

## PRESS RELEASE (EN)

### EXISTING OTHERWISE – THE FUTURE OF COEXISTENCE

**14.1. - 30.4.2022**

#### Exhibition and Re-Schooling Programme

**THE SAVANNAH CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART (SCCA), Tamale,  
RED CLAY, and NKRUMAH VOLI-NI in Tamale, Ghana**

#### Opening day of each venue:

14.1.22, 5 pm – Red Clay

20.1.22, 5 pm – Nkrumah Voli-ni

21.1.22, 5 pm – SCCA Tamale

"Existing Otherwise - The Future of Coexistence" is the culmination of a yearlong art project in a three month exhibition and re-schooling program at SCCA, Red Clay and Nkrumah Voli-ni in Tamale, Ghana. The programme started in Berlin, Galerie Wedding – Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst and Callie's. It includes listening and movement research sessions, art workshops, curatorial tours and insights, and performances by participating artists and collaborators.

Solvej Helweg Ovesen: Artistic Director of Existing Otherwise & Galerie Wedding, Berlin

Ibrahim Mahama: co-curator, founder SCCA, Tamale, Ghana

Isabel Lewis: curatorial advisor, founder The Institute of Embodied Creative Practices, Berlin

Artists: **Ana Alenso (VZ), Ato Jackson (GH), Bernard Akoi-Jackson (GH),  
Eli Cortiñas (ES), Emily Hunt (AU), Ernest Sackitey (GH), Hannah Toticki Anbert (DK),  
Rosemary Esinam Damalie (GH), Rüzgâr Buşki (TR), Sarah Ama Duah (DE),  
Sandra Kyeraa (GH), Selom Kudjie (GH), Sikarnt Skoolisariyaporn (TH),  
Tracy Naa Koshie Thompson (GH)**

Press Release

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## **Existing Otherwise – The Future of Coexistence**

EXISTING OTHERWISE IN GHANA. Groundbreaking steps were taken, when Ibrahim Mahama and his team founded, built, and put into use three awe-inspiring contemporary art venues, THE SAVANNAH CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART (SCCA), RED CLAY, and NKRUMAH VOLI-NI, in the northern region of Ghana over the past five years. Following this initial process, introducing an international exhibition programme alongside the local cultural engagements is an important next step. While the consequences of the COVID19 pandemic continue to challenge travelling, communication, administration of international art projects as well as artistic exchange and inspiration, the programme serves to resist these and pursues new sustainable ways of international exhibition making and communal envisioning.

Upon the invitation by Ibrahim Mahama, who states “I want to create space for alternative and independent thinking, critical art, and eco-activism here in northern Ghana. This is why we do this exhibition, where we mix artists from Berlin and Tamale who have this approach.”

The first larger international exhibition “Existing Otherwise – The Future of Coexistence” is now happening at this “powerhouse” for the arts in Tamale under the artistic direction of Solvej Helweg Ovesen and Selom Kudje (artistic director SCCA). “Instituting new forms of long term visionary and artistic exchanges across the art world and developing innovative models for creative space-making, human adaptation, and shared knowledge is what I’m interested in with this project. There is a lot to learn from Ghana.”, Ovesen reflects.

LEARNING FROM GHANA. Impromptu decision making, creative space-making, letting ecosystems grow on- and into each other. “Existing Otherwise - The Future of Coexistence” is an entrepreneurial curating experience, which reminds us how to do art shows from scratch, the value of defining spaces for art as well as the importance of the insistence on gender equal exhibition making practices. “Re-schooling” sessions as conceived by Mahama and given by many participating artists enable learning experiences that link artistic and scientific approaches beyond a traditional curriculum. At this point in time, where social welfare and economic systems of the western world are already on the verge of collapsing a.o. due to the ecological crises, there is a lot to learn when working with such entrepreneurial art spaces in Ghana. Alternative exchange models are becoming key today.

