

Knowledge
of our
habitats

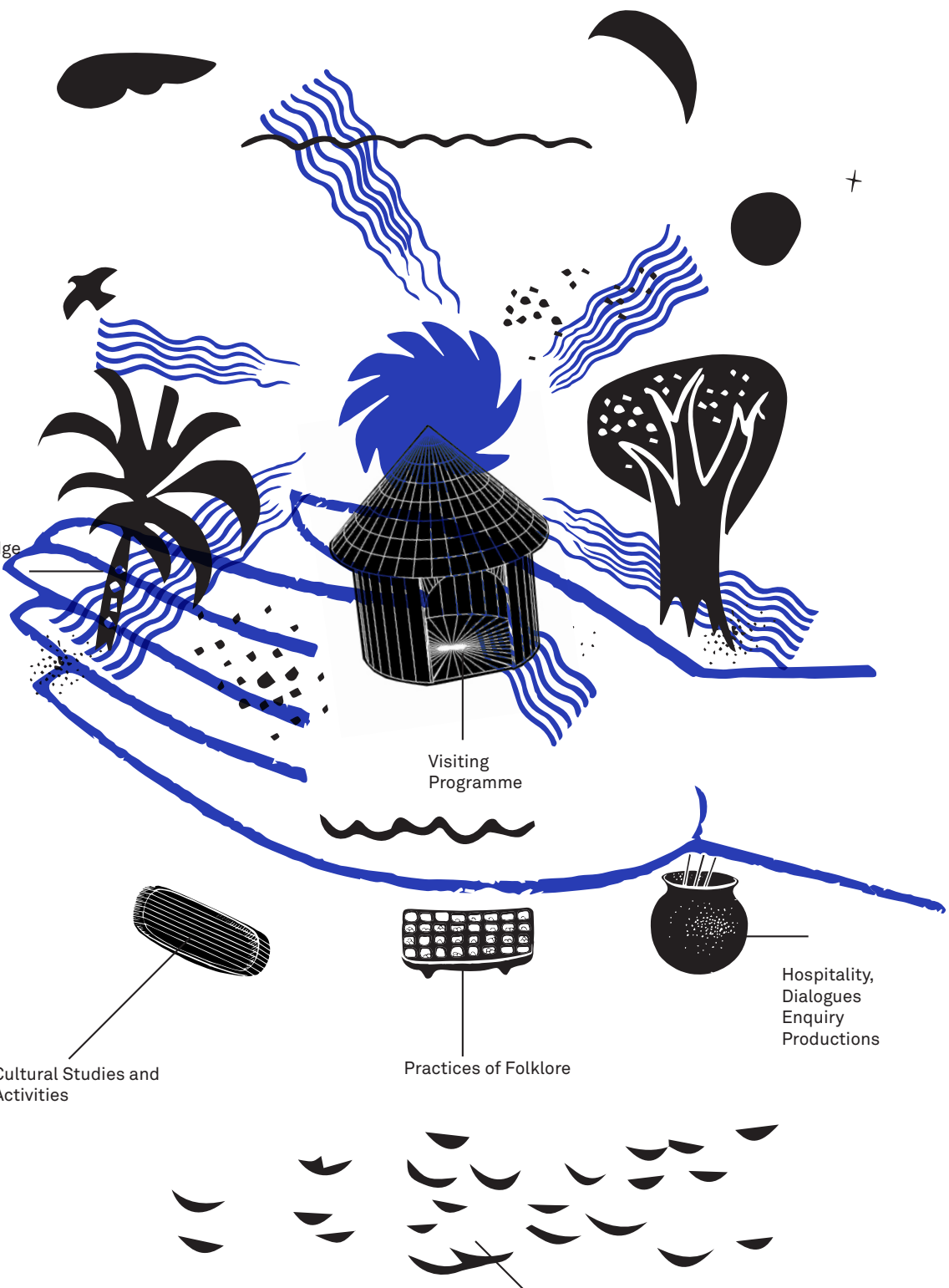
Visiting
Programme

Hospitality,
Dialogues
Enquiry
Productions

Cultural Studies and
Activities

Practices of Folklore

Artists Home



How

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called

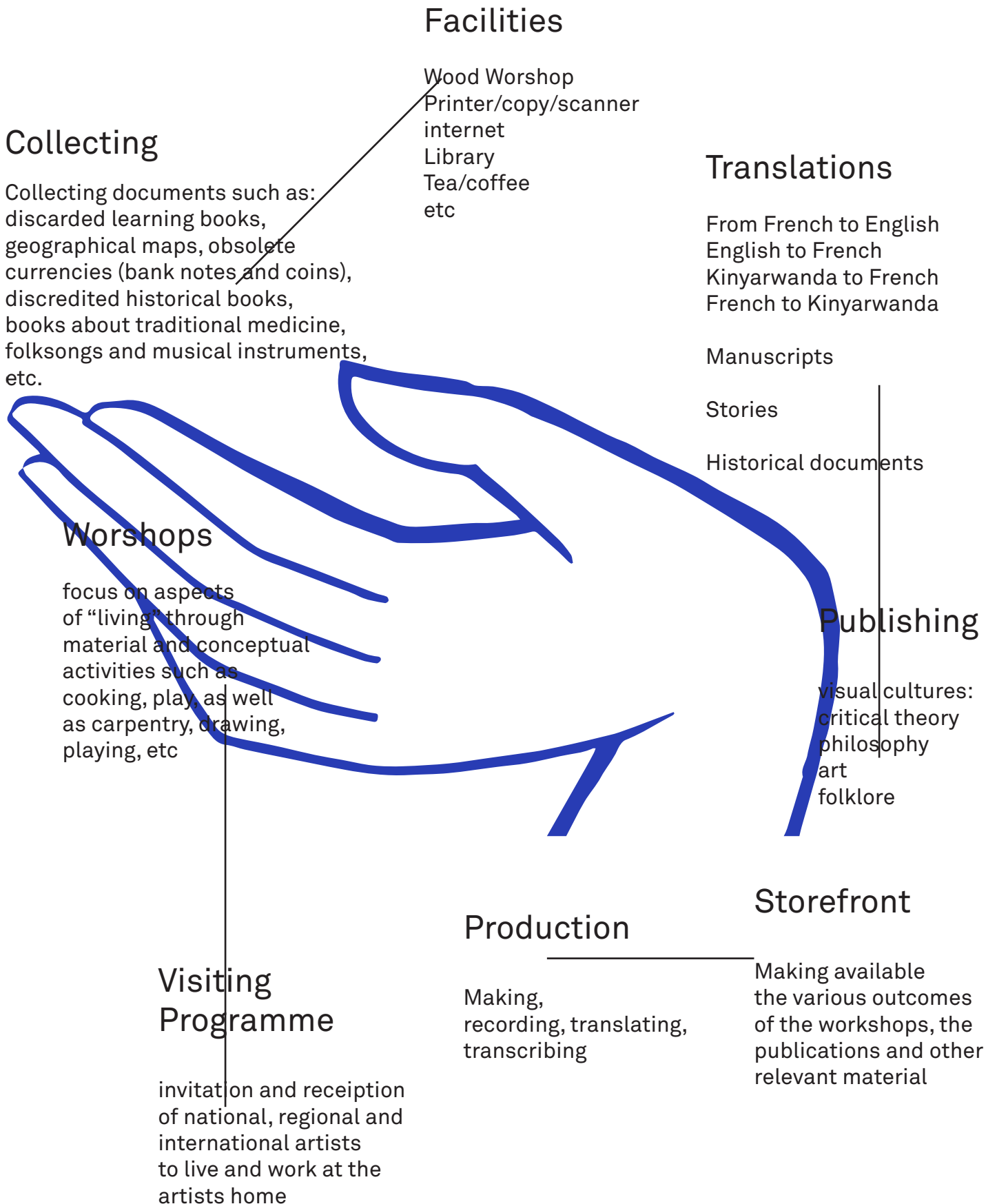
in

Kinya

rwanda?



