi print mounted on lamppost. 63.5 x 68 cm. (25 x 26.7 in.)
3 May 2016.



Fig. 19 Adjo Kisser. Part of “The Billboard Series” (billboard). Asafo Interchange, Kumasi.
Installation view. Hand-painted billboard: acrylic on flexi. 20 x 6 m. (65.5 x 19.5 ft.)
18 April 2016.



Fig. 20 Francis Anim-Sakyi. “Takeaway Series”. 2016.
Installation detail. Acrylic paint on styrofoam plates and tin cans.
19 April 2016.



Fig. 21 Francis Anim-Sakyi. “The Social Series”. 2015.
Installation view. Acrylic paint on styrofoam plates.
From “the Gown must go to Town” exhibition, Accra (2015).

Some projects were also retroactively affected. Amenuke’s red pillow piece, “Dreaming is a map”, predated “if you love me...” from 2012—yet in its new context, the dreamlike abode gained a sinister twist of parasitic encounter.¹¹

Occupying an open square at the end of the Shed, long dangling red pillows entered an ecosystem of roots and vines from a strangler ficus tree that spans both inside and outside the building. Tumbling from ceiling rafters and crawling down windows, these organic invaders of the concrete construction seem to claim back a territory

which in the first place has been an invasion on the land. Amenuke's cotton and kapok dangles introduced a third element, a new species both seductive and potentially violent. The artist has been interested in creating environments that register on multiple emotional and psychological levels. These are spaces for contemplation, comfort, and refuge, but also for discomfort, unrest, and uncertainty. At the Loco Shed, these contradictions resonated with the precarious nature of life in the space, also implicated in the other work she presented, "Marks on the sheet". A body of burnt and patched reed mats occupied a cool enclave under a platform where people come to sleep each night. Every morning, these people pack up their things and head to work, the only trace an occasional mosquito net or a bedding stuffed in a corner.



Fig. 22 Dorothy Amenuke. "Marks on the sheet". 2012-16.
Installation view. Pandamus fibre, jute, grass, plantain bark, hand-made paper.
18.3 x 0.9 m. (20 x 1 yd.)
19 April 2016.

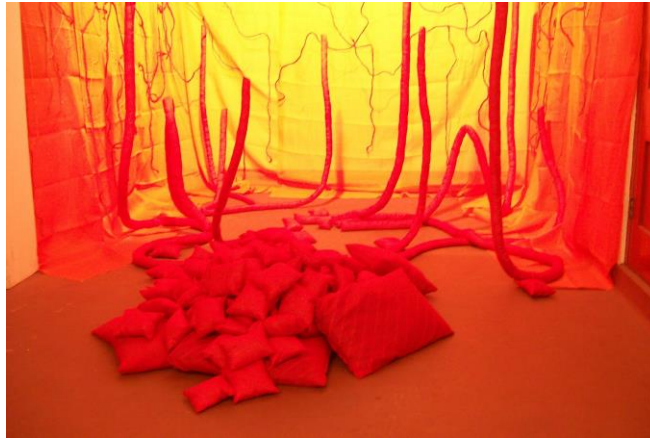


Fig. 23 Dorothy Amenuke. “Dreaming is a map”. 2012.
Installation view. Polyester fabric, kapok (silk cotton), twine.

The effects of these multi-directional exchanges between artists’ work and the site aimed toward a kind of equalising, or levelling of positions. Although our initiative was by its nature a colonisation of the space—enacted through government authority, on the territory of occupants who reside without legal rights—we attempted as much as we could to counter or question our position at every turn, to open it up to destabilisation, rupture, and participation. Though we had hoped Amenuke’s mats under the platform would create spaces where people could sleep without having to hide their presence, the art (and especially the Security lights, which we installed with a crew from Railway Electricals) had the reverse effect of scaring people away. While Railway staff were pleased with the outcome, it was the opposite of our intention. Loco Shed occupants—sometimes suspicious of artists’ work, other times appreciative, at points joining in, and oftentimes ambivalent—related to the exhibition on several registers. Our opening and closing events were a great hit with residents and people from nearby, and culminated in *Azonto* dance parties which we had a hard time bringing to a close. Yet negotiating the day-to-day and more long-term effects of our presence has been proven more challenging. We are still trying to understand and navigate the repercussions.

comrades

Brecht writes that the most powerful and effective way to achieve “functional transformation” is to involve as many participants as possible in its production; to turn as many readers into writers, spectators into actors. According to Benjamin, this is the turning point of the 20th century, brought on by the invention of the printing press and the dissemination of the newspaper: now, any person can be a writer, and those who read the paper also contribute to it. The sacrosanct position of the author is toppled, and with mechanical reproduction, the fetishized art object loses its aura. Specialist training has been superseded by a polytechnical one, and authority has become common.



Fig. 24 “if you love me...” brochure and guest book displayed daily by Loco Shed workers “Body” and Victor.
20 April 2016.

In this vein of thought, “if you love me...” involved a targeted range of actors who spanned the arts and sciences; the formally educated and the technical or self-taught; and the academy, the state, and its underbelly of lumpenproletariat. Day-to-day

happenings of the show were collectively overseen by Locomotive Shed workers Emmanuel “Body” Afful, Victor Akanwuba, Atta Gregory Wilson, and David Bentum; together with KNUST M.F.A. classmate Michael Babanawo, who directed our security and facilities management; and two volunteers from the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB), Dwomoh Kwame Owusu and Kofi Mensah. Residents of the Loco Shed assisted on daily clean-up efforts and helped to protect artists’ works. In a great negotiating victory, the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) agreed to install powerful streetlights for the length of the show, and lent use of their bucket crane for scaling the ceiling. Exhibition efforts were thus cooperatively managed by disparate groups which somehow coagulated as a heterogeneous community.



Fig. 25 Loco Shed Manager Emmanuel “Body” Afful gives Mr. Quashie, Kumasi Railway Area Manager, and colleague a tour of the exhibition.
20 April 2016.



Fig. 26 David Bentum and crew from Kumasi Railway Electricals renovate lighting system.
7 April 2016.



Fig. 27 Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) teams up with GRC Electricals team to install street lights for the exhibition, and uses their bucket crane to reach elevated heights. 14 April 2016.

Our project strove to actualise commonalities among these apparently divergent groups, connected by their surprisingly parallel relationships to capital. For in various ways, they all play the proletariat within a capitalist system. Directly or indirectly, their labour feeds a regime of commodity production and consumption, which profits off the backs of the workers who are phantasmorically detached from the objects of their industry. Though the civil servants, employed by the Ghana Railway, Ghana Museums, Kumasi university, KMA, etc. might be called *salariat*—not paid wages sourced from profit off goods they produce, but rather salaries for human activity funded by a central government revenue—they can also choose to see themselves as proletariats on the basis of their relationship to their means of production, which they do not own but sell to a profiteering authority.

Contemporary artistic practice has likewise been subsumed by a commodity-driven art market that relentlessly incorporates increasing modes of production within its realms. Even better than the Constructivist *proletkult*, the mega-museums, powerhouse galleries, and cultural foundations that prop up the market tend to propagate symbolically revolutionary discourse without functionally questioning their

position within a system of relations. Against this backdrop, “if you love me...” presented an exhibition that attempted to counteract mechanisms of reification and capitalist absorption. Anim-Sakyi works with detritus of capitalist systems (plasticware residues of social ingestions), while Lois Selasie Arde-Acquah interrogates manual labour through exaggeration, via repetitive drawings of monochrome fractals. Captain’s Kitchen, led by Geoffrey Akpene Biekro and his crew of KNUST classmates, disrupts flows of capital, offering free food in spaces of commercial consumption. Kissler’s painted billboard montage for the show veiled grotesqueries of capitalist society in a gauze of saccharine caricatures. Blue-bodied medusas grinned down with chipped teeth, some coated in reflective stickers that gleamed back at approaching cars by night.



Fig. 28 Captain’s Kitchen. “Eat Art Exhibition”. 2015.
 (Geoffrey Akpene Biekro and collaborators. Above, Biekro and Theresah Ankomah.)
 Culinary Performance: Commercial Area, KNUST.
 November 2015.

These interventions did not just critique, but created platforms for conversations, convivialities, and communities: seats and tables shared while imbibing Captain’s *garri* fish balls, disparate viewpoints conjoined within the space of Arde-Acquah’s

tessellations on styrofoam, and inhabited rooms reformed by Eric Okwei Nii Noye's "IF YOU LOVE ME" curtains. Bernard Akoi-Jackson's fictional Railway administration prompted participants of his bureaucratic performance into mutual encounter, and its production involved an improvised troupe of student volunteers who formed a loose alliance. Works that were presented in the show did not need to be permanent, portable, nor material. More significantly, perhaps, our project made present the processes of production, such that bonds between producers and products were implicated in experiences of the exhibition. Works were shifting and reforming, entered the space at different points in time, and oftentimes were produced within it. Notions of idealised objects with natural properties could not hold in our Kumasi *Kraftwerk*,¹² where the objects themselves were in flux, displays were elastic, and production was carried out in plain presence of visitors.



Fig. 29 El Lissitzky. "Cabinet of Abstraction". 1927.
A modular exhibition structure commissioned by Alexander Dorner for the Hanover Museum.



Fig. 30 Bernard Akoi-Jackson. “Untitled...and if i don’t...”. 2016.
Participatory performance of bureaucracy. Here, Selasi Sosu of Winneba applies for a ticket.
1 May 2016.



Fig. 31 Captain’s Kitchen. “EAT ART”, Locomotive Shed. 2016.
Above, Thelma Opoku Danquah serves guests from inside the buffet car.
15 April 2016.

Works continued to enter the space after the show had already opened, so that audiences encountered an undertaking that was perpetually in progress. Several days past opening, Nii Noye was sewing his “IF YOU LOVE ME” curtains and flags, with assistance from a Loco Shed resident named Janet. About a week in, Loco Shed Manager “Body” and co-curator Ankrah were helping Nii Noye scale windows and walls, in full view of visitors who happened to come by. In the last week of the show,

a second phase of works entered the space for our May Day closing event, with Yaw Brobbey Kyei fixing sign posts, Kisser and crew mounting flags, Affram inserting his iris window, and Lolo Atanley lighting up a Gold Coast British grandfather clock with automated LEDs. The exhibition was not presented as a finished package or final form, but in motion, forming and re-forming, the seams of its own labour implicated in its presence.



Fig. 32 Lolo Atanley. Untitled (clock). Early 20th century–2016.
Installation process. Gold Coast-era clock, LED lights, Arduino, wires, computer.
3 May 2016.



Fig. 33 Yaw Brobbey Kyei. “Road Sighs”. 2016.
Production process. Paint on cardboard packaging, wood.
Above, the artist and Francis Anim-Sakyi assemble and install signboards.
1 May 2016.



Fig. 34 Adjo Kisser, Timothy Affram, Selom Kudjie and Francis Djiwornu at work in the Loco Shed Office before the May Day event. 1 May 2016.

In the same line, many of the works in the show were ephemeral, designed to decay, or specific to the site. The exhibition preferred modes of co-habitation over commodities. Emmanuel Opoku Manu's strange objects nestled into crevices of furnitures and cabinets, while Eugene Edzorho's hanging Galamsey rocks started a conversation with the cargo car. Kelvin Haizel's video projections plastered walls and were equally punctuated by them, in an intervention oriented by the building. The products of Captain's culinary interventions were consumed as soon as they were served, and after the show, Edzorho's rocks were undone and packed away till their next iteration. Arde-Aquah's hand-drawn tessellations, orbiting inside a suspended train car, subsided from their 'zero-gravity space' once the train descended. Objects of the exhibition were impermanent and specific to their space. Their presence lives on in the minds, memories, and digestive tracts of audiences and participants, as a testing ground and not an eternal incarnation. Presenting a counterpoint to the finity

of the White Cube, we attempted to bring objecthood into action, or to life itself, as well as to death and rebirth.