“Existing Otherwise - the Future of Coexistence” is launched by a hybrid curatorial team presenting more than 15 artists from all around the world, who created works relating to notions of ‘existing otherwise’. A shared field of interest amongst the artists and curators is the new creative world-making strategies that may be enabled if we give more space and time for intimate relations to grow and heal as well as to develop new flamboyant uses of existing materials. To exist otherwise is both to repair and to innovate. To inhabit, revisit, and convert failed buildings or pedagogical projects. So, “Existing Otherwise” here draws on the notion coined by writer Saidiya Hartman and in this context means

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experimenting with freedom (even if it is limited) in relation to the body, space, habitus, gender roles, sustainable relations and use of material.

Each of the three exhibition venues is dedicated to artistic presentations and installations as well as gatherings during workshops and performances. Red Clay focuses on hosting the re-schooling programme and a major, space gripping virtual looking landscape work by Tracy Thompson made of recycled food paste. Sarah Ama Duah in contrast focuses on the human figure and creates a new inflatable monument, embodied by herself, in local latex. In Nkrumah Voli-ni, Ana Alenso digs into the subject of amateur gold mining and its relation to resource curses on a global scale. And finally, in SCCA the group exhibition unfolds as a soft take-over of the whole space, which can be experienced completely differently seeing it from below or above (archive gallery). This exhibition venue hosts a bunch of colourful, outspoken yet fragile works. Many of them are informed by a contemporary feminist worldviews favouring artistic and human processes of recovery, solidarity, and flourishing. Cyber wellness, beauty as intelligence, gender equality and hybridity - all contemporary themes presented with a healthy twist of psychedelia. Eli Cortinas, Hannah Toticki Anbert, Sandra Kyeraa, Ato Jackson, Ernest Sackitey, Esinam Damalie, Bernard Ahoi-Jackson and Emily Hunt present collages, textiles, costumes, figurines, and film installations that leave room for inner repair, empowerment, and intimacy (also with the works themselves). Anyone who has a soft spot for strong women may appreciate this venue.

## **BACKGROUND**

The exhibition in Tamale marks the culmination of a yearlong project that started in the municipal art space Galerie Wedding – Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst in Berlin, Germany, run by Solvej Helweg Ovesen. For 1,5 years, starting with the first lock-down in Berlin in Spring 2020, the communal art space was occupied by the social welfare office. Reception desks to accommodate people with existential needs were installed in the main exhibition space of the gallery. Thanks to the involved artists' commitment, creativity, perseverance, improvisational talent and collaboration, alternative formats of art presentation were developed over the last 1.5 years of shared use of the premises in Berlin. Ovesen now moves the programme to Tamale, aiming to expand the dialogue internationally.

With Ibrahim Mahama on the curatorial board and as an artist, co-initiator and entrepreneur on-site in Tamale, Ghana, technically and ecologically "disastrous" modernisation processes and in this context appropriated buildings that define the urban living space in Tamale are explored as 'ruins of our time' and repurposed material as well as the social spaces (Nkrumah Voli-ni, the by Mahama last acquired space). Mahama has shown this view of the modern world through his monumental artworks where he a.o. gives select buildings a second skin of scarred jute sacks from Ghana. Now he shares his knowledge through various Re-schoolings with audiences and students in both countries and supports them with ideas on how to exist differently without many resources.

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"Many of the projects I have developed in the past have focused on alternative forms of sociality among human and non-human agents, literally bringing people and things into contact as ways to challenge the contemporary cult of the individual and encourage and practice empathy. Working with proximity and intimacy have been core strategies inside past work. The demand for "social distancing" and a newly heightened awareness for how vulnerable we are to each other requires new approaches that nonetheless insist on addressing these topics. This is not a reason to try to translate live experience into online and video formats and avoid contact. We need to insist on the importance of sociability and find new ways to gather in real space and time that takes the new conditions of our lives into account." – Isabel Lewis, Curatorial Statement on "Existing Otherwise", 2020

## **THE THREE EXHIBITION VENUES IN TAMALE, GHANA**

**SCCA Tamale** is a monumental contemporary art centre focusing on exhibition creation, research, publication and documentation of practices relevant to socio economic and ecological developments of the 21st and 20th centuries. It is also a cultural repository and residency space for artists that aims to build a community with other artists and curators to share and learn from each other.

