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Otobong Nkanga. *Steady Blows*. 2021

Otobong Nkanga

Togethering

Featuring :
Oroma Elewa, Bill Kouélany, Obi Okigbo & Adéṣlá Ọlágúnjú

January 9 - February 12 2022

OPENING : January 9 2022, 2pm - 6pm

Visual artist and performer, Otobong Nkanga (b. 1974, Kano, Nigeria) first studied art at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ifé, Nigeria, and later at the Ecole Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. She was resident at the Rijksasademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam, before obtaining a master's degree in Performing Arts at Dasarts, Amsterdam in 2008. Today she lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium.

Otobong Nkanga's drawings, installations, photographs, performances and sculptures question the notion of territory and the value given to natural resources in different ways.

Her work presents the viewer with images that reveal a strong evocative power. A wide variety of material and media give shape to works inspired by the Earth, its over-exploited resources and the narratives that flow out from it. Her art is located at the intersection of temporal and civilizational constructions and thus expands beyond our horizons towards both different climates and different economies.

Despite a refined aesthetic that may appear free of tension at first glance, Otobong Nkanga's works demonstrate a strong evocative power with depictions of unstructured bodies whose disjointed limbs are linked together by ropes, roots or branches. Far more than a visual collage, these links create a genuine network of forms that repeatedly reverberate throughout a wide variety of media: drawings, installations, paintings, textiles, photographs, sculptures, performances and even poetry. Everything appears evolving and connected, in total interdependence, like associative chains that the artist constructs little by little.

For her second exhibition at the Galerie In Situ, the artist presents several recent works and also some older pieces that create a link, as always, with her previous projects, such as the two sculptures “Post I” and “Post II” (2019). With a height corresponding to the artist’s height, these sculptures form a sort of metal carousel that employs twenty-four plates on which landscape images from all over the world are printed—locations marked by trauma and littered with debris.

The wood panel painting «Borrowed Light - ...» (2019) shows three arms connected to each other by cables while being linked to a hollowed-out polygon, creating a mechanical and stylized aesthetic highly representative of the artist’s graphic work.

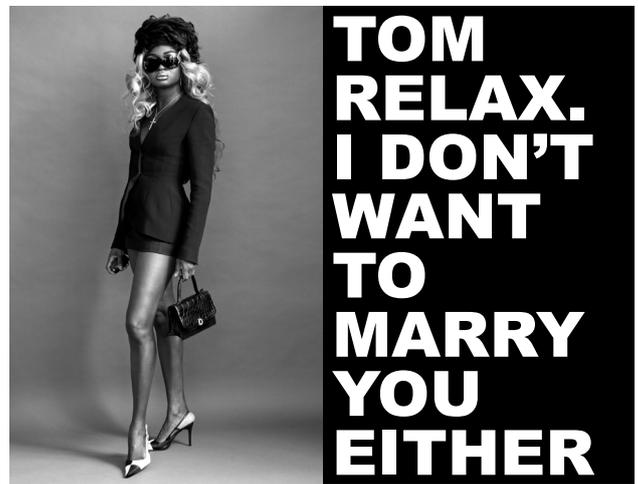
Several tapestries created for the exhibition reinterpret abstract fragments of previous tapestry works in order to give them a new life. The artist sometimes introduces plants and oxidized metals into these tapestries, resonating with the color palettes of the threads that were used to weave the textiles. Initially, these palettes were also present in several of Otobong Nkanga’s drawings, emphasizing a relationship to raw materials that lies at the origin of her creations.

An installation made up by a hand-woven carpet, to which Murano glass objects containing plant materials are connected by long ropes, invites the visitor to lie down and restore his or her energy.

A selection of drawings will finally complete the exhibition.

In parallel to her solo presentation, Otobong Nkanga also wished to invite four African artists to participate in “Togethering,” thereby aiming to incite exchange, emotions, organic relationships and connections.

Oroma Elewa



Oroma Elewa

Tom Relax, 2021
Area Babes and Ashawo Superstars

At the very core of my work, I am reflecting upon my personal experiences both past and present; exploring questions that form as a result.

I am expanding upon ideas that hold social, cultural, political and racial import to me.

I am especially interested in a subset of matters concerning contemporary womanhood and facets of my black identity including: the transnational African cosmopolitan experience, the feminine dynamic and my possession of a 'black body'.