Fig. 35 Eugene Edzorho. "GOVERNOR I". Kumasi, 2016.
Installation view. Rocks from mining sites, nylon thread, cargo car.
3 May 2016.



Fig. 36 Kelvin Haizel. "Even for a Thousand Years...". 2016.
Video projection: Cargo car, Loco Shed, Kumasi.
15 April 2016.

responsibilities



Fig. 37 Ibrahim Mahama. EXCHANGE - EXCHANGER. Former Food Distribution Corporation. (1957–2057). North Industrial Area, Kaneshie, Accra.

Like Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Mahama self-funds his independent projects, in which material residues of capitalist systems are mounted on and against architectures implicated in their production, in collaboration with workers who embody the human surplus of these same systems.

Installation view. Jute sack on Modernist structure.
November 2015.

Production of the exhibition circumvented mainstream art establishment routes.

Inspired by the independent practices of artists like Ibrahim Mahama and Christo Javacheff and Jeanne-Claude, we followed suit with the communal ethos of last year's blaxTARLINES exhibitions, "Silence between the Lines" in Kumasi (in collaboration with Niels Staats and Eye | Contemporary Art Ghana), and "the Gown must go to Town..." at the National Museum of Science and Technology in Accra. "if you love me..." was independently staged through collective initiatives, without corporate or institutional funding. Artists self-funded their work and transportation through sacrifice, improvisation, and shared efforts. A number of artists created work through collaborative processes, and nearly all installations within the space were carried out with cooperation.



Fig. 38 “Silence between the Lines”. 19–23 February 2016.
Presented by blaxTARLINES KUMASI and Eye | Contemporary Art Ghana
Above, work by crazinisT artisT, Eugene Edzorho, Yaw Owusu, Emmanuel K. Pianim, etc.
February 2015.

Akwasi Bediako Afrane, for instance, maintained his robotic studio lab with daily input from his M.F.A. classmate Makafui Gadikor. Afia Prempeh, meanwhile, painted a high-vaulted wall from a triple stack scaffold with material and moral support from Teaching Assistant (T.A.) Francis Djiwornu, who headed our exhibition production.¹³ Aside from the Painting and Sculpture section, KNUST students from several departments volunteered on various activities, in Communications Design, Integrated Rural Art and Industry, Physics, Food Sciences, and the University’s Center for Disability and Rehabilitation Studies.

Cultivating networks beyond KNUST, a spontaneous volunteer from the University of Education, Winneba, recommended by his teacher Selasi Sosu, ended up assisting periodically throughout the show, and is now planning to enter KNUST for his M.F.A.¹⁴ Meantime, the GRC generously opened their doors to us without charge; and supporting institutions including the KMA, GMMB, Western Regional Library, and DDP Outdoor Ltd. contributed materials, spaces, and humanpower.¹⁵ These

simple but vital steps helped to contribute to alternate models for exhibition production, independent from the agendas of funding foundations. In such scenarios, collaborating institutions enter as auxiliary forces, not leaders, and artists and curators direct the staging of their work. Artists are thus free to take their own decisions and risks, as long as they can negotiate for them. They also bear responsibility for these decisions, which they must make with criticality at every point.



Fig. 39 Afia Prempeh. Untitled. 2016.
Production view. Fresco: acrylic paint on wall.
The artist and Francis Djiwornu mount a triple stack scaffold to prime and paint the work.
15 April 2016.



Fig. 40 Akwasi Bediako Afrane. Untitled. 2016.
Installation view in process. Robotised home appliances.
19 April 2016.



Fig. 41 Accra Train Station and collaborators. Puppet-making workshop. J. C. Abbey and Nii Otoo Annan of Accra Train Station lead a puppet-making workshop with students from KNUST's Department of Rural and Industrial Arts (pictured, Samuel Awuni). 5 April 2016.

As exhibition production was informed by productivist strategies, participating artists' interests similarly tended toward proletarian inclinations, with an ethos initiated by *kaŕi'kachä seid'ou's Emancipatory Art Teaching* at the Kumasi art department.¹⁶ Over the past 13 years of his teaching at the Department, *kaŕi'kachä* has instigated in young art students a sensitivity to the City, to modes of labour and production, materiality and display, and critical theory and reflection. His Experimental Drawing classes, which brought students on regular visits to town, have prompted artists' interest in objects, spaces, and systems of public life (Bernard Akoi-Jackson was part of the first class). Since 2006, students' guerrilla exhibitions and "culture jamming" projects have been held annually in sites of their own choosing in town. These legacies form the foundations from which current rising artists of KNUST emerge.



I have always questioned some norms of the society and now it has started manifesting in my works consciously and unconsciously. These questions revolve around the constructions of the society I live in and especially, of gender and what is appropriate to a particular gender.

Heartwill Kankam

Fig. 42 Heartwill Kankam. End-of-Year Exhibition. 2010.
From *kari'kachä seid'ou* (2010), *Kages* [Class of 2010 End-of-Year Exhibition Catalogue].

Artist Yaw Brobbey Kyei develops semiologies of makeshift structures that house the life and commerce of surplus populations: recurring silhouettes that act as signs for the by-products of a failing economy. In the context of the Loco Shed, his indexical codes painted on cardboard packagings were presented as signposts stuck in the earth, as well as through chalk and charcoal drawings on walls made in collaboration with residents, which joined scribbled conversations already present on the building's surfaces. Previous projects of Brobbey Kyei's in town have also involved participants implicated in the material of his work, such as his interventions at workers' union protests. In a similar strain, Yaw Owusu reimagines the surplus currency of Ghanaian pecuniary systems, transmogrifying the ubiquitous yet nearly useless *pesewa* coin into gleaming architectural bodies. Introduced in 2006 to help stabilise the economy, the coins quickly devalued due to spiralling inflations. In Owusu's work, thousands of these paradoxical coins, acquired new from the Bank of Ghana, are fired into shades

of amber, umber and moss. For “if you love me...”, his metamorphic *pesewa* installations were made into columns that emerged between pillars on platforms, structures of support that ironically buttress nothing at all. Despite their seductive veneer, the subversive forms constitute a potentially violent attack on the state treasury.



Fig. 43 Yaw Brobbey Kyei. Part of the “for the love of God” project. 2015. Intervention at a traders’ union demonstration. Kumasi.



Fig. 44 Yaw Brobbey Kyei. “Road Sighs” 11 and 12. 2016. Installation view. Acrylic paint on cardboard packaging, wood. 3 May 2016.



Fig. 45 Yaw Brobbey Kyei. “Palimpsest”. 2016.
Detail. Chalk and charcoal drawings on walls in and around Loco Shed store room.
16 April 2016.



Fig. 46 Yaw Owusu. “Unwoven Pieces”. 2016.
Installation view. Treated *pesewa* coins on canvas mounted over platform panels.
19 April 2016.



Fig. 47 Yaw Owusu. *Pesewa* coins in process.
Coins in process of being burnt by the artist at KNUST Metals Shed.
February 2015.

Also following the nation's mineral resource lines, Eugene Edzorho gathers pieces for his entropic rock installations from Galamsey mining sites in different regions of the country. To acquire the material, the artist undergoes long stages of research and excavation, befriending workers from the sites and negotiating with various players in the system. He hangs configurations of sedimentary, metamorphic, conglomerate and other stones in ephemeral parallaxic geometries, which transmute depending on the point of view. Elvis Nsiah, likewise, gathers corrugated roofing, plastic discards, and abandoned containers from slum communities, which he patiently solders into twisted forms that seem to defy their materiality. Irregular shapes and distortions are similarly determined by the direction of mounting and field of vision. Nsiah's recent body of work, titled "STOP WORK PRODUCE PERMIT", references the notorious notices of Metropolitan authorities in Ghana preparing to clear out illegal occupants—the kind of people who also flow through the Loco Shed space.



Figs. 48-9 Eugene Edzorho. "GOVERNOR II". Takoradi Railway Station. 2016.
Parallactic installation views. Rocks from mining sites, nylon thread, scaffold.
17 May 2016.



Figs. 50-1 Elvis Nsiah. "STOP WORK PRODUCE PERMIT". 2016.
 Details. Found metal sheets, plastics, tins, boards, leathers, sacks and other objects.
 18 April 2016.



Fig. 52 Elvis Nsiah. “STOP WORK PRODUCE PERMIT”. 2016.
Installation in context. Metal sheets, found plastics, tins, and objects.
14 April 2016.

Lois Arde-Acquah makes tessellating bodies by connecting countless dots and shading with black ink. Repetitive manual drawings reference the monotonous specialised labour of industry, which in this century has been overshadowed by information technology. In finished form, her hand-drawn lines may not be immediately apparent, and can appear like prints, paints or digitisations. For “if you love me...”, she presented a new body of work on Styrofoam, negotiating crevices on isotropic packagings which are made non-orientable through her mutations. Sometimes the artist performs her labour within the space of exhibition, but at the Loco Shed, she left the connection silent, floating, inside the wreckages of a suspended train car that crashed 17 years ago.



Fig. 53 Lois Selasie Arde-Acquah. Untitled. 2016.
Installation view. Hand-drawn ink on styrofoam, nylon strings.
14 April 2016.



Fig. 54 Lois Selasie Arde-Acquah. Untitled. 2016.
Installation view. Hand-drawn ink on styrofoam, nylon strings.
15 April 2016.

These artists' work, autonomous *gestalts* freed from a single frame, must be moved around and sometimes moved through in order to be experienced, demanding a certain reorientation on the part of viewers.¹⁷ If we intend to organise broader political systems toward egalitarian communalities, we must also detach ourselves from singular positions, and reorient to multiple points of view. Efforts to navigate Precarities of the capitalist system are part of an increasing turn by artists from KNUST, to not only sympathise with but intervene in proletarian conditions. The strong relations between artists' materials and processes, as well as between artistic projects and curatorial strategies, indicates a dialogue between artists' and curators' work, as well as among social structures. As Thomas Hirschhorn has said, we seek not to make political art but to do art politically.



Fig. 55 Robert Morris. “Untitled (3 Ls)”. 1965.

Morris articulated a revolutionary turn propelled by minimalism, wherein works of art need not be sculptural forms to contemplate, but objects around which to move—art as theatre. The *gestalt* (perceived whole), he argued, is formed by light, space, and viewer's field of vision.

attitudes

“if you love me...” did not present a theme, but rather an attitude: a spirit of independent practice, rooted in freedom of thought and expression, striving to reform and reorganise present conditions toward more egalitarian futures. The title was borrowed from an artistic concept by Eric Okwei Nii Noye, “IF YOU LOVE ME, LET ME KNOW”. We took the first half of the expression and left it open, elided, a void for viewers and readers to complete. While “love” may not have been a thematic concept, it was a starting point (or line): the sense of love that propels artists’ persistent practices in the midst of inadequate institutional structures; Railway workers’ perseverance under the beams of a collapsing industry; residents’ resiliency within a system designed to their exploitation; and the courage of plants, species and microorganisms to thrive amidst the detritus of human excesses. A heart-leafed vine winds around the links of a metal fence, an image of hope overcoming its chains.



Fig. 56 Hearts on the fence.
A vine of heart-shaped leaves grows along a fence at the Loco Shed.
4 April 2016.



Fig. 57 Sekondi Engineers prepare to lift the train.