Core Activities of Artists Home



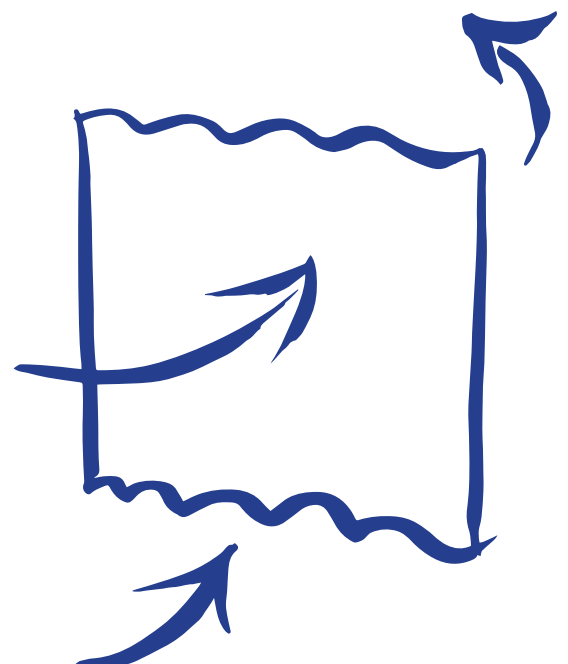
Artists Home

Artists Home, the project that Christian Nyampeta is currently developing in collaboration with philosophers working in Rwanda and further afield, will be a community house in Nyanza, Rwanda. It will be home to an artistic programme modelled on the “home”:

