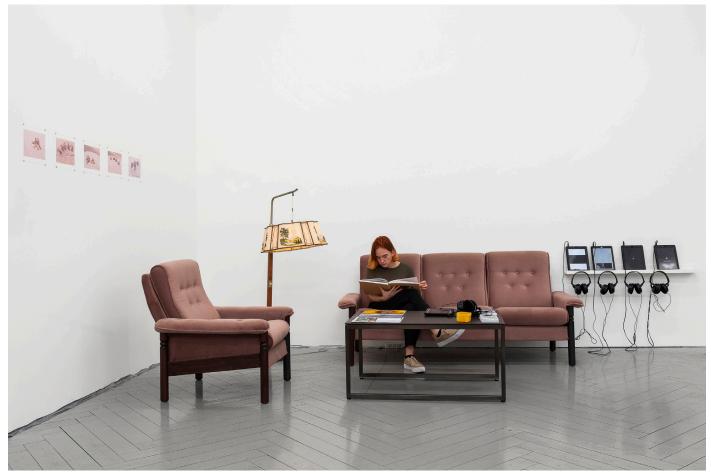# Operndorf Afrika

LAAFI BALA

June 29 - July 28, 2017

Exhibition view, Laafi Bala, 2017

The *Operndorf Afrika* is an international art project that was founded in 2009 in Burkina Faso / West Africa that is based on the ideas of German artist Christoph Schlingensief (1960-2010). Schlingensief's goal with the project was to create an international meeting place, in which people from different backgrounds could work together artistically, and exchange ideas about art. The exchange is part of the everyday reality of a newly emerging village, about 30 km from Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. To this day, 23 buildings have been erected on the site provided by the Burkinian government, including a primary school, a hospital, and residential buildings. All building projects, cultural projects and their financing are coordinated by the *Festspielhaus Afrika gemeinnützige GmbH* founded in 2009 by Schlingensief, based in Berlin. In 2015, the first international Artist-in-Residence program in West Africa was held in Operndorf Afrika. Different artists of varying mediums are invited and encouraged to use the space for several weeks as both a living and working space. Operndorf Afrika is understood as a platform where different forms of dialogues and encounters can arise from the dualistic transfer system and be reconciled in it's inconsistency. Art is to be understood as the direct language of the debate and help to arrive at differentiation, to reconsider the

western evaluation system and the concepts of art and culture, and to question the common, often exotic images and cultural codes from and about Africa's dynamic. The surroundings of Operndorf, the culture, the people and their understanding of art are the starting point for such an argument. In turn, this process should be observed and documented in order to, in the sense of Christoph Schlingensief's, learn from Africa.

Exhibition view, Laafi Bala, 2017

The four-week long exhibition can be considered as a window into the reality of life in Operndorf Afrika and simultaneously also a window out of Burkina Faso, that facilitates contemporary perspectives of African and international art.

In an installation consisting of 16 stacked monitors, different perspectives are made possible in the opera village and its inhabitants. The project team members show us their everyday reality and describe their visions for the village.

Tobias Dostal, who was the first artist to participate in the Artist-in-Residence program in Operndorf Afrika in 2015, is showing a cinematographic work produced at the Operndorf Afrika. During his two-month stay at the end of 2015 parallel to the political elections in Burkina Faso, the result of political unrest in the previous year, he worked with the local population, especially with children and young people with magic and animation techniques. One of the films produced there, shot on a 16mm Bolex camera in b/w, can be seen in this exhibition. In April of this year, he was awarded the *6th Horst-Janssen-Graphic Prize* of the *Claus-Hüppe-Foundation* for his works, which were produced in Operndorf Afrika.

Exhibition view, Laafi Bala, 2017

The photographs of 16-year-old Rouamba Maxime Wendyam, from Tamissi, a neighbor-ing village of Operndorf Afrika show everyday situations from the life of the young people of the region. Maxime Wendyam, in his pictures, describes the characteristics and desires of his generation as they grow up in a new Burkina Faso that is at the beginning of a still young democracy.

In the form of four events, which are essential to the concept of the exhibition, Operndorf Afrika exchanges ideas with artists and forms a platform for conversations:

June 29, 5 pm: Opening of Exhibition and Talk with Aino Laberenz
July 5, 7 pm: Rap Performance by KEYTI
July 13, 7 pm: Artist Talk with Tobias Dostal and Cosima Jentzsch
July 20, 7 pm: Film Screening 'Une Revolution Africaine' followed by a discussion with
                    Alex Moussa Sawadogo (cultural program director of Operndorf Afrika)

The program is kindly supported by:

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