A team of engineers from GRC's Sekondi Location coordinated with Kumasi Railway Electricals and "if you love me..." production team to repair the crane and eventually lift up the train 30 minutes before scheduled exhibition opening.

15 April 2016, 2:02 pm.

This spirit of hope and resourcefulness was encapsulated by the efforts of a group of engineers from the Sekondi Locomotive Shed. They voluntarily travelled to Kumasi to repair an out-of-order crane and lift a crashed train car into the sky (the one in which Arde-Acquah's work was installed). Though their job compelled nothing of the sort, they used payment they had received from a recent work in order to fund their trip, and throughout the week leading up to exhibition opening, could be seen cheerfully pulling levers and coordinating components. After months of negotiations with the Railway Company to assemble permissions and parts, up until the last moment we weren't sure it would work.¹⁸ Till 30 minutes before opening time, the crane gave a great heave, and the train was lifted into the sky.



Fig. 58 Train in suspension.

A train that crashed 17 years ago suspends from the renovated crane. Inside the train is work by Lois Selsie Arde-Acquah. On the stand at left, metal objects by Elvis Nsiah. 28 April 2016.

Sometimes hope failed, as in the case of Emmanuel Opoku Manu, who for months tried to get a hold of old telephone booths to use in his work. He was interested in the changing tools of telecommunications, and how the phone booth as a relic of technologies past might still hold relevance. The booth would have come into conversation with his stockpiles of depleted shells, bags, machines, etc.—dead or perhaps sleeping objects injected with new vitality in his web. Up until now Opoku Manu’s negotiations with the telecom company Vodafone have left him empty-handed. He therefore resituated an archive of things he had already gathered, objects that encountered matryoshka-like microcosms of other objects and rooms.



Fig. 59 Emmanuel Opoku Manu and Edwin Bodjawah shared a part of the storeroom. Opoku Manu. "Framework". 2016. Installation view: found objects.

Bodjawah. Untitled. 2016.

Storage on display: masks of moulded lithographic plates and metals.

19 April 2016.



Fig. 60 Emmanuel Opoku Manu. "Framework". 2016.

Installation view. Found objects.

19 April 2016.

For Bernard Akoi-Jackson, hope was in the dream that a train might come. His fictional Railway bureaucracy induced visitors to sign up for their choice of destination (Accra, Takoradi, or Domeabra) while filling out an oddly poetic questionnaire. Participants were directed through a series of steps and offices, involving hand-typed tickets, mundane tasks, and performing in a theatrical dialogue from the Beckett play, *Waiting for Godot*. When eventually ushered to the signboard marking their destination, we are left wondering, have we arrived, or are we still waiting for our train? In *the Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*, Ayi Kwei Armah's nameless "man" and his reluctant comrade must tunnel through the excrement of their compound's latrine in order to get to freedom at the other side.¹⁹ Borrowing from Marx, Armah essentially forecasted the accelerationist maxim that the only way out of capitalism is through it. Thus we dive headfirst into our system of absurdities, which beckons us with the word, "*Domeabra*" ("if you love me, come").



Fig. 61 Bernard Akoi-Jackson. "Untitled...and if i don't...". 2016.
 Participatory performance of bureaucratic administration.
 Above, the artist is waiting...waiting...
 22 April 2016.



Fig. 62 Bernard Akoi-Jackson. “Untitled...and if i don’t...” 2016.
Participatory performance.
Above, the artist leads a participant in search of her destination.
22 April 2016.

Indeed, many times we are left waiting. Fiatsi (crazinisT artisT) has yet to meet a society that can tolerate bodies alternative to prevailing norms, but he remains relentlessly hopeful. His recurring performance of dressing rituals and diary writing from inside the cage of a machine room went largely unnoticed—people seemed unaware it had actually begun—until one day residents realised it was not a woman in the red dress, but the same young man they had been encountering on other days in a beanie visor hat and jeans. In crazinsT’s “x in red” performance, *x* is a variable neither man nor woman. Coincidentally, *x* is also a sign painted by the Railway on the door to the cage, to mark prohibition of entry. The realisation of crazinisT’s sex resulted in a fight from some Loco Shed dwellers, who could have lost their place of

residence because of the encounter. Tempers were calmed, but the artist and those who follow him are still searching for a universal human love.



Fig. 63 Va-Bene Elikem Fiasti (crazinisT artisT). “x in red”. 2016.
Performance (restaged after exhibition closing).
3 June 2016.

Love also grounds the labours of participating engineers: Affram, Atanley, Immanuella Kankam, and Kwaku Tabiri. Though they might not call themselves artists, we see their practice as a kind of art: their commitment to independent production, and experimentation beyond known models or forms. Atanley runs the “MICRO-P LAB” out of his hostel room, where he self-assembles 3D printers, drones, and other avant-garde technologies. Kankam is part of a group mentoring robotics and competing in tournaments, while Tabiri spends late nights designing games and apps and dreaming of virtual realities.²⁰ Affram, meanwhile, participates in small community of engineers and other scientists from KNUST who create their own projects purely for the sake of testing their limits. He and Atanley have continued

their artistic collaborations post-“if you love me...”, the former working with Kisser on moving mechanisms in her tableaux, and the latter teaming up Makafui Gadikor (of Afrane’s robotic studio lab) on 3D-printed designs. Both participated in the “Cornfields in Accra” exhibition at the National Museum of Science and Technology, the end-of-year show for the Department of Painting and Sculpture that opened just a month and a half after “if you love me...” closed. Thus the ethos of *love* in our project not only transcended interdisciplinary lines, but helped to construct them.



Fig. 64 Lolo Atanley. MICRO-P LAB.
“Engineer Lolo” runs a cutting-edge laboratory out of his hostel room.
27 March 2016.

Grammatically, love can occur as a noun or a verb; an object or an action. Love can attach itself to anything: an empty referent, a shifter. In an index, one thing can become another thing, states of being are exchangeable. A train car could be traded for a shell, could be substituted with a destination, could be replaced by a society. Could these be expressions of deepest love: commitment to a body or spirit beyond a singular physical form?

reconfigurations

Reconfiguring existing materials and forms has been a core component of artists' practices from the College of Art at KNUST over the past decades. While their teachers were attempting to inculcate tenets of modernism, the first class of M.F.A. students in the mid-'90s rebelled with installation, performance, happenings, social interventions, and intertextualities.²¹ Opposing the medium and genre specificity of the ethos of the time, Emmanuel Vincent Essel (Papa Essel) dared to infiltrate image with political text. His paintings used letters, words, symbols, poetic fragments, and charged quotations as aesthetic devices to link, contradict, impose or dissolve established pictorial forms. Kwamivi Zewuze Adzraku created bricolage scarecrows out of objets trouvés, domestic appliances and common materials. His work "Impossibilities" (1996), in which a tortoise-looking piece of excavated concrete was placed upon on a derelict wooden mortar referenced a paradox; the spectacle of an accomplished tortoise climber against the reality of its inability to climb. Caterina Niklaus was interested in the physical properties and transience of materials. She stripped open sacks, floated wax on water, and stacked *millefoglie* sheets with chewing sticks. Her thesis reflected on the sense of losing oneself, of forgetting and re-membering, multiple ways of seeing, and continuous transformations. karî'kachä seid'ou, the publicist among them, inserted the artist's body in silent performance with unsolicited collaborators and audiences. He busted and dissolved artistic genres with humour and absurdity, and instigated institutional critique through mass media (radio) and weekly installations of political cartoons at several campus "hotspots". Atta Kwami and Agyeman "Dota" Ossei were kindred spirits in these artistic revolutions, Kwami as a lecturer in the same Department, Dota while teaching at the nearby Yaa Asantewaa Girls' Secondary School.²²



Fig. 65 Kwamivi Zewuze Adzraku. “Impossibilities”. 1996.
 “Impossibilities” also served as a mascot for the “Silence between the Lines” exhibition (2015).



Fig. 66 Caterina Niklaus. Untitled. 1995.
 in-process: liquid wax on water. M.F.A., College of Art, KNUST.

Today’s turns in contemporary practice have been made possible by these earlier insurrections, and now serve as points or lines of departure. Niklaus’s inclusion as an artist in “if you love me...” references these earlier precedents. Her wax flotations of 20 years ago resonated with her turntable project at the Loco Shed, which eventually materialised as “after tears 2”. *kari’kachä* of course was silently present from the earliest seeds of our project, since even before it was born: the Ignorant Schoolmaster

who would prefer not to...²³ Thus when Kankam builds a robotized spirograph out of a Lego Mindstorm kit, or Akwasi Bediako Afrane transmutes electronic home devices to post-human cyborgs and screens, we can remember not only Jean Tinguely or Nam June Paik, but Adzraku's syntheses. When Arde-Acquah pilots the buoyancy of styrofoam, let us not forget Niklaus's placements—which are reinitiated at the other end of the Loco Shed, co-habiting the renovated turntable.

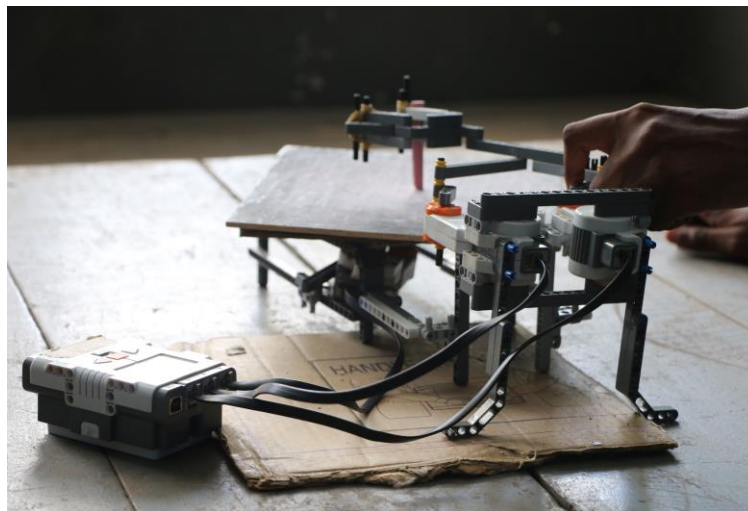


Fig. 67 Immanuella Kankam. Untitled (spirograph). 2016.
Installation view. Lego Mindstorm kit, blackboard, chalk.
22 April 2016.

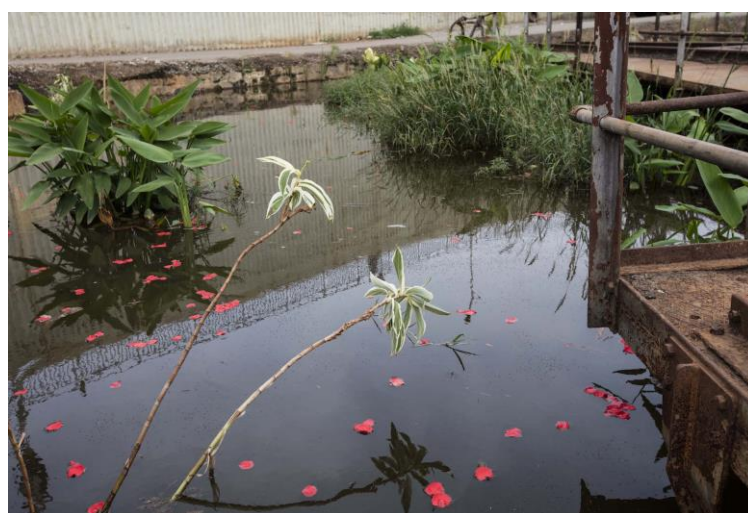


Fig. 68 Caterina Niklaus. "after tears 2". 2016.
placement: petals made of beeswax, painted with
emulsified beeswax plus pigment, and floated on waters of turntable.
15 April 2016.



