



Otobong Nkanga

The Encounter That Took a Part of Me

15 October 2016 – 15 January 2017

Gallery 1

Taste of a Stone. Ikọ

Taste of a Stone is a work that has been evolving for six years, having been first presented at Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen in 2010. Nkanga originally endeavoured to examine the different uses we have found for stones throughout history – for architecture, for marking borders and boundaries, for building tools and weapons. The artist was also interested in how stones can seemingly communicate with humans through the senses, and the spiritual meaning we sometimes give to stones.

For Nottingham Contemporary, Nkanga has developed this installation as a space for encounters. The natural world enters into a dialogue with local performers and with visitors. Nkanga has invited musicians, dancers, poets and performers from around the city to respond to the idea of “taste of a stone”. Over the course of the exhibition, they will regularly interact with the installation.

As presented here, Taste of a Stone includes boulders of sand-coloured limestone from Clipsham Quarry in Grantham and red St Bee’s sandstone from Cumbria. Images printed on limestone slabs present details of surfaces that have been transformed by insects, plants or humans. Cavities and cracks appear as metaphors for the transformation that an encounter provokes.

Taste of a Stone also contains a range of vegetation. There is a freestanding tapestry depicting a botanical drawing, as well as air plants and ivy creeping between the pebbles and boulders. Native to the Americas, air plants don’t need soil to grow; they get nutrients from water and air through their leaves, rather than via their roots. Nkanga is interested in these types of plants as a metaphor for displacement: when setting up roots is impossible; adaptability is critical for survival.

