A myriad of curatorial strategies, such as collective curating, interspecies and intergenerational conversations, accessibility programming, exhibition-as-experimental site, class-sensitive auditing, and the symbolic participation of the Unknown Artist—the "surplus population" of exhibition makers—have marked the blaxTARLINES KUMASI network of expanded-exhibition practice for the past decade and more. As a cross-generational and transcultural community, blaxTARLINES KUMASI operates through affirmative politics but also thrives on a propagative model of social organization responsive to its integral crisis points, gaps, and other manifestations of negativity (seid’ou and Bouwhuis 2014: 113). Thus, the network mobilizes different struggles, sometimes antagonistic ones, for common political action through collaborative projects. Many of the transformations that the blaxTARLINES coalition has brought to Ghana’s contemporary exhibition cultures have grown out of the Emancipatory Art Teaching Project, a generative curriculum project launched in 2003 by kàrî’kàchà seid’ou at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) Department of Painting and Sculpture in Kumasi. In a conversation with curator Jelle Bouwhuis, seid’ou contextualized his transition from the making of the “work of art” to a probing of the “art of work,” his focus on pedagogical practice, and some of its political implications regarding his vision of a sharing community:

Working in the “cultural slum” of KNUST College of Art in Kumasi, my institutional critical response was to go on artistic strike, stop “making art” symbolically and to inaugurate a practice of “making artists.” My political strategy was what I called “ironic overidentification” with the conditions of the cultural slum. Through that, I hoped to transform art from the status of commodity to gift (seid’ou and Bouwhuis 2019: 193; cf. seid’ou and Bouwhuis 2014: 111–13).
number of students, were held annually in the heart of Kumasi city and KNUST campus. These biennale-scale exhibition projects also inspired emergent exhibition cultures in Accra in the first and second decades of the century through alumni who worked with emergent art and cultural spaces and communities in Accra after graduation (Woets 2011, 2012). These include the Foundation for Contemporary Art (founded 2004), Nubuke Foundation (founded 2006), Ehalakasa (founded 2007), Writers Project Ghana (founded 2009), Dei Center for Contemporary Art (founded 2009), Chale Wote Festival (founded 2011), Ano Ghana (2012), Kuenyehia Trust for Contemporary Art (founded 2013), The Studio Accra (founded 2015), and the cultural programs of Goethe Institut and Alliance Francaise.

An inaugural MFA program in curatorial practice was introduced in Kumasi in 2014 to cater for students open to curatorial concentration while opening them up to other possible roles in the art field (cf. Woets 2012). This might well be the first graduate course in contemporary art curating in West Africa. Six years later, the graduating curators and their collaborators in the blaxTARLINES network are beginning to transform the texture and temperature of exhibition making in Ghana and elsewhere (Silva 2017; Nagy and Jordan 2016; Johannenssen 2016; Munshi 2018). Collectives are forming from the parent blaxTARLINES hub in Kumasi. Furthermore, exhibition start-ups and coalitions are spontaneously emerging in various communities. The collectives are growing into peer-to-peer art-labor movements which network from time to time, and in various topologies, to tackle exhibition, social, and ecological projects. Today, blaxTARLINES exhibitions are known to have reconfigured key aspects of the Ghanaian landscape of art practice and proposed alternative linages of concepts and histories on exhibition-making and art thought. The possibilities of forging new connections between locality and the emergent postcapitalist and postcontemporary futures appear in the distance.

Before the Emancipatory Art Teaching Project was introduced in 2003, out of which emerged blaxTARLINES exhibition cultures, the pervasive exhibition format had been the contrived beaux-arts or touristy one. While the new Kumasi curriculum does not exclude this model from its scope of cultural engagement, its hegemonic role in silencing, censoring, or erasing key futures of Ghana’s art establishment is what was in contention. For instance, the ambitious and genre-defying public interventions of the millennial

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1 Kwamivi Zewuze Addzaku’s Impossibilities (MFA, 1996, Kumasi) on the Silence Between the Lines poster (2015) was the mascot of the exhibition. Impossibilities recalls a silent revolution of the pioneer MFA students and their allies that attempted to liberate the Kumasi Painting and Sculpture curriculum from beaux-arts hegemony.

2 Installation view (interior): Silence Between the Lines, 2015. Hajaar Ameen Kudos Farouk’s pair of fibrous installations hanging from ceiling to floor (foreground); Yaw Brobey Kyei’s Road Signs and Space to Space on the adjacent left wall; Eugene Edzorho’s Same from Different Angles (stone and nylon installation) in the background (right); Adjo Kissé’s The Portrait Series in the background (left), and objects from Emmanuel Opoku Manu’s Fantasy Town hanging from the rafters.

3 Silence Between the Lines. A view from inside the automobile showroom through Eugene Edzorho’s installation rocks excavated from mining sites, Same from Different Angles, into part of Ibrahim Mahama’s installation Samsia: Towers of Emancipation that leads into the streets of the city.
generation of artists and curators—presently led by Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Ibrahim Mahama, Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, and others—were, to say the least, unimaginable in its framework.

Indeed, Ghana’s cultural fortunes seem to have waned in the last decades of the twentieth century with the inception of the neoliberalization of state institutions and economies (Seid’ou and Bouwhuis 2014; Woets 2011). An ensuing depoliticization and commoditization of art underpinned the hegemony of touristy décor and romantic Africanist souvenirs contrived to the tourist’s eye, pocket, and luggage bag. Exceptions were few and far between. There was little or no curatorial direction. “Not sellable” in these terms was equated with “not exhibitable.” Ambitious works, which challenged established beaux-arts genres, media, styles, and formats, were simply inadmissible, stigmatized, or shamed. There was a reflection of this silent censorship in an artist’s training in art school, too.