Fig. 69 J. C. Abbey. Puppet installation, Anyaa Arts Library.
A number of J. C. Abbey's hand-made puppets of musicians, politicians, animals and other characters find their home at Nii Noi Nortey's Anyaa Arts Library in Accra.
31 January 2016.

The artists of Accra Train Station, too, though apart from the Kumasi community, serve as another reference point to contemporary turns. Since the '60s or '70s (depending which member you approach), they have been inventing their own instruments, objects and rhythms, presented in dynamic and performative formats. In the late '70s London, artist and musician Nii Noi Nortey fashioned a variation of a saxophone out of car parts. Since his return to Ghana in the '90s, he has been developing a family of "Afrifonix" aerophonic windpipes, leading experimental music groups, and collaging installations of objects from his archives at the Anyaa Arts Library, where he lives and works in Accra. Nii Otoo Annan has been testing the resonances of objects since he was a child. Today, he fuses social and street rhythms with jazz, high life, reggae and other genres, suggesting future sounds that turn back toward history. Legendary puppeteer J. C. Abbey has been tinkering with tools over the past half-century, innovating his own line of puppets with extra strings and more

flexible features. In the '70s and '80s, he toured across the country three times, and after working in puppetry at the Arts Council in Accra, he spent seven years playing on TV Africa in the 2000s. The group of artists was originally named “Accra Trane Station” in 2005, formed together with American ethnomusicologist Steven Feld—a pun on John Coltrane and his 1957 album “Another Blue Train”. In the context of our exhibition in 2016, the renamed and re-united Accra Train Station’s performances on the platform and along the tracks of the Locomotive Shed gestured to risks and revolutions of times past, still present.



Fig. 70 Accra Train Station. “Accra to Kumasi”. 2016.
(Nii Noi Nortey, Nii Otoo Annan, J. C. Abbey and collaborators.)
Musical and puppetry performance.
1 May 2016.

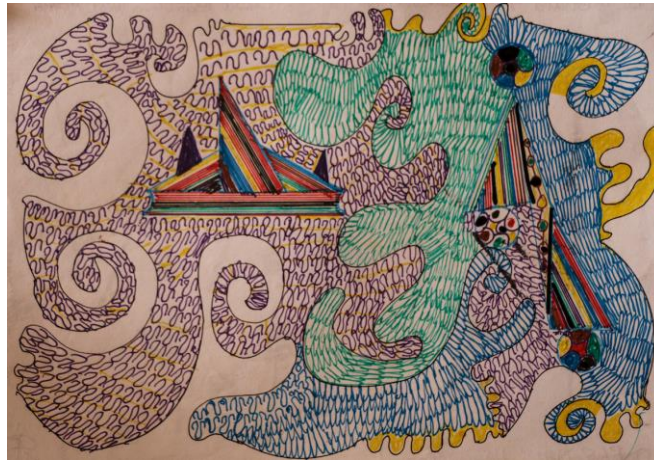


Fig. 71 Nii Noi Nortey’s Anyaa Arts Library. 2016.
An ephemeral installation from Nortey’s archive of musical and mechanical objects, which had changed the next time we came back.
31 January 2016.

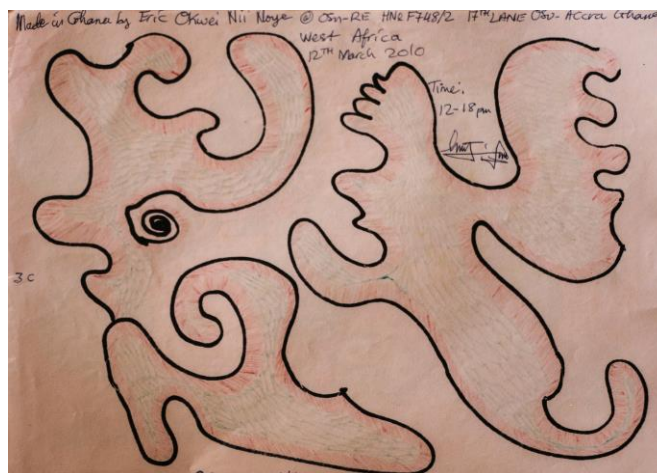
The practice of Eric Okwei Nii Noye, though it has not been known to most artists of KNUST, also serves as an inspiration and exemplar of commitment. He worked at the former textiles department of KNUST, and chaired the Board for Small Scale Industries of the Ashanti region in the early 2000s. Today from his base in Accra, he juggles textile designing with a grassroots business in chemical solutions, as well as an alter-ego as the hiplife musician “Punkyman”.²⁴ Circumventing routes of capitalist trade, Nii Noye releases his fabrics directly to the market, and has long-term plans of building his own warehouse. Over the years, he has accumulated an archive of hundreds of designs, fractal-like topologies that borrow from biological mechanisms, semiotic devices, and the wisdom of proverbs. Each sheet is recorded with the date and time of making: most of them late at night or in the early hours of the morning, between work and travels across the regions. We happened to meet Nii Noye at “the Gown must go to Town...” last year—where we also met Nii Noi Nortey, actually—and his sensitivity to the objects in the show let us know immediately that he was an artist.



“IF YOU LOVE ME, LET ME KNOW”



“You Can”



Back of textile sketch

Figs. 72-4 Eric Okwei Nii Noye. Textile Sketches. 2010.
Ink on paper.
Images 13 November 2015.



Fig. 75 Eric Okwei Nii Noye at a screen printing shop near Loco Shed.
21 February 2016.

The courageous efforts of earlier generations serve as harbingers of contemporary practice, in which one thing can become another, and any medium or form can be appropriated. Stephen Smart Sippah titled his horticultural intervention “Nostalgia”, and Niklaus called her petals, “after tears 2”, after a South African tradition for the party after the funeral, the song after mourning.²⁵ Death transitions back into life, the vitality of the *ourobouros* flows back into itself; not in a cycle, but an infinite transmutation of substitutions.

A number of artists in the show work with the idea of objects as shifters, perpetually on the verge of forms or meanings. Edwin Bodjawah’s lithographic masks critique tourist market ethnographies often mistaken for authenticities, fictions with no root. His mechanically reproduced simulations preside like artefacts without origin—Helens of Zeuxis, copies which precede reality.²⁶ Similarly, Haizel’s *oware* playing pieces materialise as pills, though they could just as well be replaced by *pesewas* or pebbles: a game with elastic rules. One of Akwasi Bediako Afrane’s contraptions could be a printer, a film reel, or a fan, but has been made into a light-up tentacled

whirring machine. Rex Akinruntan's brightly hued fibreglass helmets turn the semiotic signs of the military-industrial complex into candy-coloured playthings, while Prempeh's woodland fresco leaves the beheaded statue open-ended for viewers to fill in. In an index, states of being are exchangeable, points along a chain of *points de capiton*.²⁷



Fig. 76 Caterina Niklaus. "after tears 1". 2009.
placement: petals made of beeswax, painted with emulsified beeswax plus pigment.



Fig. 77 Stephen Smart Sippah. "Nostalgia". 2016.
Detail. Horticultural intervention: bromeliad, staghorn fern, and marble queen in basket.
5 May 2016.



Fig. 78 Edwin Bodjawah. Untitled. 2016.
Detail. Masks of moulded lithographic plates and roofing sheets.
18 April 2016.

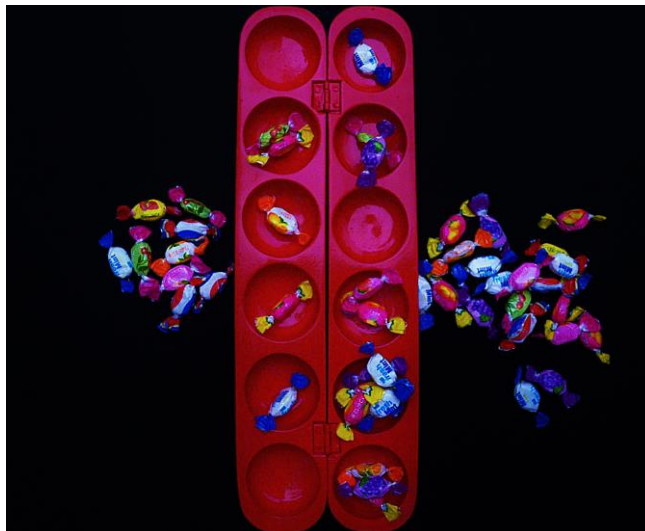


Fig. 79 Kelvin Haizel. "Untitled" (sweet tooth). 2016.
Photograph. Red *oware* board, toffees.



Fig. 80 Rex Akinruntan. "Bureaucracy for sale". Loco Shed, Kumasi. 2016.
Installation detail. Hats cast from fibreglass with resin, pigment. 35 x 17 x 29 cm. 88 pieces.
18 April 2016.



Figs. 81-2 Akwasi Bediako Afrane. Untitled. 2016.
 Details. Robotised home appliances.
 1 May 2016 and 3 May 2016.

Afrane has described how gadgets hold histories of relationships between the maker and the object, the object and the consumer. When you begin to unpack them, you find that the devices are bundled with ideas from their creator, as well as signs of attachment from their users. Afrane sees these gadgets as prosthetic extensions of bodies, which might abandon or supersede the human beings who created them. He reconfigures exhausted home appliances into cyborg trons, interspecies machines that “speak” to each other and generate their own networks. At the Loco Shed, his setup of cyborg trons interacted with boards and levers of old engine and electrical apparatuses in the Instrument Room. The irony, of course, is that the artist has been constructing this world all along, driving every day to the Locomotive Shed to mould his machines.

forking tracks

The exhibition structure was like a labyrinth, with many lines, chambers, and turns through which to lose oneself. Let's teleport back to the Locomotive Shed of April to May 2016, and collapse time to a wrinkle where all works and bodies are present at once.



Fig. 83 Edwin Bodjawah. Untitled. 2016.
Installation view. Masks moulded from lithographic plates and roofing sheets.
16 April 2016.

To get to the show, several possible entry points could take us inside. If coming by trotro, we would probably enter through the western end. Passing the shops and industries at the roadside, we would descend a dirt path and cross train tracks and yam sellers. As we approach, we might notice something peculiar: sheets of sculpted metal that cover the grounds in front of the saw-tooth roofed structure. They emerge from the base of the building and occupy segments of its windows. The shiny bodies are grouped into winking eyes around a dark hole in the wall that makes a kind of mouth, from which a multitude of their fellows erupt. A collective construction of Edwin

Bodjawah, with help from a loose association of Sculpture students, the glimmering visages beckon viewers to the space, or perhaps warn them away.²⁸ Bodjawah moulds these masks out of used lithographic plates and metal roofing sheets, through processes of serial production that complicate nostalgic ideas of authenticity.



Fig. 84 Edwin Bodjawah. Untitled. 2016.
Production view. Installation of masks in collaboration with KNUST Sculpture students.
14 April 2016.



Fig. 85 Edwin Bodjawah. Production process.
Moulding of masks from lithographic plates.
29 January 2015.



Fig. 86 Eric Okwei Nii Noye. “IF YOU LOVE ME, LET ME KNOW”. 2016.
Installation process. Textile flags. Above, Kudjie helps to install work on an outer wall.
20 April 2016.

At the point where Bodjawah’s masks end, a string of white-blue triangle flags pick up the path and lead the way around corner. Printed with swelling and receding symbologies of the phrase, “IF YOU LOVE ME LET ME KNOW”, the flags head toward a pair of colonial casement windows drawn with curtains of the same fabric. The cloth rematerialises on the other side of the building, where it occupies a series of industrial louver frames. Having been placed inside people’s home living spaces, the “love me” cloth acts like a bridge between residents and the world. The line of windows fronts our alternate roadside entrance, to which cars can drive up from the highway. Those coming from the Central Market or the Railway offices would enter from the back, where our suspended train car dangles from the crane.