- a “home” for research, theory and practice engaged with the conceptualisation, theorisation and materialisation of contemporary artistic practices in Rwanda;
- a home structured as a social club or a platform for encounters, communication and preparation where art-related activities happen by gathering and sharing information about art and society, and where work for new concepts and methods for art learning and making in the context of Rwanda can be germinated.

The aim of Artists Home is to practice and to theorise an awareness of the potential of art’s social dimensions in Rwanda; and to awaken various possibilities for artists to intervene at practical social levels and to develop a sense of cultural responsibility.

Although there is limited public discourse on the visual arts in Rwanda today, this does not mean that symbolic creative work is not being undertaken, nor that such practices are not meeting societal needs. Through their participating in the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster, the Nyanza Working Group wishes to map and to analyse the the “artistic” areas, the disciplines, the tactics and the strategies currently at play in Rwanda, and to explore the potential for extant practices to engage critically, regionally and transnationally with issues of our world.



OUTLINE 2015 – 2016

The activities of the Nyanza Working Group Artists Home have focussed on a programme situated at the intersection of the bibliographies and biographies of modern and contemporary philosophers in Rwanda. Working within an itinerant structure, two modalities have channeled these activities of the Working Group's programme. These two modalities are 1) conversations with the philosophers—members of the Artists Home, namely Fr Fabien Hagenimana, Dr Obed Quinet Niyikza, Dr Olivier Nyirubugara, and Dr Isaïe Nzeyimana, and 2) the transmission of these conversations through the staging of exhibitions and its related activities including public events and publications. The conversations are presented as edited videos and transcriptions of these the entirety of the conversations.

Conversation and Discourse

By way of questioning the discourse of “contemporary art” and “education” in the context of Rwanda, the Nyanza Working Group stages formal and informal conversations as ways of creating another discourse on art education. The Artists Home rehearses the hypothesis that one of the distinguishing features of our being in the world is the awareness of our own being with other beings. With this hypothesis, a conversation and its “language” is the vector in which this awareness is expressed. The activities of Artists Home study this conversation within the idiom of philosophy. Philosophy here is understood as the conception of ideas. Here resides the tension between the conception of one's own ideas and the conversation between one's own idea with other, possibly opposing conceptions of ideas. Artists Home sees this conversation as an avenue towards concretising a public discourse on art learning and art making. Our turn to philosophical ideas developed in the locality of Rwanda and its linguistic surroundings is a methodological dispositif for materializing concepts with which to study the uses of art in the context of Rwanda.

The historical sources from which our study is anchored include the works Maniragaba Balibutsa, Edouard Gasarabwe and Abbé Alexis Kagame. The field of philosophy has antecedents which reach back into the colonial period of 1950's when Rwanda was still a trust territory of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Standing out is indeed the work of the late priest Alexis Kagame, with his doctoral thesis, *La Philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'Être*, published by the Belgian Academie Royale des Sciences Coloniale in 1955. This work is also considered the earliest (ethno)philosophical text authored by a Sub-Saharan writer. Our new angle of research is the study of the meaning and the practice of rest in these works. Rest is a particularly fertile concept to study in relation to art learning and making in Rwanda, because of its relation to the practices of the body, its connotations with cohabitation, hospitality and domesticity, and also because of its relation to the structuring of calendrical times and to the organizing of public space and infrastructure.

Presentations and Discourse

The first presentation of these conversations took place in the context of Prix de Rome 2015, an exhibition organised by Mondrian Fund at de Appel Arts Centre in Amsterdam between November 2015 and January 2016. The following exhibitions were staged in Athens, Greece, in Aalst, Belgium, and in Southend in Great Britain. Currently, a presentation is taking place at the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea, open till November 2016. Additionally, these recorded conversations have been at the heart of seminars, and workshops and public presentations at the Dutch Art Institute in Arnhem, the Netherlands, at Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg, in Gothenburg, Sweden, at the Milan Triennale in Italy, at ESAD and at Le Magasin both in Grenoble, France.