Internationally, the situation was also enforced by the hegemonic role Euro-American salvage ethnographers and anthropologists—principally enthusiasts of the so-called World Art phenomenon, but hardly well-versed in the modern and contemporary art terrain—played in canonizing the complex and vast territory of “African Art” in text and in exhibitions (Woets 2011). It is needless to say that, at best, they failed to critically engage artists whose working formats and perspectives challenged the mythical and “Afrocultural” consensus on authentic heritage and identity. Moreover, they typified expanded and genre-defying modern art practices as “conceptual art,” dismissed them as irredeemably Western and “high art,” and omitted them from their canon. This way, they reinforced a growing tendency to homogenize Ghana’s modern art field since the colonial and post-Independence era. This aesthetic conformism was under critique as late as 2003, when Bernard Akoi-Jackson remarked in his BFA thesis, “‘The conceptual has been the African way of expression since time immemorial’” (Akoi-Jackson 2003: 23; Woets 2011: 329). By then, the South Meets West international art exhibition at the National Museum in Accra (1999), which had featured the media-promiscuous works of transnational Southern and West African artists, had already exposed Ghana’s domestic art communities as oblivious to the sophistication of real-time discourses and practices in international contemporary art (Kwami 2000: 45; Seid’ou, Ampratwum, Kissiedu, and Riskin 2015: 134).

Meanwhile, some notable exceptions to this cultural conformity had happened in Kumasi in the mid-1990s when a small group of MFA students—Kwamivi Zewuze Adzraku, Emmanuel Vincent Duku, and Caterina Niklaus (then known as Edward Kevin Amankwah)—supported by their kindred spirits, tested the boundaries of art practice and exhibition making at KNUST (Seid’ou 2006; Seid’ou et al. 2015: 134; Woets 2012; Kwami 2003, 2013). This group dematerialized, deskilled, and democratized art practice with an openness and criticality that was unprecedented in Ghana’s modern artscape (cf. Niklaus 1995; Amankwah 1996; Essel 1998). Amankwah captured the democratic spirit in a provocative one-liner that concluded his MFA thesis: “In Art, any Shit can be a hit provided there is no $ to disturb it” (Amankwah 1996: 28; Akoi-Jackson 2003; Woets 2011: 319, 322; Woets 2012). Among other things, key exponents of the group created unannounced performances, textualized paintings, site-specific and genre-defying projects, and political-feminist interrogation of materiality and systems of art and exhibition production. These interventions challenged traditional definitions and experiences of art as understood in the Kumasi Art College and put pressure on an exclusively atelier-focused curriculum that had changed very little since its British-colonial inception. Yet, “a lapse, or silence, settled in, and radical ideas were quickly censored or tamed” after this class graduated and dispersed (Seid’ou et al. 2015: 134). The Emancipatory Art Teaching Project, launched at the inception of the millennium, was a resurrection of this silent revolution. Thus, the curatorial use of Kwamivi Zewuze Adzraku’s object installation

4 Yaw Owusu’s Untitled 2, a “hollow phallus” of one-pesewa coins hanging in the atrium of the Museum of Science and Technology, Accra. On the floor are Lois Aarde-Acquaah’s ink drawing on large scrolls and William Duku’s bluish water-color paintings (Visible Series. Installation view: the Gown must go to Town… 2015).

from this era, *Impossibilities* (1996) (Fig. 1), as the mascot of *The Silence Between the Lines* is indicative of this resurrection and the possibilities for retroactive redemption, as captured in the curatorial text:

Borges summarizes this beautifully, “each writer [artist] creates his [own] precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future.” It is in this sense that Adzraku’s installation of 1996, *Impossibilities*, the mascot of this exhibition can make sense retroactively through the visions of the younger artists represented here (seidou 2015; cf. Borges 1964: 192; Elliot 1941: 25–26).

**THE SANKOFA TIME COMPLEX: EXHIBITION PLATFORMS AS FORGOTTEN FUTURES YET TO COME**

In 2015, blaxTARLINES launched a series of three large-scale end-of-year exhibitions in Accra, namely; *the Gown must go to Town* (2015), *Cornfields in Accra* (2016), and *Orderly Disorderly* (2017). The terms of this trilogy were paraphrased in the curatorial statement of the exhibition *Silence Between the Lines* (2015) (Figs. 1–3), where the Ghanaian sankofa legend, traditionally interpreted as a mythical bird nostalgically looking back to recollect from a glorious past, was reimagined as a subject “looking back towards forgotten futures yet to come” (seidou 2015). These “forgotten futures,” like anagrams, seem indelibly etched in subsequent exhibition and interventionist projects by staff, students and alumni of the Kumasi School.

*Silence Between the Lines* outdoored fresh artistic and curatorial practices that had been brewing in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at KNUST since the turn of the century. The cross-generational exhibition extended from the interior space of the car showroom of Prime Motors Ltd., located at Ahenema Kokoben, Kumasi, into its nearby environs (Figs. 2–3). Among the exhibiting artists was Ibrahim Mahama, who had just completed his MFA in Kumasi and had been invited to exhibit at *All the World’s Futures*, the International Exhibition of the 56th Venice Biennale curated by Okwui Enwezor. At *Silence*, Mahama’s outdoor installation of derelict sacks, *Samsia: Towers of Emancipation*, presaged his massive walkthrough installation, *Out of Bounds*, to be held in Venice in May that same year. *Samsia* connected the exhibits and events in the showroom interior through the glass façade and display window to the heart of the city and back.

These large-scale blaxTARLINES exhibitions were launched to encourage student artists and curators to find their own voices and directions, to imagine and create new possibilities in art. The exhibitions featured works of undergraduate and graduate students, teaching assistants, faculty, alumni, and invited guest artists. These cross-generational, genre-defying shows expanded from 17 participants in the inaugural exhibition of *Silence Between the Lines* to over 100 participants in the last of the trilogy of large-scale exhibitions, *Orderly Disorderly*.