Fig. 87 Eric Okwei Nii Noye. “IF YOU LOVE ME, LET ME KNOW” (curtains). 2016.
Installation view. Textile curtains in Loco Shed residents’ homes.
24 April 2016.



Fig. 88 “if you love me...” exhibition view two days before closing.
3 May 2016.

From the former path of entry, one meets lines of train tracks around which the presence of artists’ work may not be immediately apparent. From the roadside route, our first view is of a perforated platform wall that houses old books in its screens. If we loop back inside, we have a choice of passing over or under the platforms (Owusu’s coins? Amenuke’s mats? Akinruntan’s helmets? Anim-Sakyi’s plates and Baganiah’s sounds?) or to either side (Opoku Manu and Bodjawah’s storeroom? Affram’s iris window? Edzorho’s cargo car?). As we move through to experience artists’ work, we equally encounter the life of the place: men sitting on stoops, women preparing *jollof* rice, clothes drying on a line, a Fan Ice seller making rounds, a goat passing through. The work is filtered through these activities, and these activities are also infected by the work.



Fig. 89 life goes on as “if you love me...” continues at the Loco Shed.
1 May 2016.

Before we entered the space, we might have noticed a certain billboard from the highway at Asafo Interchange. Depending which side, we may have seen a projective tunnel of repeating windows in black-and-white, or perhaps a revelry of blue cartoon caricatures with pink and green tentacles. Now that we are inside, their presence retroactively crystallises. Owusu Bempah’s tunnelling image has been spliced and multiplied from the ceiling of the Loco Shed, and Kisser’s painted montage, viewable from exhibition grounds, acts like the farthest visible wall of our show, or perhaps a distant audience looking down. Owusu Bempah has been displacing infinities in urban architectures through photographic mechanisms. His recent work reimagines these realities through digital manipulations, constructing fantasies of future projections. His current project on the railway explores bundles of time and space via projective geometries. Kisser, meanwhile, has been working with montage as a device to pile many times onto a single frame. She reinvents ghosts of canonical systems, inducing a deracination of their authority. In Kisser’s world, sweet may be seductive, innocent profane, man indiscernible from woman: a carnivalesque event where order is suspended. These archives of future-past space offer multiple routes to pass through, and many lines of experience.



Fig. 90 Deryk Owusu Bempah and Adjo Kissar. Intervention on DDP billboard at Asafo Interchange, Kumasi. 2016.
20 April 2016.



Fig. 91 Deryk Owusu Bempah. Part of the “Ghana Railway System” series. 2016.
Manipulated photograph: printed on flexi. 20 x 6 m. (65.5 x 19.5 ft.)
20 April 2016.

If we unfold our sense of species beyond anthropocentric perspectives, we might imagine a bird flying overhead who would see the lifted train and inhabited turntable, but miss the objects inside. An ant crawling below could encounter Anim-Sakyi's plates, or Opoku Manu's snail shells. Algae skimming the surface of the pond would meet Sippah's new reeds and shoots, while a mosquito egg laid on its meniscus would hatch and flutter away. Owusu Bempah's photographic manipulations would be accessible both in and outside (inside cases, or on the billboard). From a storeroom chamber, Prempeh's fantastical painted landscape might be located in any and all times, or none at all. Our "garden of forking tracks" attempts a site where multiple versions of the same event recur in all their variations, from a multitude of interspecies perspectives, thus cutting a trail not in space, but in time. Like Borges's fabled polymath Ts'ui Pen, we seek to create several futures, which lie not in far-flung projection, but immediately present.²⁹



Fig. 92 New tracks recently laid along Accra Railway lines to Tema.
17 November 2015.

space-times



Fig. 93 Gold Coast-era clock (which once doubled as a telephone) at Loco Shed.
6 November 2015.

“if you love me...” aimed to intervene not only in materials and production, but across wrinkles in space and time. Like the strangler tree whose rhizomatic roots and vines straddle the Loco Shed from in and outside, our exhibition was deterritorialized, decentralised, fragmented in a multitude of middles. Both around Loco Shed grounds and beyond the city of Kumasi, the exhibition was split into points that suggested the potential of off-shoots. The exhibition emerged like a line in segments—cut off here, regrowing there; a planarian flatworm which, when spliced, regenerates from its offshoots.

Geographically and temporally, “if you love me...” peregrinated from multiple points. The exhibition took place both in and outside Loco Shed grounds, and extended to streetsides and lines along the tracks. In addition to Kisser and Owusu Bempah’s 20 x 6 m. billboard, Kisser also hung printed flexi flags from nearby lampposts. Brobbey Kyei’s signboards were fixed into grasses at the Shed’s horizons.

Zooming out to a wider view, an off-site intervention was staged at the Takoradi Railway Station, which is currently being renovated as part of the Railway's long-term master plan. Takoradi Coordinators Eugene Edzorho and Rex Akinruntan situated Galamsey rocks and fibreglass helmets amidst the guts and scaffolds of progressing construction. Meanwhile in Accra, Nortey's Anyaa Arts Library has morphed into a material and spatial iteration of the "Accra Train Station" concept. Since we started conversations on the exhibition with the group in January, he has been assembling bricolage trains out of instrument and machine parts on the grounds of his compound, and train concepts have been reanimated in the group's history of railway-inspired musical projects. Both strategically and spontaneously, "if you love me..." sprouted from divers sources, some of which pre-dated the exhibition, and others which continue after.



Fig. 94 Yaw Brobbey Kyei. "Road Sign" 13. 2016.
Installation view. Acrylic paint on cardboard packaging, wood.
10 May 2016.



Fig. 95 Adjo Kisser. Part of “The Billboard Series” (flags).
Installation view. Flexi print mounted on lamppost.
3 May 2016.



Fig. 96 Rex Akinruntan. “Bureaucracy for sale”. Takoradi Railway Station. 2016.
Installation view. Hats cast from fibreglass with resin, pigment. 35 x 17 x 29 cm. 54 pieces.
17 May 2016.



Fig. 97 Takoradi Railway Station: track lines under construction.
23 November 2015.

Moving through time, the exhibition did not sit still but breathed with fluctuating cadences. Within daily rhythms of the show, pieces changed or were rearranged due to curatorial, public, and environmental forces. Anim-Sakyi's plates and cans blew in the breeze, and Sippah's plants grew with sun and rains. One of Yaw Owusu's ceiling-high *pesewa* columns toppled due to pressures of gravity. Visitors picked up books from the "library project" installed in openings of the platform, and sometimes contributed their own.³⁰ From day-to-day, Akinruntan's helmets were put away and reordered, Baganiah's speakers taken out and replaced. Baganiah's sound installation created an aural passageway in the enclave under a platform, where compilations of recorded "human body activities", "rain architectures", "forests", etc., partitioned the tracks into moments of reverberation. Within single days, works also transformed by the time and measures of light. When the sun set and nighttime lighting systems were

switched on, Owusu's copper coins and Arde-Acquah's milky styrofoams gleamed in the darkness. These ecological cycles kept the works in motion, modulating experiences of the exhibition such that its states were unhinged.



Fig. 98 Francis Anim-Sakyi. "Takeaway Series". 2016.
Installation view: plates and cans painted with acrylics are blown by the wind.
17 April 2016.



Fig. 99 Yaw Owusu. "Unwoven Pieces". 2016.
Installation process. *Pesewa* coins on canvas: mounted from ceiling with KMA bucket crane.
14 April 2016.



Fig. 100 Yaw Owusu. “Unwoven Pieces”. 2016.
Installation view by night. *Pesewa* coins on canvas hung over platform panels.
3 May 2016.



Fig. 101 Lois Selasie Arde-Acquah. Untitled. 2016.
Installation view by night. Hand-drawn ink on styrofoam, nylon strings.
3 May 2016.



Fig. 102 Visitors explore the “open library” of “if you love me...” (with books from the Western Regional Library installed in platform screens).
5 May 2016.



Figs. 103–4 Lawrence Baganiah. “Architectural Consonance.” 2016.
Sound installation: “human body activities”, “rain architectures”, “forests”, etc.
19 April 2016.

Within the exhibition, time was not only occupied but constructed. *Oware*, a popular game in Ghana (also known as Ayò, Awalé, Wari, Ouri, etc., all of the Mancala family), is repurposed by Kelvin Haizel from a means of passing time to creating it. Video montages, projected onto buildings and architectures, show monumental white-gloved hands that twist and flutter against lines of red. The hands are actually moving pills (a referent for playing pieces) from one spot to another on the red-painted game board. The accelerations and slows of the film, as well as repetitions of screens, transform the movements into a frenetic dance of rates of time.



Fig. 105 Kelvin Haizel. “Even for a Thousand Years...”. 2016.
Video projection: Locomotive Shed, Kumasi.
15 April 2016.

For Anim-Sakyi, styrofoam and tin containers deal with a refusal of time. In the midst of wind and rains, they remained a collective force whose roots merely expanded. The objects denied dispersal, despite the ephemerality of their disposable nature. Painted curls, figures, and maps chart their surfaces, emblemised as if to make our trash

eternal. Afia Prempeh's fresco, meanwhile, suggested a historicity to something imagined. A decapitated statue leads with right arm outstretched, before the dying trees of an abandoned forest. The pose might be recognised as classic of Kwame Nkrumah, whose socialist leanings tended his taste toward Soviet-inspired monuments. The anonymous body could also be taken for Lenin, the Statue of Liberty, an ancient Greco-Roman icon, or any number of shifting possibilities. One actual iteration of Nkrumah's sculpture was in fact beheaded upon his military overthrow in 1966, and can today be found at his Mausoleum in Accra. In Prempeh's version, the painting layers onto a wall cracked by disrepair, its edges fading out to flaking cement. Decay becomes a texture within states of metamorphosis, the work creating a microcosm of fractured time within time.

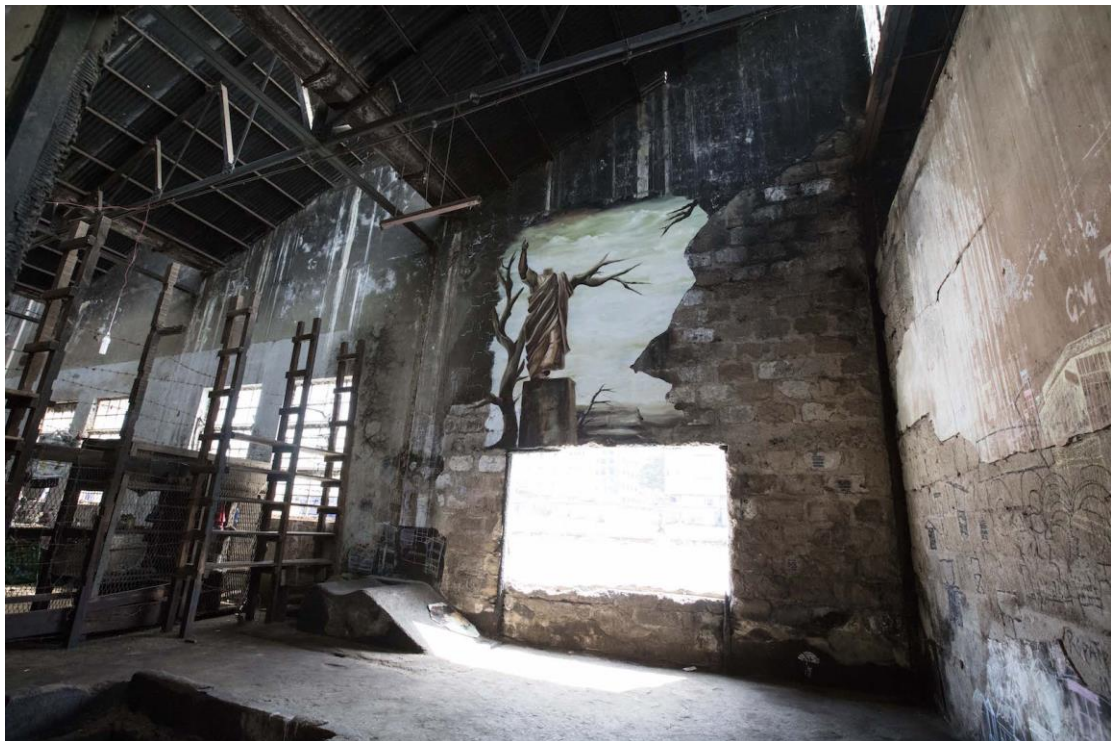


Fig. 106 Afia Prempeh. Untitled. 2016.
Fresco: acrylic paint on wall.
19 April 2016.