There is need to navigate questions that arise around the representation of this body: What is this body? What can it do? How should it think? Why does it think this way? What spaces can this body occupy? What spaces will allow this occupation? What ways can it negotiate the issues that affect it? How will navigate restrictions, etc.

My interest within it all is to create work within the framework of my own experiences and curiosities.

Area Babes and Ashawo Superstars, (2019 - Ongoing)

Area Babes and Ashawo Superstars is a performance project that explores contemporary womanhood through cultural commentary. It is presented through the lens of original and reimagined photographs from the golden age of Nollywood and unfolds through a series of characters - an intergenerational group of African Diasporic women who are navigating and negotiating life, ideologies, sex, class and power in the 21st century.

Area Babes and Ashawo Superstars bring a dimension to the cultural and feminist discourse often considered taboo, in particular the economic agency and liberatory politics of sex; transactional and otherwise. It is a feminism that exists outside its normative contours; a feminism which derives its essence and meaning right within the realities of contemporary African diasporic women. In essence, Area Babes and Ashawo Superstars is a discourse on the here and now of socio-cultural experiences of transnational and diasporic African women.

Bill Kouélany



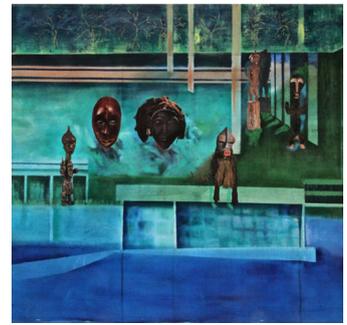
Bill Kouélany

Souffle, 2021

Gravure à main sur 430 briques

Bill Kouélany has participated in numerous fairs and exhibitions, and in 2002, 2004, and 2006, her work received great attention at the Dakar Biennale. In 2006, she received the Francophonie Prize (France), the Montalvo Arts Center Prize (USA) and an invitation to take part in one of the largest exhibitions in the world: the Kassel Documenta (Germany). In 2012, Bill took on the role of curator for the first time at the Bamako Photography Biennale, showing the work of her friend, the Cameroonian artist Goddy Leye. It is with this experience that she created LES ATELIERS SAHM in 2012, in Brazzaville. LES ATELIERS SAHM is a contemporary art center that provides multifaceted support to young artists and writers from throughout the continent. Simultaneously Bill Kouélany pursued her personal career. Bill Kouélany creates like one examines oneself, with a scalpel, casting a sly and ironic gaze on herself while integrating the notion of impossibility in her work. Orchestrating chaotic material, her work refers to an intimate exploration, questioning both the relationship to oneself and to the other. Her canvases are punctured, torn and patched: they are a place of tearing and function like skins. Her installations are monumental and are made of hand-carved bricks or a mixture of cement and papier-mâché. Bill Kouélany is also a writer, with *Kipiala* or *the Fury of Being Oneself* published by Les Avrils in 2021. The text is an epic self-portrait, a journey through the contemporary Congo and an exhortation not to suffer.

Obi Okigbo



Obi Okigbo
The Shrine, 2015

Obiageli Okigbo is a Brussels-based British/Nigerian artist. Her training as an architect at the Oxford Brooks University and the Architecture Association (UK) left a strong imprint on her work, expanding her reach through new media and different supports, ranging from “Indian ink on linen” to oil paint and collage. In 2005, she launched the Christopher Okigbo Foundation tasked with researching and preserving the legacy of her father Christopher Okigbo, poet who departed on the field of the Biafra war in 1967. The connection with her father’s poetic legacy accentuates the multi-disciplinary approach that Okigbo inscribes in her work, in which we recognise the influence of the Dutch Masters as much as appropriations of Igbo mythology. Having launched her career with a solo show in Lagos in 2003, she continues to nurture her ties to her country of origin through engaging in projects, shows and Contemporary Art fairs such as ARTX 2016 (first art fair in West Africa). In 2015 she joined the collective of Nigerian artists in the Diaspora NASUK, which organises annual group exhibitions including the seminal commemorative exhibition “Legacies Of Biafra” at SOAS London 2017/8. She has participated in exhibitions in Belgium, UK and Dubai, in conferences including DOCUMENTA 14 (2017) and “Spoken Word” performances most recently at the National Theatre (2020), London. Alongside her painting practice, she has recently started to experiment with photography, video and installation pieces.