The blaxTARLINES exhibitions are not restricted to raising isolated issues in art but are meant to connect to the wider cultural, political, material, and technoscientific substance of our global society. Their curatorial strategies expose and repurpose the inconsistencies and failures that underwrite the logic of contemporary exhibition-making and its virtual support. Working from

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7 Convivial situations were built into exhibition experience through works that explored a variety of games. Children group and play around Kelvin Hazell’s video simulation of Oware, a Ghanaian game. *Orderly Disorderly*, 2017.
the remit of an academic institution, this form of engaged critique could be understood through the political strategy seidou calls “ironic overidentification” (seidou and Bouwhuis 2014: 111–13) or in Rosi Braidotti’s formulation, “politics of radical immanence” (Braidotti 2008)—that is, inserting oneself in the site of critique in order to activate its transformation from within. Central to the curatorial strategies was the staging of covert feminist and center–periphery politics in the selection of works and their transgressive allotment to hierarchized spaces such as the atrium, a master signifier in the cultural coding of spatial privileges. In the Gown, Yaw Owusu’s Untitled, a “hollowed phallus” of near-worthless but glittering Ghana pesewa coins was suspended midair in the atrium—repeating on a smaller scale the “oculus” that takes daylight from the ribbon glass fenestration of the top floor down to the atrium (Fig. 4). Livingston Amoako’s phallus of empty and detachable strings of snail shells pierces through the oculus but is cut short at its tip by a lapse or explosion that scatters its members skyward and downward, and an implosion that keeps the base “melting.” It stands withering and “incomplete” while its surviving members, some live snails, crawl off-center across the exhibition space (Fig. 5). At Orderly Disorderly, the waning phallus figure in the atrium was displaced by Esther Anoky’s dystopic landscape installation (Fig. 6), which is in conversation with Tracy Thompson’s teardrops of vibrant matter dripping from the constellation of objects, including a Sputnik 1 model, hanging close to the ceiling.

The exhibitions were distributed in virtual spaces via the internet, radio, television, and other nonconventional physical sites in the city of Accra. Dormant for decades, the Nkrumah Era Museum of Science and Technology was brought back to life with an avalanche of artistic experiments that were staged on floors, walls, ceilings, and exterior spaces. The museum space became a constellation of varied mediums and forms like photography, video and sound installations, convivial scenarios, and games (Fig. 7), critical cooking, illustrations, paintings, sculptures, designs for living, natural and augmented life forms, robotics, graffiti, sound and fragrances, among others. The relations formed from these constellations created a distinctive ambience in the museum.

EXPOSING SOMETHING TO SOMEONE AND SOMEONE TO SOMETHING IN REGIMES OF CRISIS

blaxTARLINES initiatives and projects suggest means by which the subaltern of global contemporary art can speak for herself. Even so, the coalition’s exhibitions have been ambivalent about displaying or expressing human mastery in any field while ushering in a new era of making, thinking, and learning about art that opens up to emergent forms, genres, subject matter, and many more. In this regard, the inaugural Silence Between the Lines exhibition presented the visions of the artists and curators from the Kumasi School as having “no privileged route or direction from which, or towards
which to face, to return, to look at, to forget, to remember, to erase or to have a good grasp of the coming futures” (Seidou 2015). The exhibitions thus present art as underwritten by a spirit of indifference or an ethos that is not preemptively prejudicial to any particular medium, content, skill, trade, trend, material, or process.

Thus, the curatorial teams conceive of these exhibitions as experimental sites through which forms of collective curating, accessibility programming, and exposure of the human to the nonhuman and inhuman, and vice versa, could be put to the test. With due deference to the artist Pierre Hyughe, the creative process takes place at a junction between human vulnerability and agency where human subjects are exposed to the unfathomable gaze of “something” while reciprocally casting their own “exhibition gaze.” As Lacan puts it (1973: 89), “the picture being in my eye” also means “I am in the picture too.” This decentering of the humanist exhibition framework of exclusively “exhibiting something to someone” is hinted at in the works of some participant artists and in the curatorial statement of the *Gown …*:

These artists probe the dispositifs and uncertainties of the twenty-first century: how to reinvent from surplus created by systems of capitalist production, consumption, and speculation; how to reimagine processes and relations of biopolitical, intellectual, and artificial labor; how we might organize and inhabit today’s ever-growing cities; and how we understand material and immaterial flows through ecological and social trafficways. Moving beyond anthropocentric visions, the artists’ multisensory perspectives get down to the level of the earth, animals, plants, winds, machines, sounds, smells, and silences. Paying attention to the small things, the particles, the subtleties, shadows, and stains, they reorient perceptions and positions of experience through potentialities, impossibilities, and paradoxes. With sensibilities toward communal and collaborative systems and processes, residual entities gain new significance, forgotten traditions are injected with fresh life, metaphysical certainties destabilized, and networks of power remapped (the Gown 2015).

A good example in the *Gown …* is Fred Afram Asiedu’s installation that invites and activates ants, termites, and other insects into constellations of decaying wood. Sprinkled with sweet sugars, they gradually draw in live insects, who become present in the exhibition space. The work is as much formed by what is eaten away as by what is appended: an act of carving, of erasure, and of
assemblage. Through experiment and scientific inquiry, the work asks what humans can learn from other biological communities and cycles of consumption. Paradoxical Muse, the work of Joshua “Scolons” Osei Mensah Brobbey, who experiments with tropical fruits as fibers for making paper, is a subtler example. He manipulates color, texture, depth, and strength with modulations of heat, cooking, evaporation, and drainage. Variations in time and temperature are used to intensify the paper’s fragility and to “age” the material aesthetically. Orange-yellow tones made of freshly cooked peels split open with speckles and seams, while dark brown sheets of sun- or shade-dried fruits tend to form with relative thickness. Controlled choices are counterbalanced by chance. The process is a duet between the artist and forces of nature—water, air, and light being principal actants. The fragile sheets were hung in free space such that one could walk around them to experience variations on either side—rough or smooth, concave or convex—and smell their citrus whiff while it faded slowly in intensity as the days went by. The work continued to change its shape and form in response to the changing humidity and temperature conditions without direct human intervention.