Fragments of the exhibition also persisted beyond its formal time. The Takoradi intervention extended the length of the show until 20 May, such that our closing date in Kumasi was not really a closure. Even now, a number of works remain at the Loco Shed, their presence designed to stay until they should be washed or picked away—Prempeh’s painted fresco, Brobbey Kyei’s wall drawings, and Opoku Manu’s snail shells. Nii Noye’s “IF YOU LOVE ME” textiles continue to hang as curtains in residents’ windows and flags along walls. “Body” asked if we want the library books back, and we told him we would like them to stay. Our exhibition sticker is stuck to the old GRC bus, the text now an archive of an event past. Afrane periodically carries on with work at his studio-laboratory in the Instrument Room. The Railway has welcomed him to stay until the work is completed.



Fig. 107 “if you love me...” curatorial bus
Exhibition sticker mounted to GRC bus car.
18 April 2016.

parallactic encounters

While the Railway Company is ruled by a larger state government, and Railway staff are directed by a presiding Railway administration, precarious Loco Shed dwellers are also governed by staff who play the overseers, their current job having less to do with machinery than with keeping order. Our exhibition intervenes in this parallactic encounter between sovereign and subject, host and occupant, in which at any moment, one could slide and become the other. By injecting new material into the set of relations, we hope to open up certain possibilities and modes of participation.



Fig. 108 Eric Okwei Nii Noye. “IF YOU LOVE ME, LET ME KNOW” (textile). 2016. Production process: textile hangings. Above, the artist and Loco Shed resident Janet at work. 19 April 2016.

A number of artists’ projects were produced within the space, and Loco Shed dwellers sometimes became active players. For Brobbey Kyei, residents of the Shed acted as not only subjects but creators in his kiosk drawings. For Arde-Acquah, tying her hand-drawn styrofoams to nylon strings became a communal effort of a spontaneous group of fellow artists, curators, and two teenage boys from the Shed. A resident named Janet with an interest in tailoring joined Nii Noye’s textile sewing. Amenuke also made exchanges with inhabitants to swap their sleeping cloths and mats for new

ones, in order to use their bedding for pillows and supports in “Marks on the sheet”.

Meanwhile, the secretary of Railway Union leader Mr. Malik became a player in Akoi-Jackson’s satirical railway administration.



Fig. 109 Lois Selasie Arde-Acquah. Untitled. 2016.
Collaborative installation. Hand-drawn ink on styrofoam, nylon strings.
10 April 2016.



Fig. 110 Dorothy Amenuke. “Marks on the sheet”. 2016.
Installation view. Pandamus fibre, jute, grass, plantain bark,
hand-made paper, and cloth from Loco Shed residents.
19 April 2016.

In the weeks before opening, Sippah and Niklaus hired a crew of workers from the Loco Shed and nearby to clear out weeds and trash in and around the turntable pond. Despite efforts to procure boots and protective gear, many climbed shoe-less into the muck and heaved out mounds of sticky waste. At the same time, women living in the place were hired to sweep and dust each day, perforating mornings with the sounds of their brooms. The efforts of these individuals whose labour grounded everyday experiences of the exhibition have formed part of the overarching picture of the project, in on-site projections and ongoing archival materials.

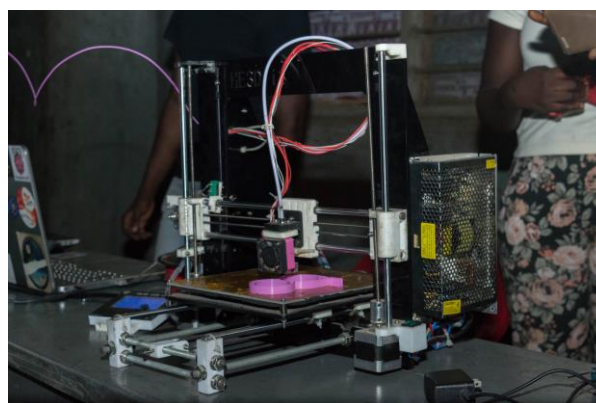


Fig. 111 Loco Shed residents played leading roles in clean-up efforts.
14 April 2016.



Fig. 112 Loco Shed residents, workers and students joined together on clean-up efforts.
4 April 2016.

Besides production phases, a number of works invited participation in their completed or presented states. Particularly the performative events at our opening and May Day finale, as well as J. C. Abbey's puppet shows, solicited interaction from visitors. One of the hits was 3D-printing by Lolo Atanley ("Engineer Lolo"), who transplanted his home-made machine to the Shed and printed gifts for visitors. His station was supposed to be a stopgap in Akoi-Jackson's bureaucratic procedures, with printed filaments functioning as special tickets for random participants. However the 3D-printing was too popular, and also too protracted even for a bureaucracy, so visitors spontaneously formed their own queue.



Figs. 113-4 Lolo Atanley. MICRO-P LAB. 2016.
Participatory intervention. 3D printer, filaments, computer.
Railway staff, students and visitors gather round as Atanley's 3D printing
kicks off for the May Day Finale.
1 May 2016.

The edible eats of Captain's Kitchen, of course, were a perennial favourite of residents. He and his collective of KNUST sous-chefs served surprising twists on nostalgic foods of times past. Clamoured around the buffet of an old dining car, guests bit into what appeared to be yam fish balls, and tasted not yam but *garri*, a mashed cassava powder. For a second event, Captain's Kitchen served a classic Ewe food: tiny "one man thousand" fish with sweet-soft *abolo* dough eaten on leaves, of the type sold along roadsides to drivers travelling between towns. The dish might also have crowded head porters' wares on railway routes in the days when passenger trains were common. The latter intervention was divided into splices, set up along British colonial cabinets at the back of the Shed, which have been appropriated by residents for personal and commercial items. Loco Shred dwellers allowed use of their shelves, while artists presented comestible offerings.



Figs. 115-6 Captain's Kitchen. "EAT ART", Locomotive Shed. 2016.
Culinary interventions. Detail: *garri* fish balls. Installation: on antique GRC cabinets.
15 April and 1 May 2016.

As artists' projects intervened among players and modes of production, curatorial tactics also sought to negotiate surrounding conditions. Through over- and under-ground operations, curators pursued both official routes and guerrilla tactics. Nearly two dozen departmental letters to administrating authorities resulted in partnership from the Ghana Railway Company and Workers' Union, and the agreement of five institutions as supporters, vis-à-vis material and human resources.³¹ At the same time that we awaited official permissions, we spent time developing relationships with workers and residents on the ground. We paid multiple visits to the site each week, organised a "*kenkey* party" one night, and made a presentation to Railway staff another afternoon. Our intrusion was instantly recognisable by those who stay at the Shed, and we had to work to ingratiate ourselves and gain their trust.



Fig. 117 Site visit with Kelvin Haizel and Va-Bene Elikem Fiatsi.
Getting to know the place and chatting with Loco Shed residents.
23 February 2016.



Fig. 118 Curators' presentation on "if you love me..." to Kumasi Railway Workers.
Office of Railway Union Branch Secretary, Kumasi Railways.
25 February 2016.



Fig. 119 Takoradi Railway Head Office.
2 November 2015.

Though our intervention was inherently a kind of colonisation, a domination over the site enacted through government authorisation, we aimed to use this position to equalise, or at least to bridge, certain gaps between civil servants, squatters, and

students. When exhibition production began, crews were made up of participants from all groups, in clean-up, construction, security, electricals, and facilities management. Not all visions can be immediately realised, and there was often segregation between these groups, but one critical point was our Security team, which was made up of half-staff, half-squatters. Having the support of both sides was crucial, for practical as well as conceptual and ethical underpinnings. Without their conjoined participation, artists' work would be in jeopardy, and our project would have failed to intervene in socio-political relations. Today we still strive toward better understanding of the conditions and concerns of residents and workers of the site, an unfinished aspiration which is ongoing.

re-rooting and re-routing

In line with our M.F.A. studies at KNUST, we conceived our curatorial work as an artistic practice of its own right, in which we must reflect on and take responsibility for our decisions, with sensitivity toward our materials. Thus the project expanded beyond questions of space and artworks' placement within it, toward critical concerns of production, participation, and consequences. Ayi Kwei Armah wrote in *The Healers*, "A healer sees differently. He hears differently.... Yes, he hears and sees more... The leaves, animals, even stones, say much, and they show much, to any prepared to see and hear."³² We seek to be like Healers, who hear these agents 'speak.'

We aspired to curate an exhibition that would enact functional transformations of a site and realise actualities within its constellation of impossibilities. Interdisciplinary collaborations, collective efforts, and persistent, considered negotiations provided the basis of our strategies. Through initiatives with artists, scientists, civil servants,

hustlers, and life forms within ecosystems, we attempted reconfigurations of objects, spaces, and times, which would invite multiple entryways, routes, and flows.

Our project identified with the position of the proletariat and aimed to intervene in mechanisms of production; to counter capitalist absorption and consumption of (art) market commodities. The exhibition bared forth seams of production and swayed away from notions of finality. Open and attuned to many forms of life and participation, “if you love me...” was segmented across geographies and temporalities, injected material into divergent locales, and was likewise susceptible to infestations by them. Cognizant of our contradictory position as colonisers of a territory in which we strive toward freedom—a *pharmakonian* penetration—we attempted to use our power to promote relationships that would be unfixed, free-forming, multi-directional. We hope to be not a pine tree, but a strangler, or a lotus: a crooked lined “infested by other points within or without”, which as Kudjie writes in his curatorial text, “participate in an open system” and “reconfigure the segment.”³³ Most of our dreams or visions are as yet unrealised.

One of our fears is that “if you love me...” should hasten processes of gentrification at the Railway, should the site be made newly attractive to potential speculators and developers by the presence of art. We are ironically consoled by the thought that this apocalypse will arrive regardless, as the Loco Shed is slated for renovation by the Company within the next two years. The question is, through what form and means will this reconditioning take shape, and can our actions or their residues stake a claim in it?

A visit to the Loco Shed exactly two months after exhibition closing presented a turntable overcome by foliage: lime-green algae, soaring papyrus, sunshine blossoms of zinnia, rippled crimson celosia. Life had burgeoned during my month away in Accra. Throughout this time, “Body” and Victor had been overseeing regular clean-up, as well as contributing their own interventions. Given a gift of young fern from a truck driver coming from Accra, “Body” had planted the frond squarely in the dirt between the turntable and the Shed. We wait to see how it will grow.



