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Untold Narratives

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Galerie Hubert Winter

curated by blaxTARLINES

Artists: Akosua Odeibea Amoah-Yeboah, Kelvin Haizel, Gideon Hanyame, Ibrahim Mahama, Daniel Arnan Quarshie, Tracy Naa Koshie Thompson

The Allegory of Decoy

—Art as Decoy for Social and Political Change

The epoch that shaped diverse art practices and discourses within the Painting and Sculpture Department at KNUST (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) has had a profound and far-reaching impact on artists in Ghana and beyond. This influence can be traced back to the silent revolution sparked by kɔ̀rɛ́'kchã seid'ou's Emancipatory Art Teaching project, which was already gaining momentum by the 2000s. This revolution was not merely about transforming artistic techniques; it was deeply intertwined with broader theories of political movements, parts of which echoed the revolutionary ethos of Kwame Nkrumah. In Kwesi Ohene Ayeh's "Notes on Contemporary Ghanaian Art: Histories and Emergences" he critically traces the history of the inherited colonial academic curriculum through pre-independence till date.

Nkrumah's vision of decolonization extended beyond political independence, emphasizing the importance of cultural and intellectual emancipation. In this exhibition, the context of contemporary Ghanaian art, manifests as a form of „decoy,“ where art serves as a strategic tool to challenge and disrupt entrenched systems of power. The excesses of the global art world—often characterized by its commercial and institutional entanglements—are confronted through practices that prioritize experimentation and subversion, revealing the potential of art to serve as a vehicle for social and political change.

The notion of „decoy“ in this context argues whether art has the power to disrupt the „distribution of the sensible“—the way in which social and political realities are perceived and understood. By engaging in practices

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that appear to conform to traditional artistic norms, yet subtly subvert them, artists can use art as a decoy to challenge dominant ideologies and offer alternative narratives. This approach is reflected in the work of blaxTARLINES, which, through its radical pedagogical practices, seeks to deconstruct historical narratives and reconstruct them in ways that address contemporary socio-political realities.

In the same vein, the work of theorists like Homi Bhabha, who explores the concept of hybridity, offers insights into how art can serve as a site of resistance and negotiation. By embracing hybridity, artists can create works that challenge the binary oppositions of colonizer and colonized, center and periphery, and instead, present a more nuanced and complex understanding of identity and power. This hybridity can itself function as a decoy, drawing viewers into familiar tropes only to disrupt and reconfigure them in ways that provoke critical reflection and inspire change.

The concept of beginning from the void, a principle central to blaxTARLINES, echoes Nkrumah's vision of forging a new identity unbound by colonial constraints. This approach does not align with or privilege any particular medium or format of production but instead encourages attitudes of curiosity and experimentation. By embracing the chaos and remnants of history, artists here confront colonial legacies while creating an open space for the emergence of inventive forms of technological, cultural and political expressions.

This process of reconstruction is not just a means of looking back but also a strategic act of deflection—a decoy that reorients attention toward future possibilities of liberation.