Audiencing takes place at both human and extrahuman levels and solicits all the human senses, too. In Cornfields, Desmond Maxwell Acquah exhibited Life, an array of mummified organs cast in granular sugar and food dye. The sugar base of Life attracted ant colonies into the exhibition space daily. The melting sugars turned sections of the exhibition space into terraqueous scapes of colors, craters, and crevices for tiny creatures and as reflecting surfaces for human spectators (Fig. 8). While Akwasi Bediako Afrane’s TRONS hovered over the exhibition floors among human spectators, Adjo Kisser’s mechanized and robotized “altarpieces” were held in place on exhibition panel while acknowledging human and nonhuman presence by blinking (Fig. 9). The blink, emanating from the pairs of mechanized eye sockets, evokes the artificial camera flash light that illuminates the sitter. Human subjects are exposed to something while something is being exposed to them. The curatorial statement evokes this human–nonhuman nexus again:

The works are diverse and span contemporary art and allied practices which anticipate emergent formats, ideas, and configurations of transformative futures. The artists are not only interested in human life, but also ponder other possibilities where animals, plants, machines, and microorganisms become potential platforms and media for reflection, engagement, and interaction. Mechanical contraptions fashioned out of discarded domestic appliances and stripped
bare of their familiar housing are juxtaposed with manipulations of synthetic fibres or hair attachments. Hyperrealistic tableaux inspired by everyday life are staged within poetic proximity with crystalline sugar sculptures that evoke archaeological discoveries from excavated futures of our contemporary foodscape, whilst smells of ferment fill up spaces and crevices, as yeast continues to perform life-transforming actions on objects made from dough. Motion sensors embedded within quirky “altarpieces” interact with visitors and draw them, through animated stained-glass projections, into new worlds where materials such as paper, resin, or plastic respond to extreme temperature changes to take on new and surprising forms. All these and more communicate with one another in the presence of experimental museological displays of autonomous objects in the MST and GMMB collection (Cornfields 2016).

Building from the ground up, back down, and across, through detours and percolations at different levels, there are profound decisions made about large- and small-scale mobilization and management of logistics, labor, care, accommodation, and publicity. Departments were set within the exhibition process in this regard. Key to the human–nonhuman interface was the Department of Care, which was headed by Selorm Kudjie. At Cornfields and Orderly Disorderly, Selorm Kudjie and his team developed a twelve-hour daily program dedicated to the monitoring and sustenance of animal life and green logistics in the exhibition space (Fig. 10). The team’s duties also included the upkeep of electronic, digital, and mechanical art forms, portals and devices, and the care of all art pieces and facilities regarding human audiences. Accessibility programming also anticipated human spectators of various abilities, interests, and competencies; Braille and local language translations of curatorial texts and captions of works are central. Because of structural limitations posed by the design of the Museum of Science and Technology building, which has neither elevator nor ramp access to the basement and first floor of the building, the curatorial team also designated a space on the ground floor where physically impaired individuals could experience the works on all three floors of the building mediated through video installation.

The exhibitions were staged as class-conscious, noncommercial, open-access events; a team of curators and artists were out on the streets on each day to canvass for a wide spectrum of publics—from street and open-market vendors, students from primary, secondary, and tertiary schools, institutions for autistic and physically challenged people, auto mechanics, commercial drivers, etc. The fluid exhibition space functioned as a living organism, a laboratory, a classroom, a cinema or theater of organic, mechanical, life and synthetic forms generating dynamic relations.

The last of the exhibition trilogy, Orderly Disorderly, had operated on a postcrisis theme captured in the curatorial text as the state of hopelessness and indifference experienced by sufferers and witnesses of the current global crises of public commons (refugee crisis, economic precarity, threats of ecological crisis in the epoch of anthropocene, new forms of apartheid emerging as invisible walls in the public sphere, gentrification of digital space and intellectual property, etc).

The exhibition proposed the inclusion of a hypothetical and generic participant called the The Unknown Artist (Fig. 11) who embodies the void and precarity left behind by the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of the contemporary art establishment, by and large,
progressively encroached upon by capitalist economic structures. Thus *The Unknown Artist* was presented as an artist figure with no physical presence in the exhibition as such, yet stimulating curatorial reflection on the “part of no part” of exhibition cultures. It was a strategy of using the exhibition as a form to think through immanent contradictions in the moral economy of contemporary art where precarious labor is exploited but rewarded with symbolic castration. By analogy, *The Unknown Artist* stimulates reflection on the extent of political, economic, and ecological expropriation that leaves the vulnerable unaccounted for. For Rancière (2006), politics begins when this “part that has no part” begins to speak and act for themselves, not spoken on behalf of by the privileged as pertains in mainstream liberal politics, but by affirming the rhetorical axiom “but we are all equal?” by themselves.