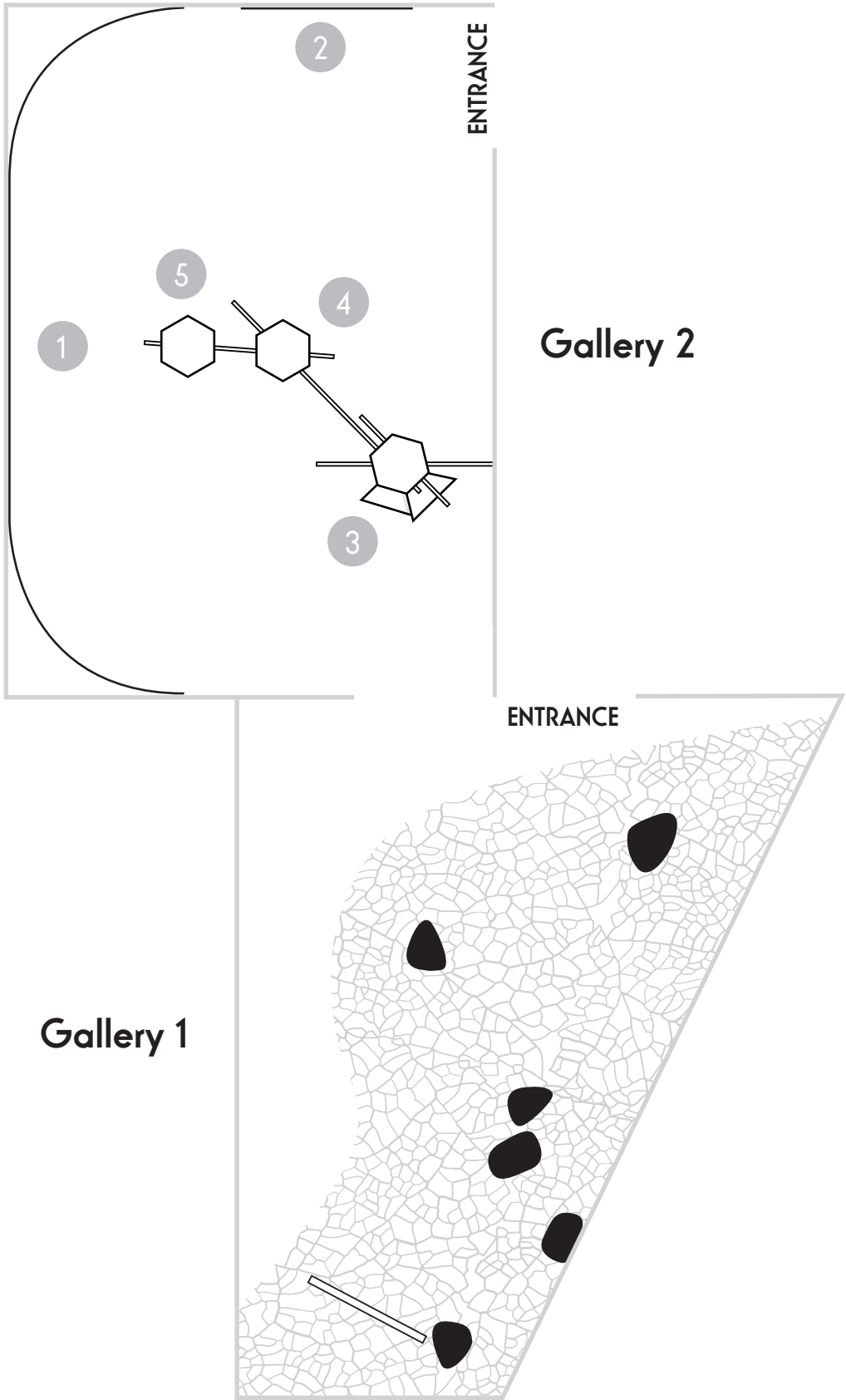
Gallery 2

The Encounter That Took a Part of Me

In this work, Nkanga is interested in the possibilities of contamination, decay, and states of mutation or transition. She uses different materials – such as clay, steel, textiles and paint – to reflect on the relationships between different entities. The installation’s diverse elements are each undergoing a slow transformation, whether due to their encounter with water, air and other invisible particles.

The installation includes a large wall drawing, a woven diptych and three display structures. Titled Steel to Rust – Meltdown, the tapestry is woven from twisted yarn, polyester, wool and a kind of reflective thread used for high-visibility apparel. It reproduces an image of a piece of the ground, reminiscent of satellite images of Earth. In the display cabinets we find three sets of objects made out of clay, steel scraps and slabs. Nkanga presents these materials in a deconstructed form, looking at ideas of contamination, transformation and displacement.

The work expands on the artist’s interest in museum displays. It also delves into the idea of rusting and decay as metaphors for corruption, ideological shifts and power imbalances. The Encounter That Took a Part of Me has been specially created for Nottingham Contemporary.



Gallery 2

The Encounter That Took a Part of Me

- 1 The Encounter That Took a Part of Me
2016
Acrylic on wood panels
- 2 Steel to Rust – Meltdown
2016
Woven textile
- 3 Steel to Rust
2016
Display cabinet, digital print on cotton, stainless steel rod, felt, steel plates
- 4 Rust to Debris
2016
Display cabinet, digital print on cotton, felt, stainless steel rods, dye, steel scraps, water
- 5 Debris to Dust
2016
Display cabinet, digital print on cotton, felt, stainless steel rods, clay, iron oxide

Gallery 1

Taste of a Stone. Ikọ

2016
Woven textile, Polar White pebbles, sand-coloured limestone, red St Bee’s sandstone, Reindeer moss, Ficus pumilla ‘Variegata’, Muehlenbeckia complexa, Tillandsia Aeranthis, Tillandsia Usneoides, Tillandsia Straminea, Tillandsia Flexuosa, inkjet print on limestone

The Encounter That Took a Part of Me has been curated by Irene Aristizábal, assisted by Nicola Guy.
The exhibition is co-produced by Nottingham Contemporary and Kunsthall Aarhus, Denmark.

Cover image: Otobong Nkanga, Harvesting Rust, 2016. Courtesy of the artist.