ARTIST’S STATEMENT

“I tell ancestral stories told and re-told”

“I’m increasingly drawn to the art and architecture inspired by our belief systems; silent witnesses of humanity’s aspirations .

My horizons widened as I became acquainted with Mbari art and Igbo-Ukwu sculpture from Owerri, the poetry of Hafez & Rumi (13th century), the writings of Joseph Campbell, Coptic art, ancient Khemet philosophy, Gilgamesh, the Mahabharata & Yoruba art, leaving indelible imprints on my world of imagination. Using canvas as my fabric, I set about tentatively weaving these themes of transcendence and metamorphosis - looking for constants- mapping our collective consciousness through the re-interpretation of existing iconic works of art. This process of juxtaposing archetypes from different cultures and epochs with my personal experiences, overlapping of existences, creates a ‘timeless’ dimension where past present and future coexist on the same plane. The paintings, like archaeological maps, reveal through their layers the passage of time, movement, traces, imprints...”

“My work is always self-examining. This inward gaze is often manifested in the form of the female figure. Indeed the underlying theme of my work is autobiographic, anchored in my multiple identity. Figurative and abstract, the female form with Goddess prowess; nurturer, mother, lover, spiritual provider, evoking a mood that transpires into places in time where chapters are crossed.”

“My approach to painting is that of an apprentice, I turn to the Masters for everything I know about the craft; technique, composition, light, shadow... I’m continually inspired by Renaissance art & early Flemish Primitives (15th century), Indian-ink paintings by “Ohwon” Jang Seung-Ub (17th century) & Shitao (16th century) and modern artists: Paul Klee, Cy Twombly, Mark Rothko, Paul Gauguin, Frida Kahlo, Andrei Tarkovski and Joseph Beuys.”

Adéḡlá ḡlágúnjú



Adéḡlá ḡlágúnjú, *ÌYÁBỌ*, 2021
© Adeḡla ḡlágúnjú. Photo D.R.

Adéḡlá ḡlágúnjú is an artist working with photography, video, sound and installations.

Much of her artistic work has involved considerations of the Self, memory, spirituality, healing and the social landscape. She developed a deep interest in the Self as a space for investigation. The Self as being both, in body, in mind and in memory. In body, because the flesh is what conveys the human spirit, and as such she chooses this as a vehicle worthy of interrogation. In memory, because this is how we process and reflect on our personal inner narratives. As a result of these mutually entwined halves, her interests extend to the environment as it is ultimately the interactive medium through which the body and the memory subsist.

ḡlágúnjú's recent research and artistic works focuses on the Abject as Object. She explores the corporeality and materiality of waste (human and non-human) and discard through abjection by examining ways in which objects are capable of producing social effects not just in their preservation and persistence, but in their destruction and disposal.

Her works have been shown in festivals, museums and galleries in many countries. she has been recipient of prizes and awards; notably NRW.BANK Kunstpreis 2021, Seydou Keita Grand Prize for the Best photographic creation at Bamako International Biennial for Photography in 2019, Young Art support Amsterdam Award in 2013 and the Lagos Photo Festival Award in 2012. lágúnjú is a finalist of the Rolex Mentor & Protégé Arts Initiative in 2019 and the selected mentee of the photography category at the 5th Edition of Forecast Platform (2020-2021).