The domestic art communities of Ghana are not remote from such forms of deprivation. In fact, the hopelessness of the systemic conditions for contemporary art was legendary by the turn of the century. Yet the experience inspired the formation of blaxTARLINES and the inauguration of its art-labor coalitions for “impossible” exhibitions and projects such as *Orderly Disorderly* and its kin to happen. The political and economic conditions of the neoliberal 1980s through the 1990s had plunged Ghana into Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the ex-Bretton Woods system. Ghana traded increased GDP figures and lower inflation rates in the books for the privatization or neglect of key state institutions that had thrived in the Nkrumah era, rising rates of key services and basic necessities, the downsizing of labor in the public sector and increased unemployment, and the curtailing of public funding of cultural institutions, personnel, and projects. Public museums and supporting art and cultural institutions and spaces were among the worst hit, but they are also among those that never recovered. In order to keep their practice afloat in the face of state neglect, artists were compelled to evolve commercially driven exhibition cultures targeted at tourists and the expatriate community in Ghana as the only game in town. It is against such a backdrop that *Orderly Disorderly* revisited a unique political vision that Professor Ablade Glover proposed in the early 1990s. He had mobilized artists around a cooperative model of economic and aesthetic emancipation; artists in the alliance would collectively operate and own the entity horizontally. Unfortunately, the proposal fell through as most of the key artists preferred to go their individual ways to keep the pot boiling.

The apparent lack of institutional and state support and art infrastructure at the turn of the century was instrumental in writing Ghana’s domestic art scene off the international and global map of contemporary art. However, like Derrida’s *pharmakon*, it is both poison and cure—the curse and the blessing that has strengthened the recent blaxTARLINES tradition of collective self-determination as the virtual support for independent art and curatorial practice. Artists pool resources through thick and thin. They seek out and negotiate for spaces, fund projects, form project-led collectives, and make critical decisions on how to present and discuss their work with existing and new publics. There is a communal attitude that undergirds the conception, production, realization, dissemination, reception, and documentation of the art works. If artists train as curators and curators as artists and beyond, they are also encouraged to work “from bolts and nuts to high theory and back.”

**THE blaxTARLINES TRILOGY: ANAGRAMS OF EMANCIPATED FUTURES**

The *Gown* (Figs. 4, 12) opened as the first of the trilogy at the Museum of Science and Technology in Accra, in 2015. The...
exhibition affirmed an imperative to the African student by the first pan-Africanist president of Ghana, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, in his speech *The African Genius*, to hyphenate the gap that exists between the academy (the gown) and that of the wider social sphere (the town) (Nkrumah 1963). Hence, Nkrumah encouraged a liberation from the mantle of colonial education. The gown–town engagement was mediated by art objects and projects that occupied the basement, ground floor, and top floor of the building and audiences that cut across social and economic classes. The technoscientific works in the permanent collection of the Museum of Science and Technology were on display at the top floor, with a few dotted among the contemporary art works on the ground floor. Among the fifty-seven artists was 28-year-old Ibrahim Mahama, who wrapped the entirety of his architectural armature, the Museum of Science and Technology building, in his iconic jute-sack material (Fig. 12). This immersive approach would become more pronounced in his later work after the introduction of drone technology for prospecting and for documentation. The plain-weave material regulated the incidence of daylight and gave a spectrum of tonalities to the visual experience inside. *the Gown* also celebrated Professor El Anatsui, the renowned Ghanaian artist and alumnus of KNUST who received the Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement Award at the aforementioned Biennale.

An extract from an eponymous poem by the feminist literary figure Ama Ata Aidoo inspired *Cornfields in Accra* and its theme of resilience in times of crisis.

… We shall sit firmly on our buttocks  
And plant our feet on the earth.  
Then we shall ask to see him  
Who says  
We shall not survive among these turbines? (Aidoo 2007: 12).

It is a vision of universal solidarity in the face of common struggle, as the curatorial statement describes it—citing lines from the poem—“men without barns” and “women without fallows” (Aidoo 2007: 12) allied in common struggle, scraping through challenges and surviving imminent crises self-assured. The works occupied all three floors and extended into several parts of the city. Among them were nontraditional forms like live land snails escaping from Livingston Amoako’s “withering phallus,” which glided across the museum floors. There is a teleportation through the exhibition’s “time machine” as the live snails crawl into Esther Anokye’s dystopic landscape installation of tree branches, clay, and sprinkled earth at the *Orderly Disorderly* exhibition the following year. Such creative repetitions have become leitmotifs of blaxTARLINES exhibitions. By extension, the time-space of blaxTARLINES exhibitions is structured like a fractal; sections can be zoomed in or zoomed out to birth other major projects, making them a space of infinite possibilities. Today, some key sections of the trilogy, such as the sections on historical reconstruction featuring Ghanaian modernists significant to the evolution of the KNUST curriculum, have developed into large-scale monographic retrospectives by the younger generation of artists and curators.

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20 Caleb Prah  
*Madonna (Market Women)* (2017)  
Aluminium framing, glass, found and repurposed wooden tray, digital photography and picture transfer.  
*Orderly Disorderly*, 2017  
Part of the *Madonna Series* (*Kayayei Madonna Triptych*, 2016), this piece is in the collection of Harn Museum, University of Florida.

Top right: Tracy Thompson, section of *Synt Illusion* (three-part installation) (2017); polystyrene (Styrofoam), polyvinyl chloride, (PVC) sheet, petrol.  
Lower left: Kelvin Haizel, *Desperately seeking forevers* (2017); images mapped onto automobile head and tail lights with light fixtures and powered by car batteries [organs without bodies].  
Cornfields (Figs. 5, 13–15) also featured the sound installation of noted Cameroonian conceptual artist Goddy Leye (1965–2011) (Fig. 13) whose work had been in the blaxTARLINES Collection before his untimely death. For the first time, the constellation of exhibition sites included the older Museum of Science and Technology building, with a folded-plate roofing that was wrapped in Ibrahim Mahama’s jute-sack leitmotif while screening his corpus of projects inside. The exhibition also displayed items from the collection of the museum, including the prototype of the Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite ever launched by humanity and at a time contemporaneous with Ghana’s independence from colonial rule. The curators “launched” the Sputnik 1 model “into orbit” inside the main museum building and brought more context to the array of items in the Museum of Science and Technology collection, researching into the museological objects and providing comprehensive provenance for them. Among the official museum collection is a bust of Paul Robeson, the famed African American singer, actor, and civil rights activist, by Jacob Epstein, and a model of Ghana’s Black Star Line ship (Fig. 16). An audio recording of Sputnik 1’s radio transmission by NASA on October 4, 1957, kept beeping as the heartbeat of the three-month-long exhibition. In the previous year, sound artist Lawrence Baganiah’s montage of chirping birds and a choir of fitting shop tools had tied the Gown’s on-site and off-site exhibition spaces together. At Orderly Disorderly, the Sputnik 1 beep sound was interspersed with the Juno spacecraft recording of the roar of Jupiter’s magnetosphere, and the LIGO recording of the chirping sound of two colliding blackholes and the gravitational ripples in the space-time fabric. Occasionally, a live cock crowed from Larry Adorkor’s exhibit, announcing to visitors that there was life at stake even among the “mute” objects (Fig. 17).

