

PRESS RELEASE 12.01.2023

Otobong Nkanga
Of Grounds, Guts and Stones, 2022-2023



Otobong Nkanga, *Of Grounds, Guts and Stones, 2022-2023*. Courtesy the artist and Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino

Tuesday 24 January 2023, 11 am
Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, Pollenzo (Bra)
Lawn in front of the Pollenzo Castle



Otobong Nkanga, Digital rendering for *Of Grounds, Guts and Stones* – Pollenzo, 2022-2023, at Pollenzo Castle, Bra. Stone base drawn by Linda Schuster. Composed and drawn by Otobong Nkanga

For its fourth and final installation, *A CIELO APERTO*, a public art project commissioned by Fondazione CRC in collaboration with Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, concludes with the presentation of the new outdoor sculpture *Of Grounds, Guts and Stones*, 2022-2023, by Otobong Nkanga. Curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Director of Castello di Rivoli, it is created with the scientific collaboration of University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo and Slow Food.

Nkanga's artwork will be installed a few kilometers from the center of Bra, on the lawn in front of the historic Savoy castle, the Agenzia di Pollenzo, home of the University of Gastronomic Sciences, with its Slow Food restaurant and hotel and pioneering Wine Bank. The work will be inaugurated on Tuesday 24 January 2023 at 11 am.

In line with the Slow Food philosophy and the theme of regeneration of Terra Madre Salone del Gusto in Turin, Otobong Nkanga has developed a new public art project for the city of Bra.

Paying great attention to the Piedmont region, Nkanga has created *Of Grounds, Guts and Stones*, a sculptural work formed by a sequence of large benches in carved marble linked by metal pipes. The marble benches house planters filled with local and seasonal aromatic plants. These include species such as *Viburnum tinus*, *Juniperus communis*, *Lavanda nana hidcote*, *Helleborus*

niger – *Helleborus x hybridus* 'Pink', *Punica granatum* 'Nana', *Cornus alba elegantissima* (red) – *Cornus stolonifera flaviramea* (yellow), *Erica darleyensis*, *Helichrysum*, *Cineraria maritima*, *Hypericum* (erect) and *Iberis sempervirens*, recommended by Alberto Arossa of Slow Food Italy and coming from a local nursery, the VIVAI VERBENE di Ferrero & Demagistris in Bene Vagienna (Cuneo). The selected plants are well suited to the local climate, characterized by very cold winters and very hot summers.

Instead of proposing a traditional sculpture for a square to be experienced passively by the public, the artist sought to create a place where the local community and students can gather, and where native plants and minerals are harmonized in poetic relationships.

Nkanga's artistic research addresses urgent issues related to our environment, climate, exploitation of resources and sustainability. In her work, she lays out the inherent complexities of our resources like soil and earth and their potential value in food production and our well-being. Nkanga emphasises on how various ecosystems are part of our economies and local territories and traditions.

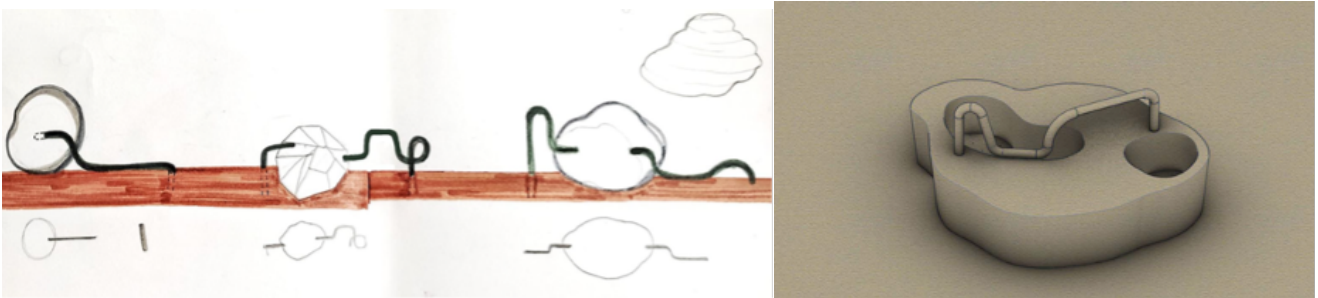
For the artist, instead of dwelling on what separates or divides, it is better to seek and insist on what, as human beings, unites us to each other and binds us to the planet that hosts us.

Offering a place dedicated to meeting and resting, Nkanga's work at Pollenzo promotes the value of horticulture as a regeneration practice in which the mixing of native plants becomes a metaphor for happy cohabitation between living beings - both human and vegetable - under the banner of a more equitable and sustainable world. Located in the meadow of the Pollenzo castle, Nkanga's project enhances the rich history of the 19th-century Savoy royal farm, a model farm and place originally aimed at experimentation in the field of wine-growing.

The President of Fondazione CRC, **Ezio Raviola**, states "With the inauguration of the fourth and final stage of the *A CIELO APERTO* project, which the Foundation has promoted to celebrate 30 years of activity, a unique cultural initiative concludes, which has left a tangible and highly valuable mark on the region, thanks to the installation of the works of four significant international artists. We are pleased that this last stage is an opportunity to consolidate the collaborative relationships with Slow Food and with the University of Gastronomic Sciences and to enhance with this work an area characterized by a strong community identity. A special thanks goes to the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea for the scholarly curatorship and the collaboration on this important project."

