





Potentiality can be found in materiality, as echoes in the ruins of futures past. The signs, evident in concrete, cinder block manifestations scattered about the city, remain as postcolonial promises that stretch across oceans. Entangled, whispered ever so softly amidst the weighty grey monuments, are the words of epochal leaders -- Nehru, Nkrumah -- a promise to resist the neocolonial currents of the cold war, an entreaty to find a third way that rejected the western dictat, that which sought to divide the world into two spheres of influence. Non-alignment. It is 2015, and Delhi has grown around these material manifestations of a previous era of promises.

Contemporary versions of the future, encoded in the Delhi Master Plan 2020, speak of development wrought in the triumphant logic of contemporary capital, infrastructure that imagines a world-class city in the making. Public-private partnerships. Shopping malls. The metro system. New roads. Gated housing developments. By this logic there is no third way, for a second way has fallen and what remains is a future inhabited by those who embrace Delhi as part of the world system, a node in the arterial network that seeks to inextricably link financial capital to labor, resources, land, and desire. And yet, the landscape of memory remains. Toppled, unseen, crumbling, even towering but silent, these material remnants remind those who wish to remember a moment where solidarity, even if ephemeral, unrealizable, was a horizon of possibility.











Amidst this landscape of the taken for granted, the promise of the otherwise continues to find form in conversations amongst Kenyans, Ugandans, Nigerians, and Cameroonians as they sip their beers in the dimly lit speakeasies found in unanticipated African enclaves tucked in the folds of the urban villages of South Delhi. Mingled amidst words that conjure neoliberal capital's dreams and describe nomadic subjectivities, are echoes of a fantasy of a Pan-Africa and an Afro-Asia. Nigerian entrepreneurs sing the refrains of Bollywood songs they learned when they were children in Lagos. Playful banter between Cameroonians, Kenyans, and Nigerians erupt around what, if the dream of a sovereign Africa ever came to pass that erased the borders imagined by the European powers during the Berlin Conference in the late 1800s, the common language of Africa would be.