Among other things, Orderly Disorderly (Figs. 16–23) honored the lifework of Iranian poet, photographer, and New Wave filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami (1940–2016) whose working process of giving amateurs key roles in his world-famous films resonated with the egalitarian principles of the blaxTARLINES Emancipatory Teaching Project from which Orderly Disorderly was birthed. Kiarostami’s vital efforts to intervene in the film form saw him subvert conventions of filmmaking in order to transform and reinvent the medium. Orderly Disorderly exhibited examples of Kiarostami’s filmic practice—such as The Bread and the Alley (1970), the near-eponymous Orderly or Disorderly (1981), and The Chorus (1982)—that resonated with the blaxTARLINES egalitarian project. The exhibition occupied all three levels and terrace of the museum and extended into the old museum with folded plate-roof design. Of the 106 artist-exhibitors, 60 were from the BFA 2017 graduating class, 18 were alumni of KNUST, and 28 were special guest artists and discussants, some of whom are lecturers. The exhibition brought together the works of KNUST art diploma and degree pioneers such as Prof. Ablade Glover (b. 1934, class of 1958) (Fig. 17), Galle Winston Kofi Dawson (b. 1940, class of 1966) (Fig. 18) and Sylvanus Kwami Amenuke (b. 1940, class of 1970), the works of graduates of the transitional generation of the 1980s such as Agyeman Ossei “Dota” (b. 1960, class of 1987) (Figs. 17, 19), teaching staff (Figs. 23–24), millennial and Gen Y graduates (Figs. 17, 20–21) and their contemporary Ibrahim Mahama (classes of 2010 and 2014), whose work was featuring concurrently at the 2017 edition of documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel. Furthermore, an archive of the KNUST art establishment and its links to canonical European, American, and African art institutions, art movements, and artist practitioners and teachers was


also exhibited, expanding the historical, geopolitical and thematic scope of the exhibition. Among the archives were handwritten and unpublished manuscripts of poems authored by Uche Okeke, the Nigerian modernist and key figure in the Zaria Art Society who was external examiner in the 1970s. There were also off-site projects around the museum and other parts of the city. The show was characterized by programs such as open-access art history and curatorial classes, technical labs on art handling, exhibition design, and art talks in a Meet the Artist series, forms of accessibility which included Braille translations of curatorial texts and live feeds on social media. The diversity of media, technologies, and life forms demanded a corresponding diversity of approaches to care. The living organisms like plants and animals (cock, snails, strawberries, and Wandering Jew flowers) were nurtured on a daily basis by cocurators and participant artists.


In order to sustain and grow the blaxTARLINES collective’s ethos of radical experimentation across cultures and generations and to develop extensive art practices in regions written off the default map of global contemporary art, the collective is actively building and scaling up hard and soft infrastructure and growing the supporting human resource in Ghana. As Okwui Enwezor began to propose later in his career,

We need not only just institutions, we need thriving and sustainable institutions. It’s not just being guests, we have to be hosts as well. We have to play a role. If we want international contemporary art, we have to host it (Enwezor and Williamson 2016).

The artist’s economic self-determination and emancipation is key on this agenda but it seems to pose the toughest of political challenges because blaxTARLINES encourages artists and curators in its network to cultivate their own systems of financial generation and mobilization as mainstay for their projects. The vision is that, hopefully, artists and curators can tactfully work their way out of the hegemonic imperatives of institutionalized “markets of philanthropy” and propose and actualize viable alternatives to the existing mechanisms of exhibition financing and funding. As a result of initiatives the blaxTARLINES network has taken in this direction, we see the emergence of infrastructural projects, art–labor coalitions, artist, curatorial, and technical collectives, network of artist outposts, art writers and artist–book publishers’ workshops, and curated exhibition projects some of which have expanded key sections of the trilogy into autonomous solo exhibition projects. As a result of initiatives the blaxTARLINES network has taken in this direction, we see the emergence of infrastructural projects, art–labor coalitions, artist, curatorial, and technical collectives, network of artist outposts, art writers and artist–book publishers’ workshops, and curated exhibition projects some of which have expanded key sections of the trilogy into autonomous solo exhibition projects.23 Graduates of the MFA Curatorial Practice program also collaborate among themselves and with others to undertake exhibition projects principally from their own resources. Key among these exhibition projects was *if you love me...* (2016), the first thesis exhibition of the MFA Curatorial Practice program and a collaborative exhibition project between the Ghana Railway Workers’ Union, “squatters” at the locomotive shed, and artists and students of KNUST. The exhibition was co-curated by Robin...
Riskin, Selorm Kudjie, and Patrick Nii Okanta Ankrah at the Kumasi and Sekondi Railway Loco Sheds and tracks. *if you love me…* featured thirty artists and collectives, including Lois Arde-Acquah, whose zero gravity *Fragments* of Styrofoam float in a derelict train car also floating in free space and hoisted on a crane which had been out of use twenty years but repaired and resurected by railway engineers for the purpose of the exhibition (Fig. 24).