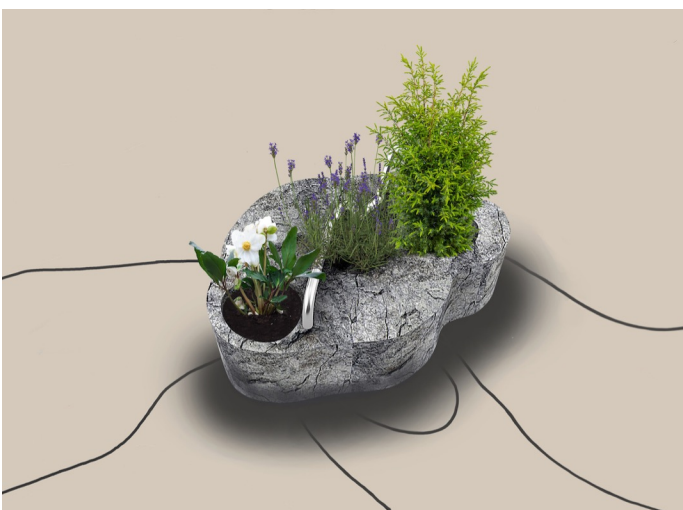
From September 25, 2021 to July 3, 2022, Nkanga presented her solo exhibition *Otobong Nkanga. Of Cords Curling around Mountains* at Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea. The Director of Castello di Rivoli, **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, states, "After two and a half years of pandemic, it's time to go out into the open air. A project like this, strongly supported by Fondazione CRC, reminds us how art has healing and beneficial effects on the public and also calls us to our responsibility towards the environment, so rich in aesthetic stimuli and so open to welcoming the works of art."

"The enormous challenges that characterize our times," states **Edward Mukiibi**, the incoming President of Slow Food, "affect every single person on the planet, human and non-human alike, and call for everyone to collaborate in regeneration. Contemporary art is also called upon to do its part, making available the extraordinary ability of artists to read the times we live in, imagine the future and transform thoughts and visions into expressive forms of great impact. The regeneration that the Slow Food movement is referring to is echoed in the work of contemporary artists, as artists such as Otobong Nkanga today walk alongside the communities of Terra Madre."



Left: **Otobong Nkanga**, First sketch for *Of Grounds, Guts and Stones*, 2022-2023. Courtesy the artist and Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino.

Right: **Otobong Nkanga**, Project for *Of Grounds, Guts and Stones*, 2022-2023. Courtesy the artist and Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino.



Otobong Nkanga, *Study for Of Grounds, Gusts and Stones*, 2022-2023. Digital drawing. Stone base drawn by Linda Schuster. Composed and drawn by Otobong Nkanga

The overall *A CIELO APERTO (Open Air)* project presents **four new permanent, public artworks** which are installed in four locations: the Piemontese towns of Bra, Mondovì, Cuneo and Alba – the area of Cuneo where Fondazione CRC operates, characterized by vineyard landscapes and historic hill towns. This project is part of the program *La generazione delle idee* (The Generation of Ideas) by Fondazione CRC to celebrate its 30th anniversary, and it is designed to be enjoyed by the community and celebrate a spirit of renewed freedom in the open air, in contrast with the limitations that have characterized the last few years of cultural activities.

This final installation of the project follows the inaugurations of the artworks *The presence of absence pavilion*, 2022, by **Olafur Eliasson** at Castello di Grinzane Cavour (formerly the home of the 19th-century statesman Camillo Cavour, who led the reunification of Italy), *Il Terzo Paradiso dei Talenti*, 2022, by **Michelangelo Pistoletto** in Cuneo, and *A Song A Part*, 2022, by **Susan Philipsz** in Mondovì, which have followed one another in recent months.

The initiative aims to establish a new balance between local communities, history, international artistic culture and nature, with particular attention to the themes of ecology which today are expressed in an effort to slow down climate change, to seek a quality and sustainability in food production, as well as in the cultural memory that constitutes the identity of these places and distinctive landscapes, protected with UNESCO heritage status. This region, famous for its white truffles and Barolo wine, is also the birthplace of the Slow Food Movement and home to the Slow Food University in Pollenzo, just outside Bra, which partners with one of the art works of 'A CIELO APERTO'. The combination of art and land of the *A CIELO APERTO* project connects the exceptional local gastronomic and enological culture and ecosystems to the experimental culture of contemporary art.

The project, which involves four internationally renowned artists, creates a dialogue between different cultures and generations. The works of Olafur Eliasson (Copenhagen, 1967), Michelangelo Pistoletto (Biella, 1933), Susan Philipsz (Glasgow, 1965), and Otobong Nkanga (Kano, 1974) have been acquired by Fondazione CRC and are presented respectively at Castello di Grinzane Cavour (Alba), Cuneo, Mondovì, and Pollenzo (Bra).

Fondazione CRC thanks Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea for curating and installing the project, as well as its Education Department for the collaboration.



An artwork created with the scientific collaboration of the University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo and Slow Food.



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