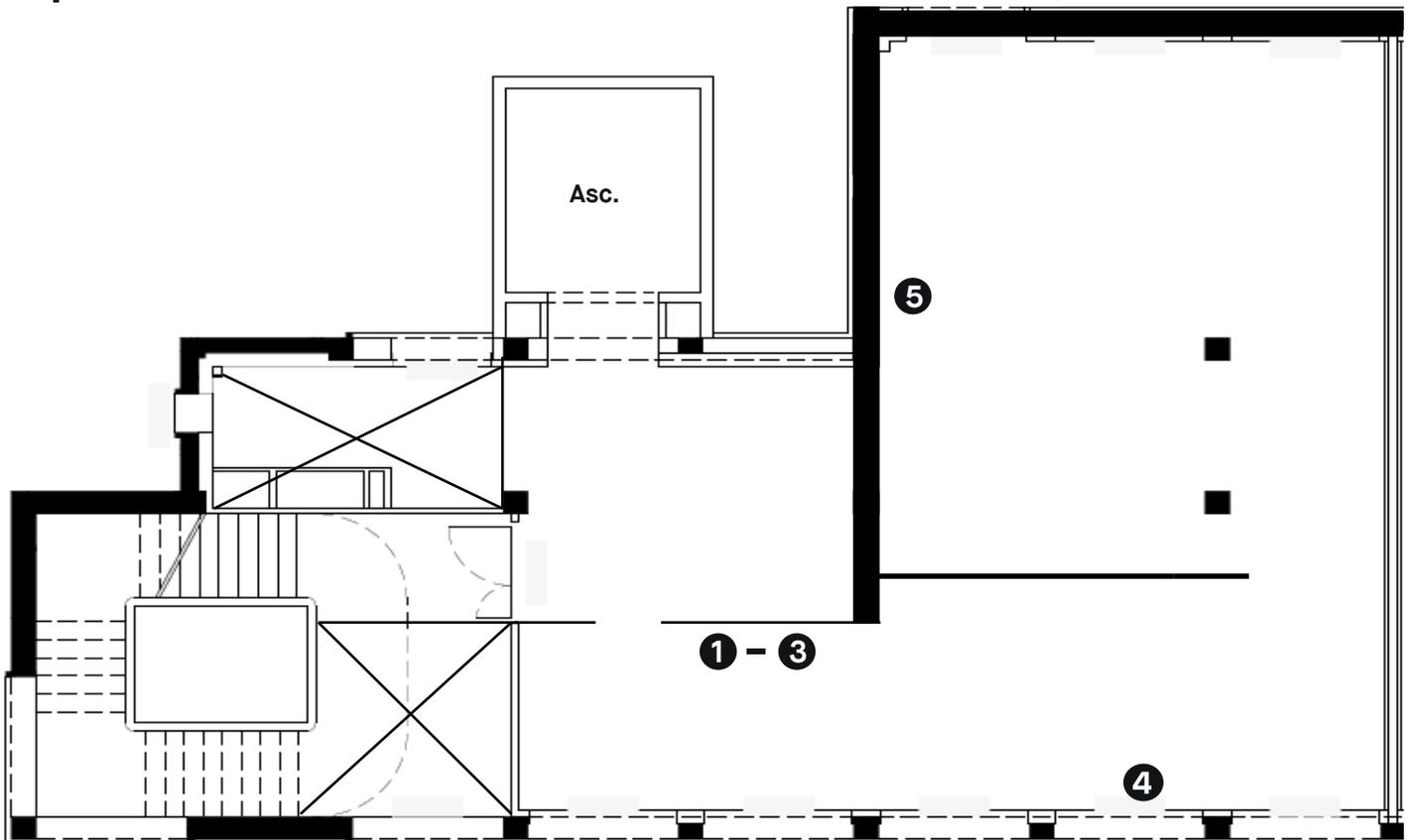
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① Adéḡlá Ḷágúnjú, *Paths & Patterns*, 2014

