

Ian Wainaina

Tides That Bind

OBELUS

49 Forster Str. 10999 Berlin

opening Friday 22nd November, 6—10pm

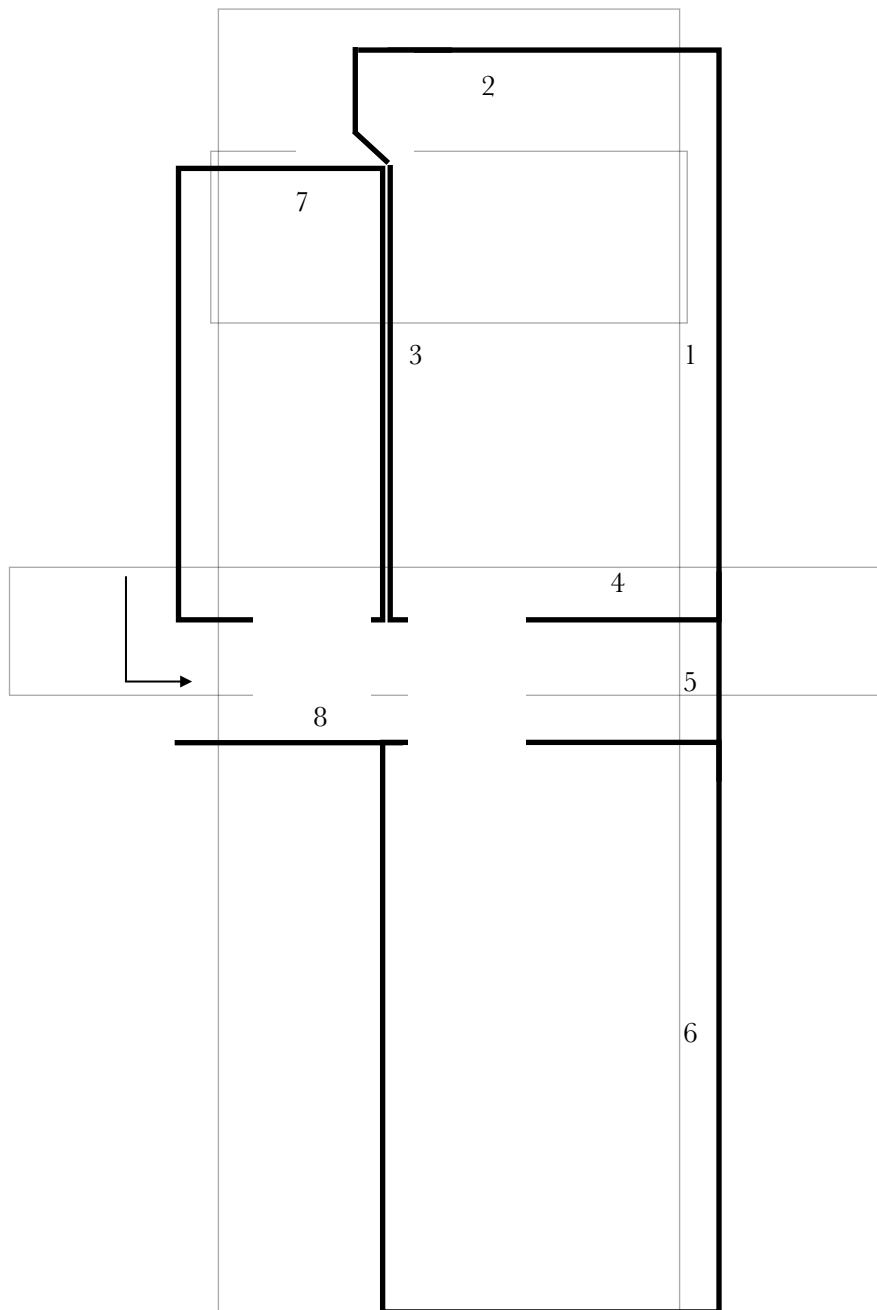
reading Monday 25th November, 8pm

The ocean has long been a symbol of separation and connection. For Africans on the continent and in the diaspora, its waves carry complex histories—of displacement, longing, resilience, and reunion. This exhibition seeks to explore the duality of the ocean as both a barrier and a bridge in the context of the artists personal experience growing up in Kenya and living in the US and Germany over the last decade.

In my first week in the US, I met Imani. Imani is the Swahili word for "faith." Delighted at hearing a familiar name in this foreign land, I struck up a conversation with Imani, who I thought was Kenyan at the time. Upon investigating where she was from, Imani said she was from "Philly" and was not familiar with her African heritage. Looking at this encounter, I do not think it is a coincidence that I met an Imani in my first week of being in the US. Rather, I see this as a divine intervention from the ancestors who came before us. Imani made me feel at home in a land that felt so foreign, and I, in turn, sparked her curiosity about her roots. That exchange, small as it was, felt like a bridge—a thread connecting our shared history and identity. Many such exchanges later, I am convinced that my work exists to bridge these gaps between the continent and the diaspora.

Tides That Bind invites visitors to reflect on questions of home, ancestors, and the unseen forces that tether us to one another across continents and time. How do we define home when it stretches beyond borders? How do we honor the ancestors who endured and persevered? And how do we embrace the invisible threads that weave us into a shared story of survival and belonging?

This exhibition is a conversation—a call to explore the ways in which we, as Africans and diasporic Africans, remain connected despite the vastness of the seas that separate us.



1: Multiple connections, 2019-2024, Polaroid assemblage, dimension variable / **2: Ritual II**, 2024, inkjet archival print, 50x70cm / **3: Over the ocean waves**, 2020, arrival laser print on PVC, 29x18cm / **4: Abstract ideas**, 2019-2024, Polaroid assemblage, dimension variable / **5: Dreadsea** 2023, inkjet archival print, 50x70cm, notes / **6: Ritual**, 2022, video, 1080hd, 5:59 minutes / **7: Alone Together**, 2019, aluminum dibond print, 82x100cm, notes / **8: Home is Far Away**, 2022, inkjet archival print, 40x60cm

22.11.2024 6:00 pm

the work is hung and stuck to the walls
the work waits
the work hangs out

people respond to the initiation of Home as a place in movement, beginning with 'w' and with 'h', a place that takes shape and form in answering a question

filling in
waiting for reception
waiting for reception

the work is a witness
almost everybody is carried through, in front of it, almost every individual is given by the artist an informal landscape to relate to the work
these conversations are not recorded

23.11.2024 5:00 pm

the artist adds to the wall polaroids taken during the drawing

I think of the work that is in silence

people keep responding to the initiation of Home

24.11.2024 7:00pm

people keep responding to the initiation of Home

people come to read
they read
[readings:

Ariel Thompson, *Blue, Leave me with my Love, Here and There*

Naledi Maskia Mmoledi, *The Performance of Community*

Ian Wainaina

Roob

Clemente Ciarrocca, excerpts from *Sun of Consciousness* by Edouard Glissant

Luca Serri, *Untitled*]

ideas are shared

there is no conclusion

but a temporary coagulation in place

somehow this flows the blood down, things getting less dense

now