TASTE OF A STONE **KOLANUT TALES - DISMEMBERED**

As a meditative oasis, the site-specific in pieces. Within the installation, installation opens with an indoor garden of rocks and marble pebbles. home almost anywhere. They thrive It is a landscape full of historical and by absorbing water and nutrients geological traces, and simultaneously through the air and their leaves, a space for interpersonal encounters. pointing to the idea of displacement: Nkanga probes the cultural value and stories of the stones. She asks what they can reveal about land and soil, and what roles they can take ask can also be extended to us: on, for instance when delineating territory or taken as a souvenir from come from? their original location, narrating their own diasporic dislocation. The surfaces of the limestone slabs show listen to how their own footsteps sound subtle signs of change that testify to contact with insects, plants or people, thus pointing to the interconnectivity of all systems. The and various engagements, which freestanding textile work depicts a botanical image of dismembered plants disjoined and dislocated

rootless plants grow that feel at if it is not possible to take root, then adaptability is crucial for survival. The questions that plants and stones Where are our roots? Where do we

The work is a walk-in invitation for visitors to engage with the stones, on the pebbles and find their own narrative within this context. It offers the movements can be space for so-called movements further activate the work during the exhibition as an open platform.

boulders, gneiss limestone, movements, plants

Courtesy the artist

2010, woven tapestry

Courtesy the artist



CONTAINED MEASURES OF SHIFTING STATES - EVAPORATE

The evaporation process can be observed on the round table. Liquid slowly but steadily drips from the glass container onto a hot plate, which instantly turns into hissing steam. By observing the transformation from into the larger context of the state fluid to vapour, we witness the change in the state of things. The installation is part of a series that makes the changing states of different process – it is not yet visible, it will elements perceptible - aiming to

make the non-tangible conditions visible. In the reading of Nkanga's work, these conditions should not only be seen as physical manifestations; they also need to be translated of the world and politics. Everything is evolving and connected, and even if - at a certain point in its still find its manifestation.

distilled water.

Courtesy Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels. New York

DIASPORE

Performers in *Diaspore* narrate, sing and resources are displaced and and focus their stare as they navigate through a topographical map whilst carrying pots of the plant Queen of the Night (Cestrum Nocturnum) on their heads. The with the plants, carefully direct cartographic map that does not delineate which territory is being traversed. Nkanga further explores people who have been displaced the language of diaspore and the journey of leaving home looking for plant was subsequently naturalized dialogue about the relationship in South Asia. It illustrates Nkanga's interest in the complex network of social and political tensions manifesting when bodies

uprooted from their origins. The title refers to the botanical term "diaspore", which describes all of the fruits and spores that are used to propagate plants, creating new women, who are in constant dialogue identities. The work is a metaphor for displacement, focusing on their movement over the floor of a the migrations of people and plants that have had to relocate over the course of history. It asks how under harsh conditions are able to reconstruct and be resourceful. a new future. The native West Indian At the same time, this work fosters sat, sun: between care and resistance. How can a space of care be created so that bodies are able to rest and recuperate?

Cestrum Nocturnum

ourtesy the artist

activated during the following times:

> Mon. Wed. Thu. Fri: 16:00-18:00

13:00-18:00

erformers can be found on our website

IN A PLACE YET UNKNOWN

MANIFEST OF STRAINS

interconnectedness of actions, with a view to opening up an overall picture of social and political states. spaces and social strains can be translated and rendered tangible. or emotional; another section In *Manifest of Strains*, physical and emotional states - such as anger, melancholy or numbness - are manifested in seven material-based heat until it glows blazing red, parts related to the natural elements of water, air and fire. As

The circular sculpture deals with the such, one section presents a glaring red neon tube; followed by the expulsion of air represented by air compression; a thermochromic It examines how non-visible emotional change from black to silver addressing the shifting of states, be it political refers to the moment of suffocation, depicted by air trapped in the glass sculpture; one section creates referring to growing tension and warfare; there is a stone hovering