② Adéḡlá Ḷágúnjú, *Paths & Patterns*, 2014

③ Adéḡlá Ḷágúnjú, *Paths & Patterns*, 2014

④ Bill Kouélany

⑤ Adéḡlá Ḷágúnjú, *ÌYÁBỌ*, 2021

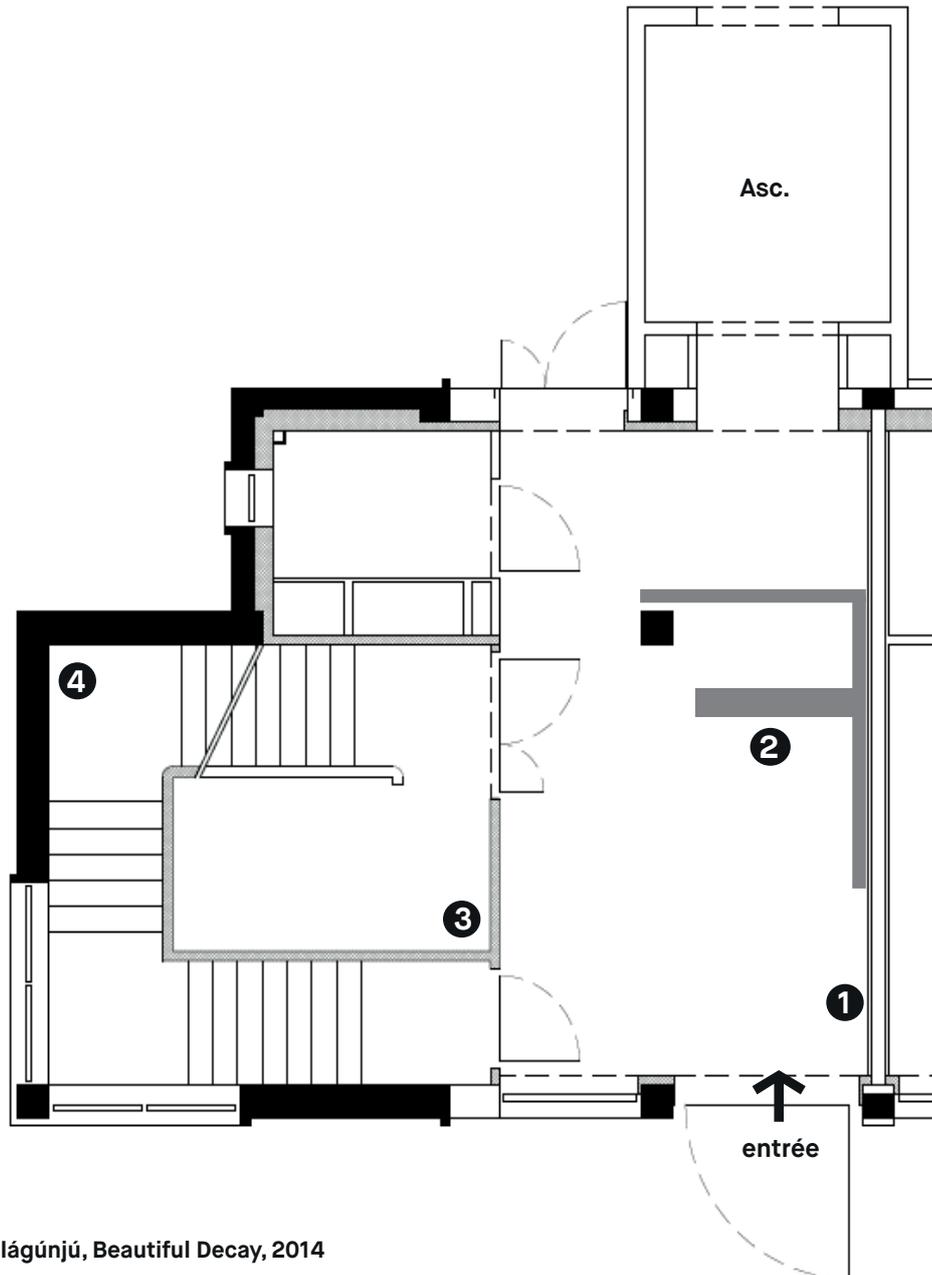
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① Adéola Ọlágúnjú, *Beautiful Decay*, 2014