These exhibitions and seminars, which often take place within carefully conceived hosting structures, are enacted propositions as well as commentaries on these dialogues. In so doing, the historical notions and visual motives from philosophical sources are extracted and become inscribed in local and distant contexts, whereupon these philosophical concepts travel and take on a life, as a method of engaging with and collecting insights from new, related or opposing contexts and audiences.

The outcome of these exhibitions and seminars amount to new libraries, imageries, commentaries and footnotes in the transcriptions and annotations, as well as additional videos which will be presented to the members of the Nyanza Working Group during our next gatherings in March 2017.

FORTHCOMING 2017 – 2018

Our motivation to work cross-culturally is 1) contextually motivated, but also 2) structurally necessary. 1) Rwanda is a locality which has a cultural, political and military influence on a world scale. These links between Rwanda and the world are often obscured for critically questionable and troublesome reasons. 2) The funding to work in Rwanda comes from institutions outside of Rwanda, and the dialogical relation benefits both contexts.

In the coming year, Artists Home will pursue this transdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach of concretized philosophy, whereby “philosophy” is made manual and becomes a collective that has taken on an invitation to inhabit, to dwell on, to utilize and also to question and to reject some of these historical and contemporary propositions in a manner that produces a new praxis of art learning and art making in Rwanda.

Conversations in Nyanza, March 2017

Artists Home produces ongoing interview-conversations with a number of philosophers living and working in Rwanda and those outside in exile. These conversations enable a dialogue to take place which would otherwise never happen. Some of the outcomes of these interviews include transcripts, translations and videos. These are knowledge- material which respond to the question of how to live together, considered as question of learning how to rest together.

Central to these conversations is the definition of concepts of interest to art learning in Kinyarwanda, following the methodology found in Alexis Kagame’s historical work. Indeed, *La Philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l’Être* is written in the form of a dialogue between Kama and Gama. These are two fictional characters who perform a conversation as the dialectic thrust of the philosophical arguments of the book. This discursive form which translates and extends the oral traditions into academic writing, makes it thinkable to approach and to adapt *La Philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l’Être* to contemporary forms, including perhaps at a later stage a theatre or radio play, or fiction film which extends the conversations. This adaptation into a play would be achieved through workshops with the staff and students

from the schools run by the philosophers members of the Nyanza Working Group, as well as neighbouring members of the communities outside of academic circles.

The staging of these conversations inaugurates further artistic considerations: What are the corresponding images, shapes and material to these ideas? How is the use of space and time understood in these works? How is harmony articulated in such ideas? These questions are asked with an emphasis on the practices of hospitality and domesticity. the programmes and activities for art learning of the Artists Home will reach out to groups and communities who would otherwise not be addressed by the services and pedagogies of the existing institutions.

In this period of March 2017 prior to the presentation in Venice, the proximity, criticality and engagement to the institutions of (art) education and to the grassroots initiatives will allow the Artists Home to gather stories, anecdotes, folkloric tales and songs, i.e. minor and major histories which may contribute to the desired communal knowledge for later use as a growing resource which, in itself, may offer an object for further research.

Presentation at the Venice Biennale 2017

It is of crucial importance that members of Artists Home are able to travel outside of Rwanda. It is in this context that a presentation, seminar and colloquium will take place in Venice in 2017.

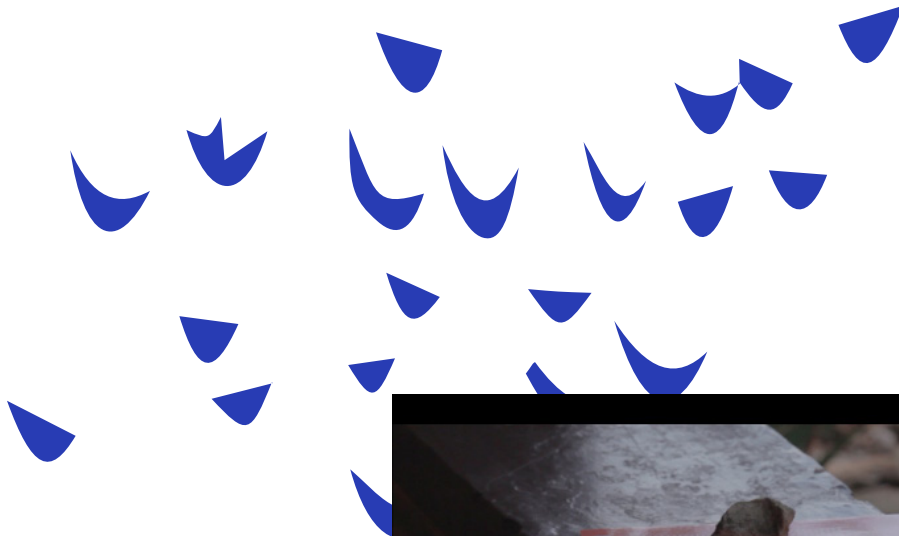
The curatorial framework of the exhibition to which Artists Home is contributing engages with the study of how art was put to many tests in the time of societal change, among them those of determining its public, convincing them, remaining current and acceptable, negotiating between private or affective life and the demands of politics and history.