2017, woven textile, colour, ink, metal reservoir

free-floating heating rod, metal

in seeming defiance of gravity, standing for transcending a situation; one segment rusts, addressing decay and also the changeability of the elements and their states. In this material be disassociated from another. expression, relating to the very substance of earth, Nkanga considers the state of the world: to one another in intricate and metaphorical temperatures that complex networks. heat, cool and resist. It stands

for the parallel timelines of violence, resistance and relative peace. The material actions are inseparable in the circle; what happens in one area cannot In this way, global events and human emotions are linked

DOUBLE PLOT

The tapestry incorporates different discover the double narratives

perspectives and talks about and connections. The textile work acts that have affected land and also opens up a temporality, the lives of people. The background like the light of the stars shot depicts the structure of the into the universe long before solar system and star formations. their twinkling reaches our eyes, From a bird's-eye view, a or the politically oppressive network of lines is reminiscent situations playing out in parallel of land measurements and globally. Situations and borders, of structural divisions appearances that happened at a that create tensions. The frontal certain time and are rendered visible at another. The depicted perspective shows a man without a head and hands, next to a tree elements of bodies, land, and holding a chord to the network plants are literally woven together of discs on the next layer. This and connected and remind us plane zooms into photographic that political decisions have human, images of explosions and riots geological and social repercussions. - moments of manifestation Similar to the installation of power and moments where Manifest of Strains, this work also people are manipulated and thematizes the notion of care controlled by power structures and explores moments of political - such as the uprising at Tahrir strain, where bodies have been Square, which is documented pushed to a limit of tension which here and aligns with the star accumulates in uprisings and constellation in the background manifestations of resistance. Her from that very day. As such, works of art probe the political the man invites you to look up, space of care, from where down and forward in order to stability can be reinstated.

woven textile and acryl and inkjet metal plates, bio

> Amsterdam: In Situ Mendes Wood DM,

THE LEFTOVERS

SOLID MANEUVERS

This topographical, layered sculpture is like an equation of a negative volume becoming a positive volume: the remaining negative emptiness of one place left behind after the excavation of resources is often not visible in the end product of the erected structure. The sculpture references the abandoned excavation, which leaves the landscape, and our relationship with it, wounded. The structures consolidate elements from underground, such as petroleum, land, contradicting the image of copper, sheet metal, steel, acrylic the intact hill and telling of and aluminium. Brought together human greed. and stacked, it makes us think

materials and about how they are artificially interrelated. The work is inspired by Nkanga's field trip to Namibia, seeing how mountains are reduced during the process of the exploitation of natural resources. In addition to the layers of material, the sculpture references the places that have been stripped, creating holes in the layered structure. The holes stand for the empty absence of the now disfigured

about human-made processed

WE COULD BE ALLIES

The installation We Could Be Allies struggles and tensions of human Courtesy the artist is composed of visual, textual and sculptural elements, a constellation that delves into the or emotional.

affective relationships, be these psychological, physical various metals,

2017. woven textile

metal, poems inkjet

1ST FLOOR



- 3 Diaspore
- 2 Contained Measures of Shifting States -

In a Place Yet Unknown

1 Taste of a Stone Kolanut Tales -

- 5 The Leftovers Solid Maneuvers We Could Be Allies
- 6 drawings
- 7 Wetin You Go Do? Oya Na



DRAWINGS

"Drawing can be the first approach her approach to drawing, using it to think about a work or an exhibition, starting with quick space in order to think things moment in my studio that never results in an actual piece", says Otobong Nkanga. The artist's depict bodies, landscapes and matter that connect as one entity. Such threads reinforce

as a space that loops into her wider material practice and sketches or drawing directly into thinking through making. As with the inhale and exhale of breath, through; or it can be an intimate where we exchange invisible lines, the rhythm of drawing is a life force for Nkanga that is fundamental in forming works on paper from 1997-present relationships. Further information about the works is delineated on the labels in Room 6.