② Oroma Elewa, *Tom. The Money, Area Babes and Ashawo Superstars*, 2021

③ Adéola Ọlágúnjú, *Beautiful Decay*, 2014

④ Obi Okigbo, *Geometry of Life Series I*, 2021

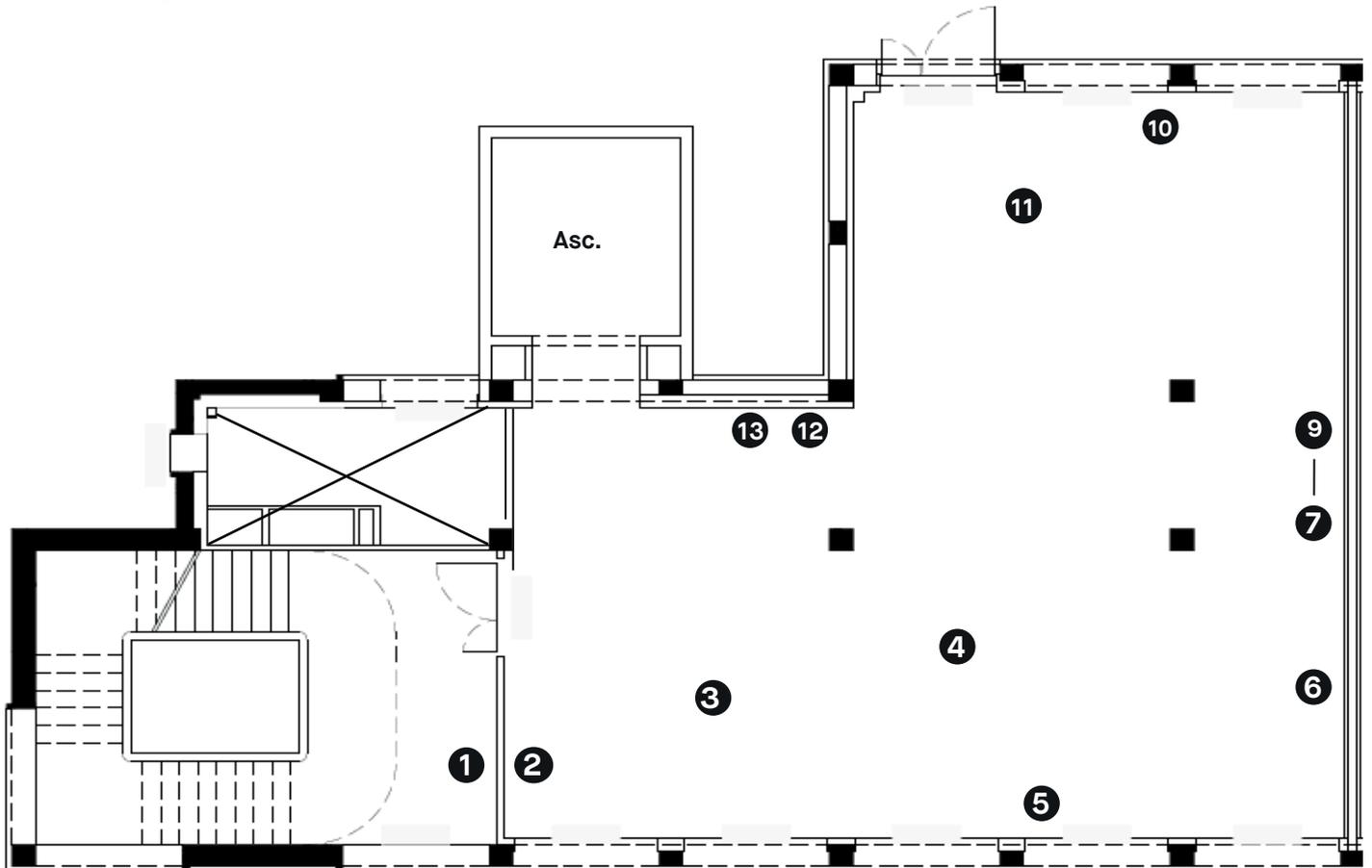
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1er étage



- 1 Adéṣlá Ọ́lágúnjú, *Beautiful Decay*, 2014
- 2 Otobong Nkanga, *Kolanut Tales - Dismembered*, 2016
- 3 Otobong Nkanga, *Post II*, 2019
- 4 Otobong Nkanga, *Shaped by Morning Dew*, 2021
- 5 Otobong Nkanga, *Steady Blows*, 2021
- 6 Otobong Nkanga, *Quiet Force*, 2021
- 7 Otobong Nkanga, *The Collection : Muscovitologicalymica I*, 2013 - 2014
- 8 Otobong Nkanga, *The Collection : Muscovitologicalymica II*, 2013 - 2014
- 9 Otobong Nkanga, *The Collection : Biotitologicalymica I*, 2013 - 2014
- 10 Otobong Nkanga, *Borrowed Light - Appeasement*, 2019
- 11 Otobong Nkanga, *Post I*, 2019
- 12 Otobong Nkanga, *Beyond Skin I*, 2021
- 13 Otobong Nkanga, *Beyond Skin II*, 2021