Among the collectives, platforms, and residencies that have sprung up from the egalitarian community of the Kumasi School and its allies are the Exit Frame (formed in 2012); Asafo Black Collective (formed in 2017); the Ofkob Artists’ Residency annual programs initiated by Dorothy Amenuke; the perfocraZe International Artist Residency [pIAR] (2019) founded by gender-bending artist Va-Bene Elikem Fiatsi (CrazinstT ArtistT); the Soul Six, a six-member women’s group who mentor artist-girls at high school; the Anamorphic Stain, an exhibition-oriented artist-team led by Issah Alhassan; and so forth. Also, Ibrahim Mahama’s concern about the lack of infrastructure for artists in Ghana inspired him to establish the Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA Tamale), the Red Clay Studio Complex (Janakpeng-Tamale) and, more recently, the Nkrumah V oil, a repurposed Nkrumah-era grain silo structure in Tamale. FCA recently worked closely with blaxTARLINES, SCCA, and Exit Frame on a Crit Lab program that brought together twelve young Ghanaian artists, writers, and curators and international facilitators, including curator Bonaventure Soh Bejing Ndikung, Renzo Martens, and Nontobeko Ntombela.

The SCCA Tamale opened in 2019 with a follow-up to the special guest exhibition of Galle Winston Kofi Dawson at *Orderly Disorderly*. Titled *In Pursuit of Something “Beautiful,” Perhaps….*, the retrospective solo exhibition was curated by Bernard Akoi-Jackson, one of the co-curators of *Silence Between the Lines, Cornfields,* and *Orderly Disorderly*. Since then, Bernard has, among many other projects, co-curated the Curator’s Exhibition of the first edition of the Stellenbosch Triennale 2020 with Khanyisile Mbongwa. Titled *Tomorrow, there will be more of us…*, the Triennale was described by Khanyisile Mbongwa, the chief curator, as “intergenerational conversation set in an intersectional, ancestral time-zone.” The Curator’s Exhibition of the Trienniale opened at the the Woodmill Lifestyle Centre—Vredenburg Road Devon Valley, Stellenbosch, with the Ghanaian participation of Ibrahim Mahama, Tracy Thompson, and Kelvin Haizel (Fig. 25). *On the Cusp*, a cognate exhibition that featured projects by ten young African artists and collectives, was curated by Bernard Akoi-Jackson for the Triennale. This wing of the Triennale featured the Asafo Black Collective from the blaxTARLINES network.

The Red Clay Studio Complex also opened in 2020 with a follow-up to the special guest exhibition of Agyeman Ossei “Dota” at *Orderly Disorderly*. The exhibition, titled *Akutia: Blindfolding the Sun and the Poetics of Peace* (Fig. 26), was a multisited and multigenre exhibition with a vast body of works that extend to the SCCA Tamale and Nkrumah Voil premises. The exhibition was...
curated by a curatorial team headed by Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, one of the co-curators of Silence Between the Lines, Cornfields and Orderly Disorderly. The other members of the curatorial team are Adwoa Amoah (codirector of FCA) and Tracy Thompson, alumni of the Kumasi School. As the exhibition was prepared and opened in the heat of the COVID-19 pandemic, Akutia tested the resilience and adaptability of the blaxTARLINES model. Prior to Akutia, Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh was special guest curator of the first edition of Lagos Biennale (2017) and a co-curator of the 12th Bamako Photography Biennale (2019).

There have been international exchanges with institutions, artists, curators and scholars abroad. The exchange with HFBK Hamburg, for instance, birthed a residency program and art talk series in Kumasi and a collaborative exhibition in Hamburg that featured projects of students from the Kumasi School and of HFBK students led by their professor, the artist Sam Durant. The exhibition UnStand der Dinge—A State of Affairs featured fifteen artists, six of whom were from blaxTARLINES KUMASI. There were also artist talks on the blaxTARLINES network by Kwaku Boafo Kissiedu (Castro) and Bernard Ako-Jackson, the co-curator of the exhibition with Julia Gyemant of HFBK. Among the exhibiting artists were Akwasi Bediako Afrane and Tracy Thompson, both of whom had featured prominently in the blaxTARLINES trilogy of exhibitions. For the HFBK exhibition, Afrane transformed obsolete electronic gadgets, which he refers to as “amputees,” into new machine beings he describes as “TRONS” (Fig. 27). His role as artist-subject was to serve as prosthesis to these “amputee-gadgets.” For her part, Tracy Thompson exhibited samples from her recent work. To produce this body of works, she employs bioplastic technology in the mutation of ultraprocessed foods common in the domestic and diasporic Ghanaian and African foodscape such as instant fufu, instant noodles, and cream crackers. By likening her alchemical poststudio processes to Photoshop, Thompson reprocesses a selection of ultraprocessed foods by cooking them with ingredients such as glycerine, fermented lemon, wine vinegar, probiotics, etc. They are further transmuted by the contingencies of time, climatic changes, and space. The objects of her installation at HFBK are thus plastic manifestations of foods evolving beyond human guts, plate, and palate (Fig. 28).