**Red Clay** is a complex of studios. These are multi-purpose spaces for exhibitions, meetings, art talks, film screenings, workshops, and more. There are also dedicated spaces for a library, a cinema hall and a decommissioned aircraft serving as a site for teaching and learning purposes. The building also includes an outdoor atrium with a "pool of ideas" in the middle, which is called The Parliament of Ghosts. Here historical and contemporary humanist ideas are negotiated and challenged in talks and performances.

**Nkrumah Voli-ni** as a silo building is one of the many independence projects initiated by the first President of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, before his overthrow in 1966. The building was originally intended to be a granary and storage for karité nuts, but abandoned after the overthrow of Nkrumah. The now renovated facility is converted into an exhibition venue for science and culture.

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## **RE-SCHOOLING WORKSHOPS SCCA, RED CLAY, and NKURMAH VOLI-NI**

**14. – 21.1.2022**

14.1.22 Red Clay, 8 pm: film programme “I am Somebody”: spanish filmmaker, professor, and artist Eli Cortinas introduces her curated film programme “I am Somebody” on women finding their own voice in public: Martine Syms (Notes On Gesture 2015, 10’30”), Cecilia Vicuña (What Is Poetry To You? 1980, 23’ ), Sikarnt Skoolisariyaporn (And That Ocean Too, Is A Fiction 2019, 11’40’) and Madeline Anderson (I Am Somebody 1970, 30’)

14.1 and 17.1.22 Red Clay, 12–2 pm: Clay sculpting workshop: artist and sculptor Emily Hunt teaches how to make delicate clay figurines and even power rings in her collaborative workshop which runs in 2 x 2 sessions around the opening in Red Clay (max 20 people, all ages, in each course).

20.1.22 Nkrumah Voli-ni, 2–4 pm: A course on Resource Curse: Venezuelan artist and eco-activist Ana Alenso who in her installations functions industrial materials and machines connected to the mining industry, teaches on the subject of resource drain and proposes activist strategies to oppose this tendency. In the course, she will discuss how to create images of the Anthropocene.

18.1 and 21.1.22 SCCA Curating Otherwise (sign up by 17.1.22 and please send portfolio and/or CV to [sccatamale@gmail.com](mailto:sccatamale@gmail.com)): curator of festivals, art spaces, and biennials as well as founder of the CURARE curating course, Berlin, Solvej Helweg Ovesen, teaches the 5 steps of curating an unorthodox show and producing artworks from A to Z in two sessions of 2 hours each, taking you from start to end of your exhibition. Each session will include an open discussion and feedback round addressing curatorial positions of the participants.

4.2.2022 Online Presentation and discussion with professor of Sustainable Leadership at University of Cumbria, GB, Jem Bendell (“Deep Adaptation”) with Isabel Lewis, Ibrahim Mahama and Solvej Ovesen on learning from Ghana (Ecological understanding, impromptu decision making, Covid19 handling)

March 2022 (date TBC): Rüzgâr Buşki, artist and experienced silk screen print teacher (UDK Berlin) will conduct a workshop on printing and painting banners (for people of all ages). The group will create one coed banner work with the artist that will be presented in the exhibition.

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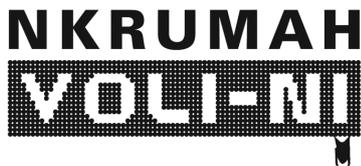
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## PARTNERS

Existing Otherwise - For a New Politics of the Senses started off in Berlin 2021 and follows an invitation by Ibrahim Mahama, extending into 2022 with an international final exhibition at Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA) in Tamale, Ghana.

Existing Otherwise - For a New Politics of the Senses is executed and directed by XO Curatorial Projects (Solvej Helweg Ovesen & Kathrin Pohlmann) in close collaboration with Galerie Wedding - Space for Contemporary Art, a communal exhibition space in Berlin under the artistic direction of Solvej Helweg Ovesen; The Institute for Embodied Creative Practices, Berlin Wedding, an ambulatory corpus of particular concerns and the sensorial methodologies for addressing them founded by artist and choreographer Isabel Lewis in 2016, currently operating from Callie's Berlin, Shedhalle Zürich, among other locations; Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA), Tamale, Ghana, founded by Ibrahim Mahama, who is an artist and lecturer in art and architecture at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.



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