

Forbes Alexander, '15 Documenta Artists with Staying Power; Pélégie Gbaguidi'. www.artsy.net, 9 June 2017.

15 Documenta Artists with Staying Power



Installation view of documenta 14, 2017. Photo by Benjamin Westoby for Artsy.

In his keynote remarks to open documenta 14, curator of public programs Paul B. Preciado noted that those about to take on the 35-venue, over 160-artist show should “not be in search of something new.” That’s somewhat surprising given that most of the artists included have never before shown on an international scale. More accurate might be to say that documenta 14 offers little that’s novel other than, perhaps, in its curatorial framework—no new art form, no new technology, and, for the most part, no new blood for collectors at Art Basel in Basel next week.

What documenta 14 does offer, however, is the opportunity for some artists to break out and others to show the full resonance of their practices with our current moment. Here are 15 highlights among that group.

Neue Galerie

Pélagie Gbaguidi



Pélagie Gbaguidi, *The Missing Link. Decolonisation Education by Mrs Smiling Stone*, 2017, on view at documenta 14, 2017. Photo by Benjamin Westoby for Artsy.

Gbaguidi's contribution, *The Missing Link. Decolonisation Education by Mrs Smiling Stone* (2017), is one of documenta's most literal—and hopefully most effective—interpretations of Adam Szymczyk's educational mandate for the exhibition. In a sun-drenched arcade of the Neue Galerie's upper floor, school desks and supplies are strewn about, while somewhat childlike sketches on long scrolls hang from the ceiling.

Half-used notebooks sit on some of the desks; they are, in fact, the product of workshops that Gbaguidi is holding over the course of documenta with pupils from one of Kassel's local schools. Her aim is straightforward: to wind back the legacies of colonialism and prejudice.

“How might education contribute to / purge from consciousness that there exist no / under-beings but that the birth of life is a value in itself,” she writes, in a poem affixed to the wall. “That every human has a right to a cradle.”