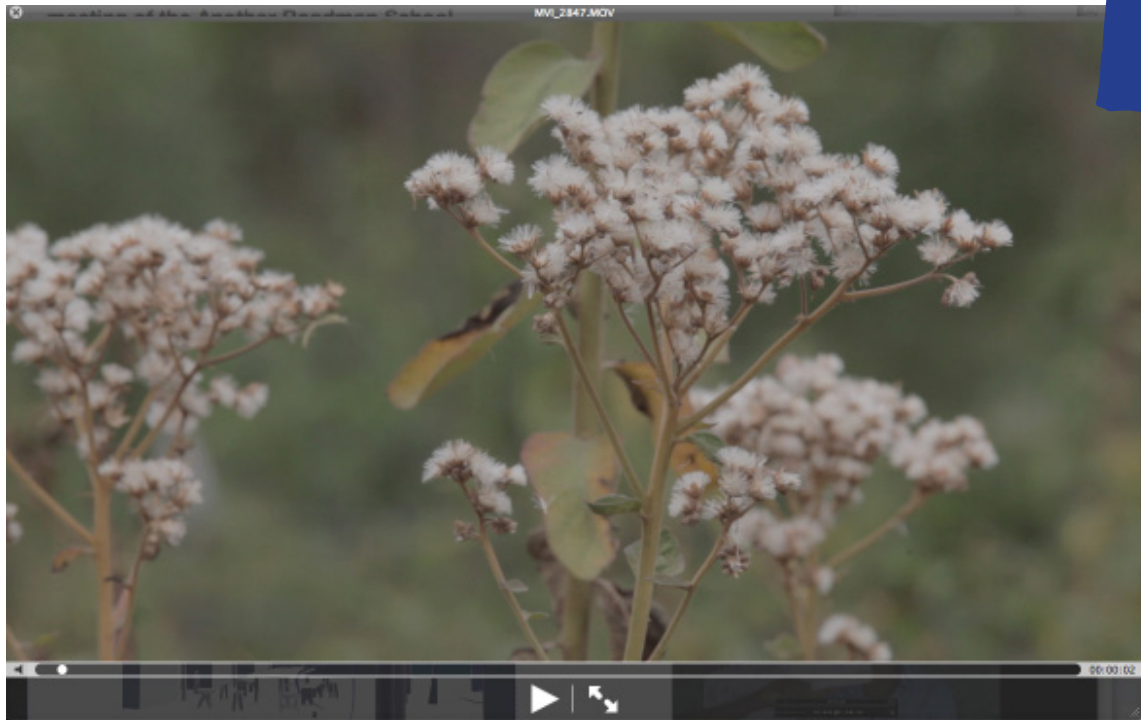
Artists Home will contribute with an exhibition and a programme rooted in the ongoing conversations and engagements with philosophy as a life practice: as both an artistic form and a discourse in Rwanda. Two members of the Artists Home, Dr Isaïe Nzeyimana and Dr Obed Quinet Niyikiza will travel and reside in Venice, where they will be joined by their colleagues from London and Europe. We will present existing video conversations, and

the live conversations will yield new video. A formal structure will be found in which the conversations will be made available directly or soon after the events, as translated and printed transcripts, and (wherever needed subtitled) videos.

Publication, November 2017

Lastly, the exhibition in Venice is organized as a working library and a printing workshop. The object of this arrangement is to produce a publication containing the annotated conversations to date, as well as extract of translations from material of reference to the conversations which are not yet available in English. This way of writing in the open will materialize a syllabus conceived collectively.





For visual material of the activities,
please visit:

<http://www.christiannyampeta.com/rest>