WETIN YOU GO DO? OYA NA

Recorded in 2015 and transformed especially the material of into a spatial composition for the Gropius Bau, the piece is a reaction to the feeling of powerlessness in the current world - facing a wave of political when whispering, screaming, tension and uprising against political systems, which have often collapsed and stayed unanswered. The broken English Wetin You Go Do? asks the question "What are you going to aware of the situation, or the it was five years ago. Nkanga's own voice takes different styles when lending a voice to characters and materials,

concrete, which is taken for granted, stepped on, used and extracted. Her voice splits into different characters and states flirting, chirping and complaining. These characters all have different approaches to life, the angry one resisting a situation, the drunken voice not even being do?", which is as urgent today as excited one just voicing enthusiasm without action. The voices are accompanied by snapping and singing and guttural tones, carrying the poetry of the work further.

multi-channel sound

Written and Otobong Nkanga

Wim van Dongen

Courtesy the artist

CARVED TO FLOW: **GERMINATION**

support structure that is embedded the Carved to Flow Foundation, within art and the social sphere. Consisting of three phases, the first was the *Laboratory* in 2017, a third phase, *Germination*, focuses workshop installation in Athens during documenta 14. Ten soap prototypes were created including structured around exhibitions, 08 Blackstone Soap – a coldproduction process soap comprising water, coal, lye and seven butters and oils from the Mediterranean, the Middle East, North and West Africa, The production process and the combination of these raw materials in one object reflects on the circulation of goods, bodies, geographies, traditions and stories. It contrasts the fecundity of these regions with the replaced or repaid in some form. charred aftermath of crisis. destruction, extraction or mismanagement: states that leave peoples and environments physically gasping for air. The second phase, Warehouse and Distribution, took place later that year during documenta 14 in Kassel activated by workshop formats as a 100-day performance involving and conversations and the the selling of the O8 Blackstone Soap constant evolving presence of through conversations with the

The project Carved to Flow is a

on local ecologies through research and knowledge sharing, workshops and events. The transmission of knowledge through conversation, horizontal learning, poiesis and bodies in flow is a key aspect of this platform for research, communal production and connection. Carved to Flow is conceived as fluid and developing, replacing economies of extraction and displacement with a system of transference, where what is removed is The ground-floor work space, inspired by African architecture and managed by Nuno Vasconcelos during the course of the exhibition, is a continuation of Otobong Nkanga's residency at the Gropius Bau in 2019. It will be

creating circularity with the

previous phases. Currently the

This work can be found on the ground floor of the Gropius Bau

public. The sale of the soaps finances Nuno Vasconcelos

> Present Wed, Thu, Fri 14:00-18:00

Carved to Flow can be

gropiusbau.de/nkanga



English **OTOBONG NKANGA** THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS SOLID GROUND

INTRODUCTION

Otobong Nkanga (*1974, Kano, Nigeria) was the Gropius Bau's *In House: Artist in Residence* for one year in 2019. Interested in the relationship between repair and care, she deals with complex Oxygen, voice and the act of relationships between people and breathing are elements that land as evinced through global mining and other systems of exploitation, the movement of natural resources and people, and history's violent legacy. Land can be understood as earth, soil and landscape, as well as the terrain on which ecological, economic, political and social issues are navigated. Interweaving works resonate with the past media such as installation, textile, performance, painting, drawing, texts and stories to

create multi-sensory encounters,

Nkanga's work is often based on All events and a period of intensive research, teasing out the many-layered intersections between objects and actions.

connect the artworks in this exhibition, from Nkanga's reshaped sound work Wetin You Go Do? Oya Na (2020), a new aural arrangement that reconfigures her existing voice recordings, to her drawings and the three-phase project Carved to Flow (2017-2020),

begun at documenta 14. These

and present to reveal hidden

forgotten stories.

secrets, altered histories and

he Walther König

GROUND FLOOR



First gallery on the hall, just before

Clara Meister

Very with Felix Ewers

Ekkehard Kneer Silke Schröder

EMArt Ruben Erber

Wetin You Go Do? Oya Na: arrangement by

Studio P4 / Berlin

Lighting: Marc Aldinger

Consultant Architecture: Günter Krüger

Production Manifest of Strains: Saygel & Schreiber The Federal Government

the Media Production, sound design Contemporary Sound Hauptstadtkulturfonds

Kindly support by Jean-Boris Szymczak The Flemish Community

#otobongnkanga

Gropius Bau is supported by

funded by the

Comissioner for Culture and

#gropiusbau