The trilogy of large-scale and genre-defying blaxTARLINES exhibitions and its precursors have made a case for the political solidarity of different struggles about self-determination and the collective mobilization of transgenerational labor, resources, and goodwill for material, intellectual, and sociotechnical transformation. The axiom of interspecies conversations, actualized in curatorial and artistic strategies such as yeast performing life-transforming actions on objects made from dough, or ants, termites, machines, and the elements “collaborating” with humans in the generating of art experience, is a recipe for ecological sensitivity and responsibility. It has inspired the alchemical projects of Tracy Thompson, the mycorrhizal curating of Robin Riskin, the work of Samuel Kortey Baah of the Asafo Black Collective, and sundry others. The Millennials and Gen Y-ers of the blaxTARLINES Network have taken valuable insights from hands-on egalitarian pedagogy within the complex blaxTARLINES exhibition environments and the multiverses beyond. As “plagiarists” or “excavators” of emancipated futures which lie dormant in present crisis conditions as “hidden potentials,” the artists and curators are self-aware that their future-driven visions occupy “a place in time which is incommeasurable with the one they occupy in space” (Deleuze 1989: 39; Žižek 2012: 128).

The postrilogy period and the postpandemic extension could be a litmus test to the staying power and tenacity of the contemporary art scene boosted by blaxTARLINES in Ghana. The possibilities of failure have returned their gaze at every moment of our journey, just as Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and its Black Star Line project, which inspired Kwame Nkrumah and which continues to inspire blaxTARLINES, were confronted with their integral accident. As Virilio said,

To invent the sailing ship or the steamer is to invent the shipwreck. To invent the train is to invent the rail accident of derailment. To invent the family automobile is to produce the pile-up on the highway (2007: 10).
However, the failures themselves—the crisis points, the signs of hopelessness, the void, the cracks, and the sites of indiffer-
ence—also suggest in them some threads through which we can emancipate ourselves.

Practicing artists, curators and other art workers and enthusiasts continue to organize themselves by mobilizing or crowdfunding cognitive, technical, and physical labor for art-focused projects that manifest in art infrastructure, logistics, services, goods, life-
forms, and ideas, while taking charge of their economic and ma-
terial destinies. The possibilities are endless and extend to cues and tools that operate beyond the meaning-purveying postcolonial

Notes
The title is inspired by Pierre Hyughe’s famous line, “I don’t want to exhibit something to someone, but rather the reverse: to exhibit someone to something” (first quoted in Davis 2014). However, while Hyughe makes the two categories of unmelt, human and nonhuman, mutually exclusive, blaxTARLINES exhibitions dialecticize them. The phenomenological experience of the human subject is indeed decentred in both cases but in the blaxTARLINES exhibition framework it is jettisoned altogether.

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Notes
ber 2018. The workshop was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon foundation and the NRF/DSI SARChI chair program in Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa.

1 The blaxTARLINES collective is not a wholist or organism one—the kind patronized by pan-African art of New Age Gnosticism or vitalist spiritualism who advocate a return to a homeostatic balance premised on a mythical figure of nature or romantic images of “ancient wisdom.” Rather, blaxTARLINES works as a coalition of “organs without bodies” open to contingencies.

2 As Woests recounts elsewhere:
One of seidou’s assignments in the final year’s Drawing Class is to create work(s) in dialogue with a selected site, in the widest sense of the term. Apart from physical locations, students also opt for virtual, conceptual and discursive sites for their projects. They need to register the working process in a diary or notebook by means of sketches and dotting down concepts and thoughts: the questions posed in the journey of making an art work might be more im-
portant than the actual end product (2012: n.p).

3 I employ Hans Belting’s distinction between “World Art” and “Global Art” (2013). According to Belting, “World art” is an old idea complementary to modern-

4 Art Kwami, then a member of the KNUST faculty,

5 The kindred spirits are Artist Kwami, a KNUST

6 Caterina Niklaus’s MFA project, More Eyewor-

cross the turn of the century and how this impacted on the

current configuration of the Ghanaian art world. The SaNsA

7 Silence Between the Lines was curated by kąrî’kạchä seid’ou (artistic director and head of the curatorial team) with co-curators Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Kwasi Obene- Ayeh, and Robin Rukm (then MFA student in curating).

8 kąrî’kạchä seid’ou (founding curator) along with Salah Mâlikî’s (2016) idea of a speculative time com-
plex—“time which arrives from the future”—the tempo-

eriality through which Malik speculates about a possible exit from the contemporary into the postcontemporary.

9 Silence Between the Lines was organized in collabora-
tion with Na’NmAs, founded by Fye. Contemporary

10 Ibrahim Mahama completed his BFA in 2010 and MFA in 2014 in Kumasi. He is currently pursuing a phd in curatorial practice at the University of Amsterdam.

11 The curatorial team of the blaxTARLINES trilogy was made up of a team of three artistic directors who were teaching at the time in Na’NmAs (lead of curatorial team), Kwabu Boatto Kissioud (Castro), and George Ampratwum—supporting co-curators who were graduate students—Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Kwasi Obene-Ayeh, and Togbe Tetteh-Kuoo, Selorn Kadju, Patrick Nii Okannah Ankrak, Frank Gyabeng, and Keziru Owusu-Ankonam.

12 In Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psycha-
nalyse, Jacques Lacan writes: “Le tableau, certe,

13 The present Artists’ Alliance Gallery, privately

14 art Kwami, then a member of the KNUST faculty,

15 Caterina Niklaus’s MFA project, More Eyewor-

cross the turn of the century and how this impacted on the

current configuration of the Ghanaian art world. The SaNsA

16 Some subsequent all-over immersive projects are


18 Leves work was presented at L’art de l’art in

19 The gesture of setting the Museum of Science and

technology collection in conversation with the art works on
display was repeated in Ordinarily Disorderly.

20 Other editions of the bust could be found in the

21 Ghana’s Black Star Line, a state shipping corpora-
tion, was established in 1957 to coincide with the year of Ghana’s independence and went defunct in the late

22 Some subsequent all-over immersive projects are

23 Some subsequent all-over immersive projects are

24 Leves work was presented at L’art de l’art in

25 Some subsequent all-over immersive projects are

26 Some subsequent all-over immersive projects are

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29 Some subsequent all-over immersive projects are

30 Some subsequent all-over immersive projects are

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