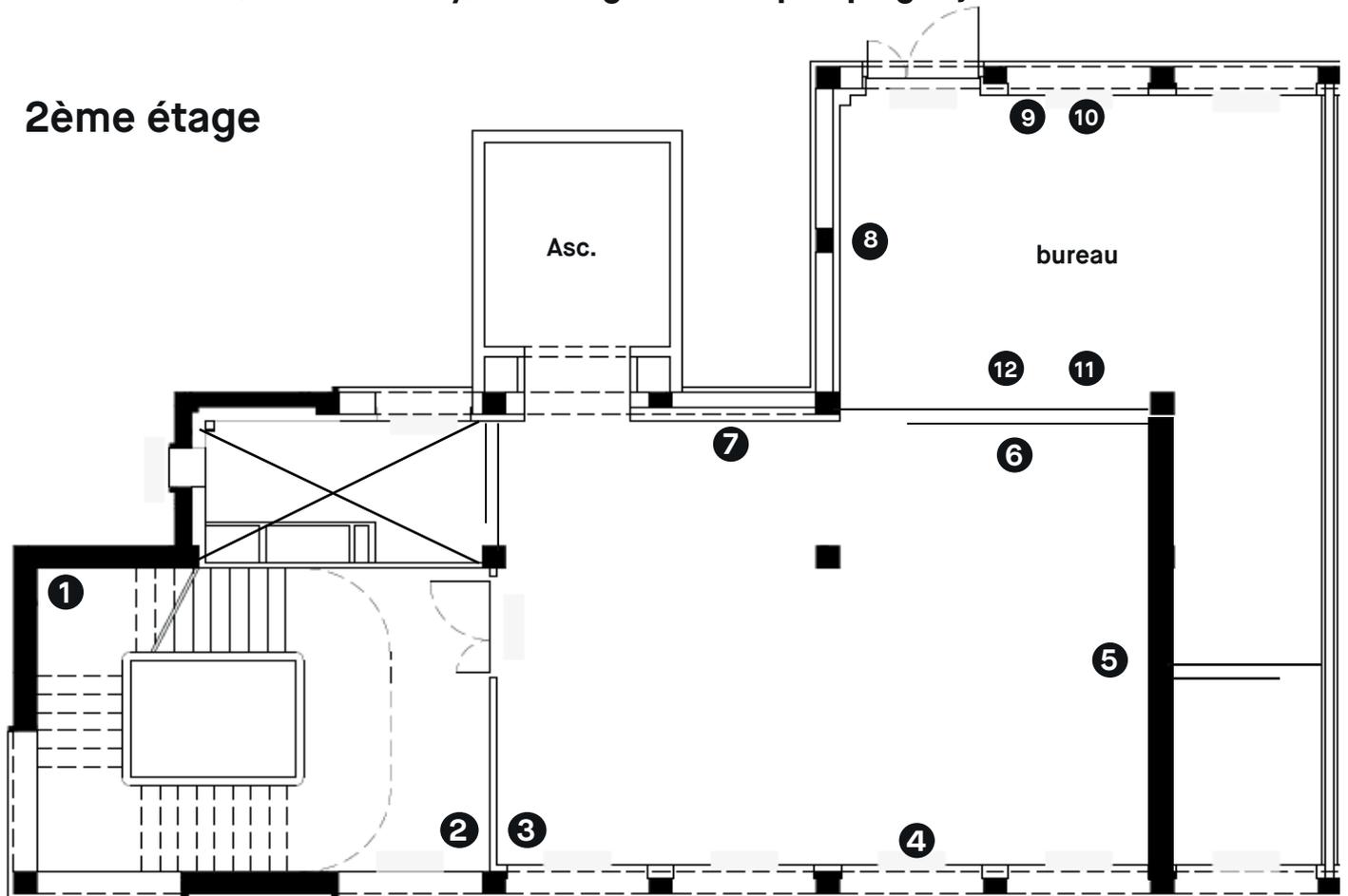
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2ème étage



- ① Obi Okigbo, Geometry of Life Series II, 2021
- ② Bill Kouélany
- ③ Adéṣolá Ọlágúnjú, Transmutations, 2018 - 2019
- ④ Obi Okigbo, Yellow Melodies, 2014
- ⑤ Oroma Elewa, Babe Listen. Area Babes and Ashawo Superstars, 2021
- ⑥ Oroma Elewa, Tom Relax. Area Babes and Ashawo Superstars, 2021
- ⑦ Obi Okigbo, Moonglow
- ⑧ Obi Okigbo, Landscapes of my Childhood remembered, 2015
- ⑨ Adéṣolá Ọlágúnjú, Paths & Patters, 2014
- ⑩ Adéṣolá Ọlágúnjú, Beautiful Decay, 2014
- ⑪ Bill Kouélany
- ⑫ Bill Kouélany