

# WHITE CUBE

Press Release

Ibrahim Mahama  
*A SPELL OF GOOD THINGS*  
September 5 – October 26, 2024  
White Cube New York

White Cube is pleased to present "A SPELL OF GOOD THINGS" by Ibrahim Mahama, marking the artist's first solo exhibition in New York and his first presentation in the city since the *57 Forms of Liberty* project at The High Line in 2021. Debuting new work, this White Cube show draws together ideas of physical labor, post-colonial collapse and reclamation.

Born in Ghana in 1987, Mahama has produced exhibitions and projects around the world, including founding Red Clay Studio, an artist-run cultural institution established in Tamale, Ghana, in 2020. This year alone, his achievements include transforming the exterior of London's Barbican Art Centre with his artwork *Purple Hibiscus*, opening his first solo museum show in Scotland at Fruitmarket, and receiving the prestigious Sam Gilliam Award from the Dia Art Foundation.

Best known for his ambitious installations, in which he covers entire buildings with repurposed jute sacks, Mahama has gathered materials abandoned through institutional decline in Ghana and incorporated them into his works for many years. Forged during a period of growing confidence in the 1960s and 1970s, when newly independent West African nations imagined a way forward after British colonial rule, the artist regards these objects as carriers of both optimism and failure.

Occupying the entirety of the ground floor gallery, the titular installation, *A SPELL OF GOOD THINGS* (2024) features items salvaged from the former Gold Coast railway system, displayed alongside effects from the Tamale Teaching Hospital in Northern Ghana. First commissioned in the 1970s by former military leader Ignatius Acheampong, the hospital is now in heavy decline, with numerous preventable fatalities due to a lack of resources.

Comprising a disordered assembly of decrepit hospital beds, Mahama's installation features leather "sheets" tattooed with the names of unexplained deaths, some of which are ripped from the interiors of abandoned train cars, a process the artist likens to peeling skin. Mahama views the layering of history and loss within the work as being inextricably linked with infrastructural bankruptcy, mechanical breakdown and "all the things that were destroyed in the post-Independence era."

On the second-floor gallery, a series of large drawings will be on display. Following negotiations with the Ghanaian Railway Development Ministry in 2023, the artist salvaged train carriages, tracks, and machine parts from the pre- and post-Independence eras. Together with his local collaborators at Red Clay Studio, he repurposed these materials, converting the carriages into classrooms, libraries and studio spaces, while transforming other parts into sculptures. Documenting Mahama's ambitious endeavor, these works attempt to retrace the history of the rail lines and the memories embedded therein, drawing a direct line between the tracks and the

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bodies of the men who bore their load – the weight of the objects simultaneously implying a physical burden as well as social and political exertion.

Ibrahim Mahama's "A SPELL OF GOOD THINGS" is open at White Cube New York from September 5 until October 26, 2024.

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## Notes to Editors:

- Ibrahim Mahama was born in 1987 in Tamale, Ghana. He lives and works in Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale. Solo exhibitions include Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2024); Barbican Centre, London (2024); Kunsthalle Osnabrück, Germany (2023); Oude Kerk, Amsterdam (2022); Frac des Pays de la Loire, France (2022); The High Line, New York (2021); University of Michigan Museum of Art (2020); The Whitworth, The University of Manchester, UK (2019); Norval Foundation, Cape Town (2019); Tel Aviv Art Museum, Israel (2016); and KNUST Museum, Kumasi, Ghana (2013). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions including Desert X AIUla, Saudi Arabia (2024); Sharjah Biennial 15, UAE (2023); 18th International Venice Architecture Biennale, Italy (2023); the 35th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2023); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas (2021); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2020); 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2020); Stellenbosch Triennale, South Africa (2020); 6th Lubumbashi Biennale, Democratic Republic of the Congo (2019); Ghana Pavilion, 58th Venice Biennale, Italy (2019); Documenta 14, Athens and Kassel, Germany (2017); Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University (2016); Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen and Holbæk, Denmark (2016); 56th Venice Biennale, Italy (2015); and Artist's Rooms, K21, Düsseldorf, Germany (2015). Mahama was also appointed Artistic Director of the 35th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana (2023). In 2024, Mahama was selected for the inaugural Sam Gilliam award by the Dia Art Foundation and the Sam Gilliam Foundation, which includes the presentation of a public program at Dia in fall 2024.
- White Cube's exhibition program extends across locations in London, Hong Kong, Paris, New York, Seoul and online. Since its inception in 1993, the gallery has exhibited the work of many of the world's most highly acclaimed contemporary artists.
- White Cube New York can be found at 1002 Madison Avenue between 77th and 78th street, a short walk from the Frick Madison, Breuer building, the Met and other galleries. The space is the gallery's first permanent location in the United States after launching the seasonal White Cube West Palm Beach gallery in 2021.
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