Figs. 120-123 Loco Shed Turntable in states of transformation
 Clockwise from top left:
 6 November 2016. 23 March 2016. 19 April 2016. 9 July 2016.

In the colonial block of the building, residents in the corner room have appropriated another “IF YOU LOVE ME” curtain. Its tied knot peeks from behind a window slat, facing in rather than out. At Akoi-Jackson’s former Waiting Room, scripted chalk lines from *Godot* still trail the border of an aquamarine wall. Rounding the corner to

the doorway outside, repetitions of “*accratakoradidomeabra accratakoradidome...*”
fit under scrawls of fading charcoal:

NO ONE CAN NO
SAVE ME ONLY
JESUS

Yet on the adjacent tracks, dismantling of the dining car has begun, sold long ago for scrap metal. The crashed train in the back has also been tagged—soon only the sleeping car will be left at the Shed. Opposite the cornfields which grow across the way, our resident Garveyite is not to be seen—reportedly detained in prison since an argument he had with the police a month ago, his textile and batik products gone from his workshop.

We are still navigating our ways through the aftermaths of “if you love me...”, which is surely not finished, and will re-root in other places and forms. We are in a process of understanding what it was we came to do, negotiating the effects, and projecting toward its possible futures. Poised between stations, we perch on the platform toward Akoi-Jackson’s *Domeabra* (“if you love me, come”).



Fig. 124 Bernard Akoi-Jackson. “Untitled...and if i don’t...”. 2016.
Participatory performance: installation detail.
1 May 2016.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For more on the ‘agit-trains’, mobile cinema, etc., see Adelheid Heftberger (2015), “Propaganda in Motion. Dziga Vertov, Aleksandr Medvedkin, Soviet Agitation on Agit-trains, Agit-steamers, and the Film Train in the 1920s and 1930s”.
- ² For more on the “factographic” versus the “productivist,” see Hito Steyerl (March 2009) “Truth Unmade: Productivism and Factory”.
- ³ This sentiment is well captured in a statement by Ghana Railway Union Secretary of the Kumasi Branch, Malik Abdul Mohammed, written for the “if you love me...” exhibition. Mr. Malik also spoke to this effect in a brief but powerful speech at our May Day closing event, in the context of the national holiday of workers. Also see Malik Abdul Mohammed (2016), “A Message from the Ghana Railways...” from the exhibition brochure.
- ⁴ See Walter Benjamin (1934), “Author as Producer”, pp. 85–103, particularly pp. 87, 93.
- ⁵ My attention was drawn to “actualities within impossibilities” in qarĩ’kachä seid’ou’s lectures on Agamben’s *Potentialities* and Žizek’s interrogation of Agamben. For an aphoristic reflection on the subject in a curatorial project, see qarĩ’kachä seid’ou (2015) “Silence between the Lines; Anagrams of emancipated Futures” [Curatorial Statement].
- ⁶ See qarĩ’kachä seid’ou and Jelle Bouwhuis (2014), “Silent Parodies: qarĩ’kachä seid’ou in conversation with Jelle Bouwhuis”, p. 111.
- ⁷ See Giorgio Agamben (1999) “On Potentiality”.
- ⁸ Legon Pr3k3s3: Artist Profiles (2016). “if you love me...” [Exhibition Brochure].
- ⁹ Curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev titled the 2008 Sydney Biennale, “Revolutions – Forms that Turn,” revolving the exhibition around formal, political and ecological repercussions of a word whose root literally means “to turn twice (*re-volvere*), to follow a curvature around and return to where one began”. For the whole text, see Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev’s exhibition catalogue (2008) *Revolutions – forms that turn*.
- ¹⁰ See Jacques Derrida (1981), “Plato’s Pharmacy”, from *Dissemination*, p. 70.
- ¹¹ Dorothy Amenuke is also a lecturer in Sculpture at KNUST, and leads the annual OfKob Artists Residency, which takes place at roving locations in Ghana in July.
- ¹² Alexander Dörner, a pioneering curator who directed the Landesmuseum Museum in Hanover, Germany in the 1920s, conceived a notion of the museum as *Kraftwerk*: an energy plant in a state of permanent transformation. Dörner, along with revolutionary and Constructivist artists like El Lissitzky, helped to lead “objects” into “spaces”, and thus viewers into participants. His “Kraftwerk” museum was elastic: with flexible displays, multiple identities, and interdisciplinary fertilisations spanning art and science. For further reading, see books and essays by Hans Ulrich Obrist (2008), *A Brief History of Curating*, and Obrist’s (2013) “Battery, Kraftwerk, and Laboratory (Alexander Dörner Revisited)” from *Sharp Tongues, Loose Lips, Open Eyes, Ears to the Ground*; as well as John Rajchman (2009) “Les Immatériaux or How to Construct the History of Exhibitions”; or Mariabruna Fabrizi (2015) “El Lissitzky’s ‘Cabinet of Abstraction’”.
- ¹³ Students and especially Teaching Assistants (T.A.’s) from the Department of Painting and Sculpture came together in strong force to aid in production efforts. In addition to Djiwornu, Elolo Bosoka and Elvis Nsiah also played leading roles in exhibition construction, and Alvin Ashiatey and Deryk Owusu Bempah on film/photography documentation, with Ibrahim Mahama on drones. Clean-up efforts were organised by Geoffrey Akpene Biekro, Michael

Babanawo, and Daniel Osei Poku. Justice Amoh assisted with technical coordination, and a group of 3rd year B.F.A. students managed public relations activities.

¹⁴ Among our collaborators, a group of students from Integrated Rural Art and Industry (IRAI), Theophilus Sarpong, Samuel Awuni, and Felix Asare, participated in a puppet-making workshop with J. C. Abbey and Nii Otoo Annan of Accra Train Station, and assisted with the group's puppetry performances. In Physics, Samuel Quarn Olatunde and colleagues helped to install automated LED lights in the dark hall of an old sleeping car, modulated by a sensor box of his own design. Damien Laryea and colleagues from Food Science collaborated with Captain's Kitchen's culinary event in a train car, serving experimental snacks developed as part of the DANIDA Roots and Tuber Value Chain Project at KNUST. Captain's Kitchen was also joined by Painting and Sculpture alum Baaba Brown (M.F.A. '14), whose work deals with the politics of sugar through the form of baked goods. Finally, the indefatigable Yaw Akosah Yiadom, a Communications Design graduate on the TekTV team, worked countless late nights and early mornings on all of our "if you love me..." graphic design materials for over a month. And from the University's Center for Disability and Rehabilitation Studies, Frank Twum and Richard Adade advised on how to make the exhibition space accessible to differently abled bodies (with thanks to carpentry efforts from John Agenda), while their colleagues Joseph Ampratwum and Alexander Nakamu are working on Braille and sign language translations.

This leads us to the University of Education, Winneba, where Selasi Sosu and her colleagues have so far helped to translate some of the materials from blaxTARLINES exhibitions "Silence between the Lines" and "the Gown must go to Town..." The idea for Braille translations has been a part of blaxTARLINES accessibility policy for all of its programmes even if not yet fully actualised. Sosu, Kwamivi Zewuze Adzraku, and others at the University of Education, Winneba have been part of a network of allies extending the efforts of *Emancipatory Art Teaching*, initiated by kaŋi'kachä seid'ou in Kumasi. Their work it seems has been taking effect, as their student Joshua Dzidufe Adufutse helped a number of their artists install work for "if you love me...", and he and another Winneba student have applied for the M.F.A. course at KNUST in the coming academic year.

¹⁵ The Ghana National Fire Service also agreed to be at hand in case of emergencies, but fortunately no disasters ensued and their assistance was not needed.

¹⁶ kaŋi'kachä's *Emancipatory Art Teaching* was also referenced in the blaxTARLINES exhibition "the Gown must go to Town..." as a force behind the Department's recent transformations. See Robin Riskin et al. (2015) curatorial statement for "the Gown must go to Town...", as well as the exhibition press release.

¹⁷ See Robert Morris (1966), "Notes on Sculpture: Part I", pp. 42-44.

¹⁸ Agreement from the Railway's Sekondi Locomotive department to send materials and workers to repair the crane was reached thanks to the tireless efforts of our Takoradi Coordinators, Eugene Edzorho and Rex Akinruntan. These two artists played a crucial role coordinating with GRC Headquarters in Takoradi-Sekondi on numerous aspects. They made follow-ups on general proposals, organised site and archival visits, and negotiated for the off-site intervention at the Takoradi Railway Station despite construction underway. Edzorho also secured a contribution of old books from the Western Regional Library in Sekondi, where he had staged an independent solo exhibition last year; and hosted curators on multiple visits. The pair's persistent visits to Company authorities, and patience and hope in the midst of bureaucratic blocks, made several impossibilities actual in the making of our exhibition.

¹⁹ *the Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* was also silently implicated in "if you love me...", though its presence never realised materially. The Accra-based collective Legon Pr3k3s3 was supposed to present audio-visual projections with dialogue and sound recordings from their

March performance of Ossei “Dota” Agyeman’s theatrical adaptation of Armah’s novel. Due to circumstances and the late notice of their participation, the work has not yet been realised, though we are still ever hopeful. Legon Pr3k3s3 originated in the ’70s at the School of Performing Arts, Legon, and has more recently been revived by Agyeman, an artist and Head of Legon’s Department of Theatre. Ayi Kwei Armah’s novel of 1968 centres around an anonymous man who works at the Railway Company in Takoradi, whose main crime to his family and to society at large seems to be refusing the temptations of corruption. The book is set in the interstices around independence, in a society floating precariously between freedom and failure.

²⁰ Kwaku Tabiri has been an enthusiastic member of our 30 selected participants, though his Loco Shed simulation for cardboard Google glasses never finished in time to show in the exhibition, and is still, poetically, in process.

²¹ For further reading, see the artists’ M.F.A. theses at the KNUST Library: Emmanuel Vincent Essel (1996) *Letter-Image Configuration*, Kwamivi Zewuze Adzraku (1996) *Synthesis (A Project in Painting and Sculpture)*; Caterina Niklaus (1995) *More Eyeworks*; and Edward Kevin Amankwah (1996) *Caricature Paintings on Royal Palm Trees*. (At the time, *kaŕi’kacha* went by Edward Kevin Amankwah on official documents, before his legal name change.)

²² Dota ended up enrolling for the M.F.A. course in 1996, the same year his friends graduated. He had also been active with the theatre group Legon Pr3k3s3 in the ’70s, whose name and concept he reclaimed for a project intended for “if you love me...”.

²³ Other critical backbones to our project include members of the younger faculty in the Department who have joined *kaŕi’kacha*’s revolutionary teaching efforts—such as his congenial collaborators Kwaku Bofo Kissiedu (Castro), George Ampratwum (Buma), and Edwin Bodjawah (HOMD), our Head of Department who is to thank for his patience with the dozens of Departmental letters without which this exhibition would not have been possible. For more context, see the essay by *kaŕi’kacha* seid’ou et al. (2015), “Silent Ruptures: Emergent Art of the Kumasi College of Art”.

²⁴ “The P means Peace, U means unity, N means newness, K means kindness, Y means yours is yours, so I am a man of PUNKY”, Nii Noye told us on a visit to the Loco Shed.

²⁵ The first “after tears” was made at the SaNsA workshop in Kokrobite in 2007, which is where the she also took its title, learning of its story from fellow SaNsA participant David Koloane.

²⁶ According to legend, the artist Zeuxis of Heraclea painted Helen of Troy, the most beautiful woman in the world, by compiling segmented parts from multiple bodies—one woman’s breasts, another’s hair, etc.—united into a singular idealised form that makes a fiction of several realities. The Italian renaissance painter Vasari has also depicted this scene of Zeuxis in the act of painting, in a fresco at the Casa Vasari in Florence. The idea was discussed in *kaŕi’kacha* seid’ou’s Master of Fine Arts, Philosophy Class on 17 November 2014. For details on the painting, see Giorgio Vasari, “The Studio of the Painter” (c. 1563, fresco) on the “Web Gallery of Art”.

²⁷ In his understanding of semiology, Lacan conceives of ‘sliding signifiers’ that are not bound to one meaning, but slide on a string of possibilities. A sign could latch onto these meanings like *points de capiton*, the buttons on upholstery that fix a quilting point in place. For Lacan’s own text, see Jacques Lacan (1993) *The Seminar. Book III. The Psychoses, 1955-56*, pp. 268-9.

²⁸ Edwin Bodjawah is a senior lecturer in Sculpture at KNUST who also happens to be Head of the Department of Painting and Sculpture.

²⁹ See Jorge Luis Borges (1941), “The Garden of Forking Paths”, pp. 270–292, particularly p. 286.

³⁰ An open “library project” was initiated with a contribution of books from the Western Regional Library in Sekondi, installed inside screens in the station platform. Visitors were free to pick up, take or exchange these books. Many were political or scientific manuals which seemed to date back to the Library’s late colonial and early independence archives. Partway through the show, KNUST alum Gideon Asmah (B.F.A. 2014) gave a sizeable collection from his grandfather’s archives.

³¹ Supporting institutions included the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (who offered two staff members to work on exhibition administration, Kofi Mensah and Dwomoh Kwame Owusu), the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (who lent streetlights and helped to scale the ceiling with their bucket crane), the Western Regional Library (which contributed books to our open “library project”), DDP Outdoor Ltd. (which offered two slots on the billboard at Asafo Interchange throughout the show), and the Ghana National Fire Service (which committed to emergency health and safety assistance, though fortunately no need arose).

³² See Ayi Kwei Armah (2000) *The Healers*, p. 94.

³³ See Selom Kudjie (2016), Curatorial statement, “if you love me...”.

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APPENDIX A
“if you love me...” Exhibition Information

“if you love me...”

15 april – 5 may 2016
at the Loco Shed of the Kumasi Railway
opening: 15 april, 3 pm
Open daily 9am – 5 pm

co-curated by Robin Riskin, Patrick Nii Okanta Ankrah, and Selom Kudjie
powered by blaxTARLINES KUMASI, in partnership with the KNUST Department of Painting and Sculpture, Ghana Railway Company Ltd., and Ghana Railway Workers Union

if you love me... is a collaborative effort of railway workers, occupants, engineers, artists, and students of KNUST. The idea is to take on the space of the Kumasi Loco Shed as a living organism, a structure with a vital life of its own. The independently staged exhibition presents work born out of freedom of thought and practice, steered by attitudes of subtle resistance, activated by suggestions of renewal. The project aims to penetrate the site like a bacteriophage on a host cell, quietly attaching to the cell's DNA and reproducing, until the space has been regenerated.

With Kumasi as its nucleus, the project flows out to other locations along the tracks, from Takoradi to Accra, mapping a trajectory of the railway system. Presenting work by 30 artists and numerous collaborators, *if you love me...* meditates not only on human love, but that of plants, winds, germs, machines; not only on romantic love, but also toxic, consuming, possibly fatal passion. The *pharmakon*, both poison and cure, can be the Agent Smith that replicates itself onto subsumed subjects, or the kenosis that empties out the disease. Dangerous, seductive, formless, it floats in free play, disappears into itself, and ever eludes grasp or possession.

The exhibition follows two major shows by KNUST's Department of Painting and Sculpture last year — one at a repurposed car showroom in Kumasi (*Silence between the Lines*), another at the National Museum of Science and Technology in Accra (*the Gown must go to Town*), as well as the launch of blaxTARLINES KUMASI, the Department's project space for contemporary art. *if you love me...* resonates with strategies of “ironic overidentification” as proposed by KNUST art teacher kaŋ'kachä seid'ou — inserting oneself within the site of critique, in order to transform that subject. In this interdisciplinary and intergenerational project, a host of familiar faces and other new ones join together in a labour of love that transcends institutional, intellectual, and categorical lines, toward a more Consciencious future.

Participating Artists:

Accra Train Station (Nii Noi Nortey, Nii Otoo Annan, J. C. Abbey); Timothy Affram; Akwasi Bediako Afrane; Rex Akinruntan; Bernard Akoi-Jackson; Dorothy Amenuke; Francis Anim Sakyi; Lois Selasie Arde-Acquah; Lolo Atanley; Lawrence Baganiah; Geoffrey Akpene Biekro (Captain's Kitchen); Edwin Bodjawah; Yaw Brobbey Kyeyi; Eugene Edzorho; Va-Bene Elikem Fiatsi (crazinisT artisT); Kelvin Haizel; Immanuella Kankam; Adjo Kisser; Eric Okwei Nii Noye; Caterina Niklaus; Elvis Nsiah; Legon Pr3k3s3 (School of Performing Arts, Legon); Emmanuel Opoku Manu; Yaw Owusu; Deryk Owusu Bempah; Afia Prempeh; Stephen Smart Sippah; Kwaku Tabiri

Co-Curators:

Robin Riskin, Selom Kudjie, Patrick Nii Okanta Ankrah

Advisors:

karɪ'kachä seid'ou, Kwaku Boafo Kissiedu, George Ampratwum

Support:

Edwin Bodjawah, Ibrahim Mahama, Caterina Niklaus, Stephen Smart Sippah

Takoradi Coordinators:

Eugene Edzorho, Rex Akinruntan

Partner Institutions:

blaxTARLINES KUMASI

Department of Painting and Sculpture, KNUST

Ghana Railway Company Ltd.

Ghana Railway Workers Union

Supporting Institutions:

Ghana Museums and Monuments Board

Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly

Ghana National Fire Service

Western Regional Library

DDP Outdoor Ltd.

Exhibition Location:

Locomotive Shed

Kumasi Railway

(Adum, at Asafo Interchange)

with an off-site intervention at the Takoradi Railway Station

Exhibition Production Team:

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APPENDIX B

“if you love me...” Curatorial Statement, Robin Riskin

“he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below; and he is therefore thought to be mad.”

– Plato, *Phaedrus*

“if you love me...” is a collaborative effort of railway workers, occupants, engineers, artists, and students of KNUST. The idea is to take on the space of the Kumasi Loco Shed as a living organism, a structure with a vital life of its own. The independently staged exhibition presents work born out of freedom of thought and practice, steered by attitudes of subtle resistance, activated by suggestions of renewal. The project aims to penetrate the site like a bacteriophage on a host cell, quietly attaching to the cell’s DNA and reproducing, until the space has been regenerated.

With Kumasi as its nucleus, the project flows out to other locations along the tracks, from Takoradi to Accra, mapping a trajectory of the railway system and structures that have grown around it. Presenting work by 30 artists and numerous collaborators, “if you love me...” meditates not only on human love, but that of plants, winds, germs, machines; not only on romantic love, but also toxic, consuming, possibly fatal passion. The *pharmakon*¹, both poison and cure, can be the Agent Smith² that replicates itself onto subsumed subjects, or the kenosis³ that empties out the disease. Dangerous, seductive, formless, it floats in free play, disappears into itself, and ever eludes grasp or possession.

Established as a colonial institution to extract Gold Coast resources, only to become a major proletarian force in the struggle for independence led by Kwame Nkrumah, the Ghana Railway Company (GRC) is enmeshed in global narratives of industrialisation, capitalisation, and sovereignty. With trains imported from Germany, America, and Korea, colonial-era equipment dating back to the British Empire, and a temporary administration flown in from India in the early ’80s, the GRC does not exist on its own, but is networked into a system of relations. Even the Loco Shed building is of more than one self: born as a British colonial apparatus in the 1920s, annexed with a monumental appendage in the latter part of the 20th century, and more recently improvised by informal occupants with bricolage structures of train tracks and other accessible materials.

Today, the Railway’s barely active sites could be seen as graveyards for technologies abandoned, or perhaps museums archiving objects of eras past. As the Company looks back to former glories that may or may not have been; and forward to impending contracts of construction; but also inward at drastic cuts to the system, we aim to stake a claim in what is to be done, and what could be. “if you love me...” proposes potentialities⁴ beyond what might be immediately sensible—the *skotos* unseen in harsh rays of sun; the undergrowth inhabiting stagnant pools; the dynamism lying latent within states of slumber.

The title is borrowed from a textile concept by artist Eric Okwei Nii Noye, “IF YOU LOVE ME, LET ME KNOW,” but leaves the statement cut-off, suspended, a void for the viewer or reader to complete. Taking inspiration from two major shows by KNUST’s Department of Painting and Sculpture last year — one at a repurposed car showroom in Kumasi (“*Silence between the Lines*”), another at the National Museum of Science and Technology in Accra (“*the Gown must go to Town*”) — “if you love me...” resonates with strategies of “ironic overidentification” as proposed by KNUST art teacher qarĩkà chä seid’ou — inserting oneself within the site of critique, in order

to activate its transformation. The exhibition will occupy the Loco Shed for three weeks, but its traces will live on, in archives, memories, and residues, whose lives may lead us through other lytic cycles to come.

“radical evil is not this or that bad deed but the potentiality for darkness. And yet this potentiality is also the potentiality for light.”

— Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book Theta

“When a plurality of men exist in society, and it is accepted that each man needs to be treated as an end in himself, not merely as a means, there transpires a transition from ethics to politics.”

— Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism*

-- Robin Riskin, Co-Curator, “*if you love me...*”

¹ Jacques Derrida refers to the *pharmakon* in Plato’s *Phaedrus* thus;

«This *pharmakon*, this “medicine”, this philter, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence (Plato’s *Pharmacy*, 1981).

In *Phaedrus*, a dialogue staged between Socrates and Phaedrus, the discussants deploy the *pharmakon* in their ruminations on the dialectical qualities of love. The “love” in *if you love me...* alludes to the ambivalence at the heart of the term. *kārî’kà chä seid’ou* repurposes Derrida’s interpretation in his essay “Silent Parodies” (an interview with Jelle Bouwhuis published in *Project 1975—Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Unconscious*, by the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, 2014), relating an expanded notion of the *pharmakon* to his politics of “ironic overidentification” within Ghana’s “cultural slum” and the on-going transformation of the curriculum of the Fine Art Department in Kumasi.

² In the film *The Matrix* (The Wachowski Brothers, 1999), the character Agent Smith is a program, more like a virus, which copies itself onto every other subject. Agent Smith is the sovereign, a position inside the game but exempt from its rules.

³ *kārî’kà chä seid’ou* re-conceptualises the idea of kenosis (from Greek *kenos*, ‘to empty’) in relation to Bartleby’s politics of refusal (“I’d prefer not to...”): an affirmation of the possible revolutionary potential of the void. *kārî’kà chä* has raised these ideas during talks in 2014 and 2015 at the OfKob Artists’ Residency, which takes place annually in July in roaming locations in Ghana. In the exhibition “*Silence between the Lines*” (Kumasi, 2015), *kārî’kà chä* enacts the kenosis when as the principal curator of the exhibition, he stages the paradox of participating as an artist while refusing to present a work.

⁴ In the essay “On Potentiality,” Giorgio Agamben writes of the Möbius strip-like nature of potentiality: the contradiction or counter that passes fully into itself, the potentiality to not-be that activates the potentiality to be. This can be the presence lying latent within privation, or darkness waiting to spring to light.