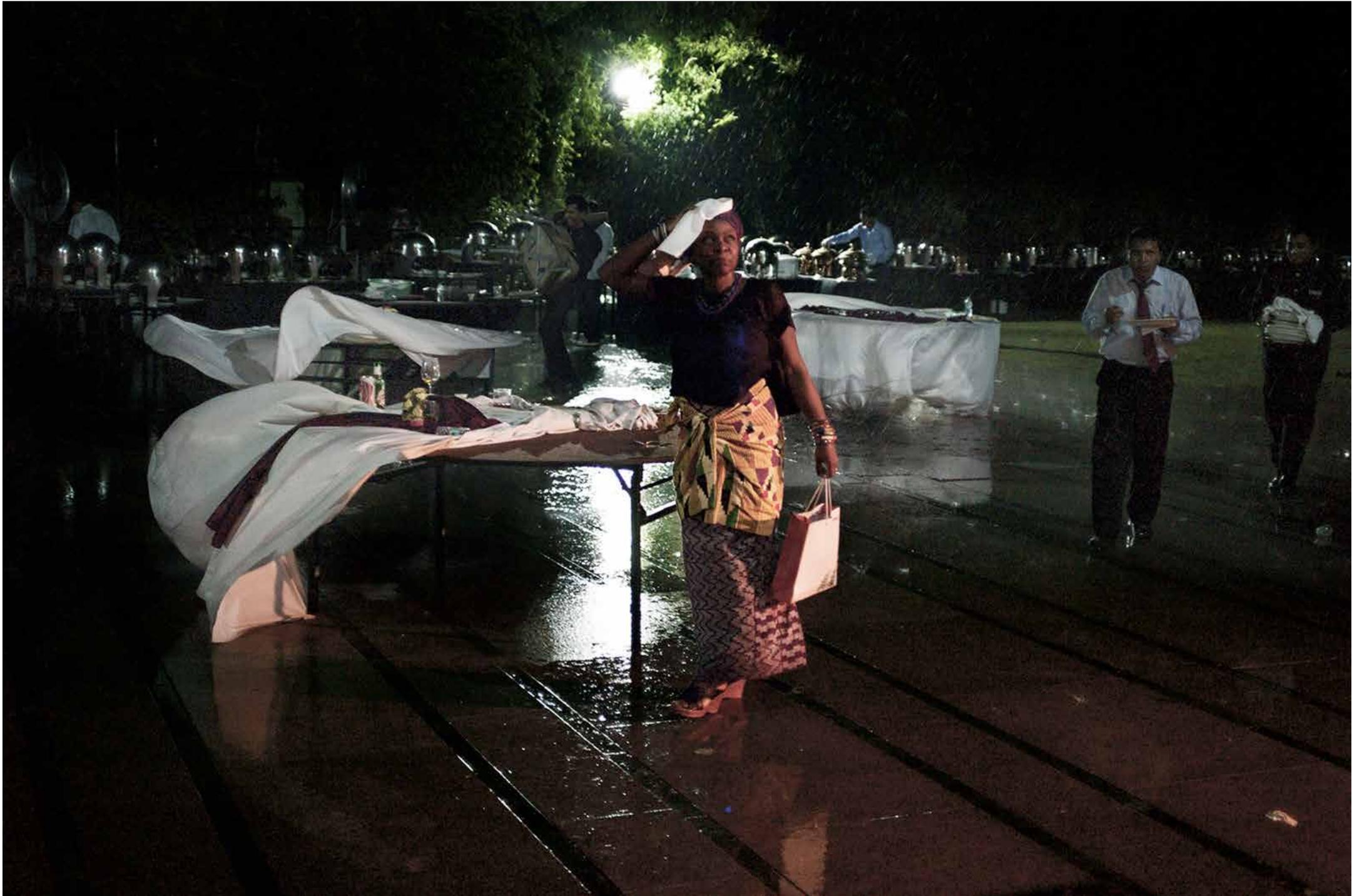


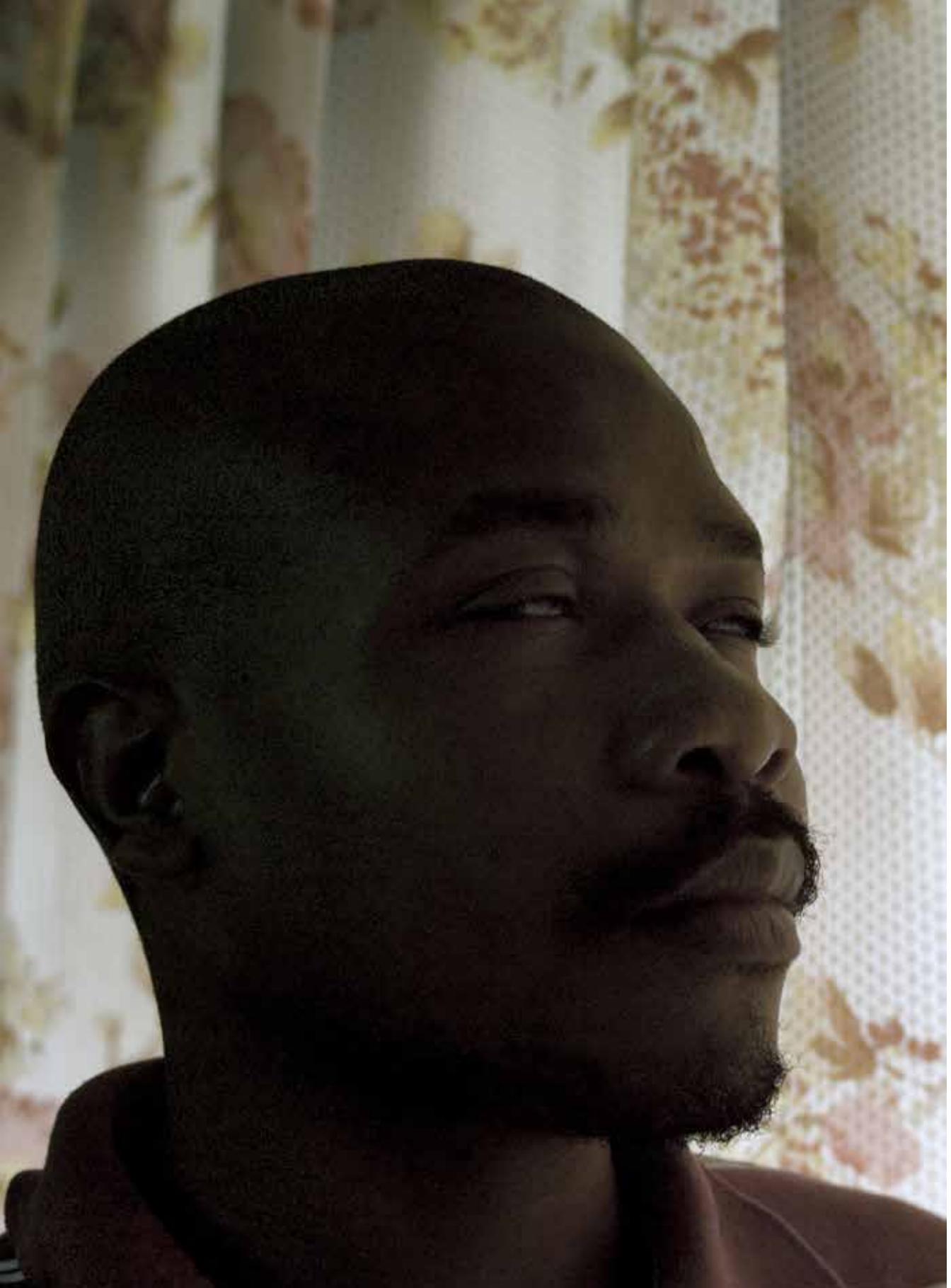


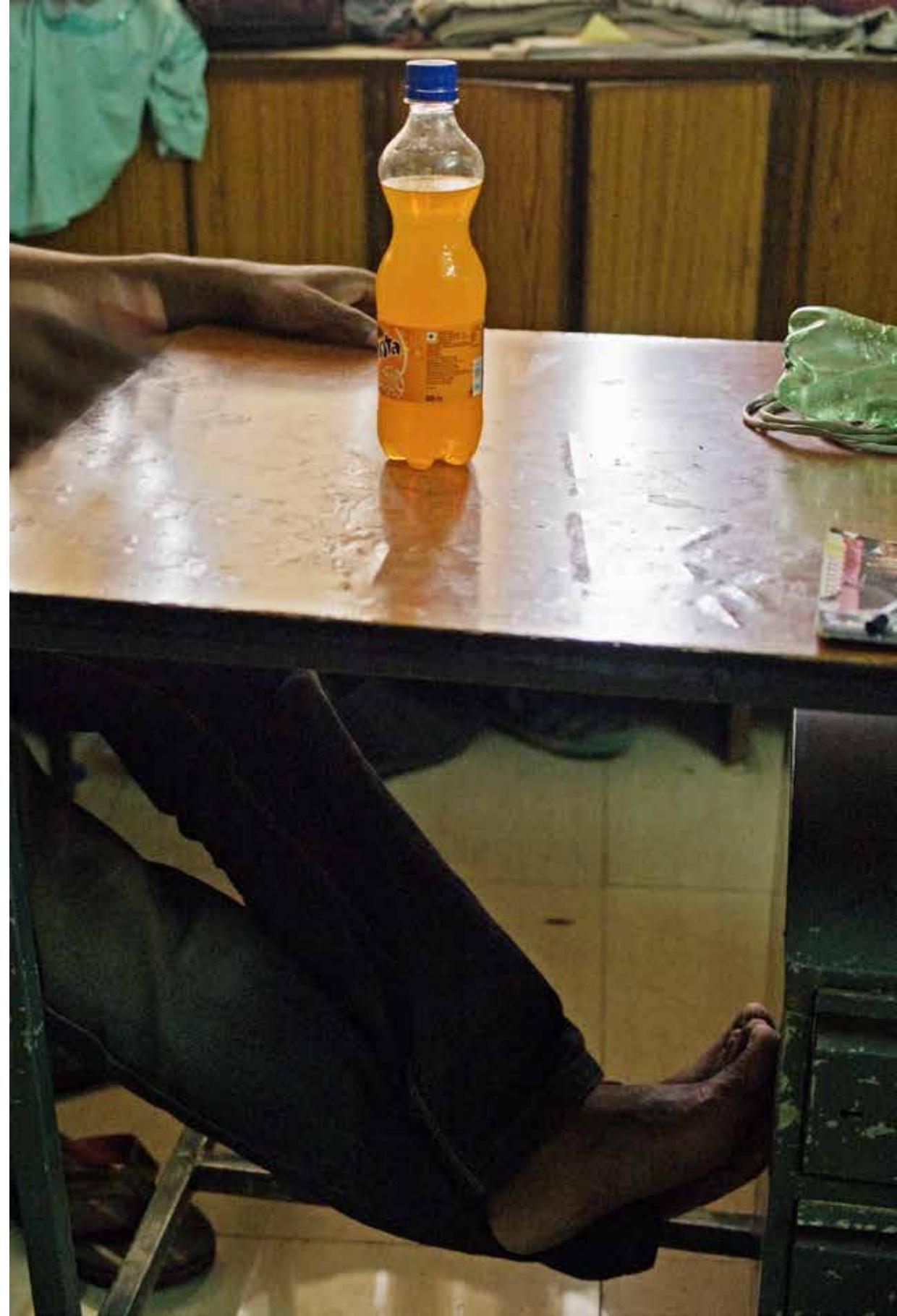


Yet, this future past, echoed in the small pink and blue rooms of the speakeasy, sits uneasily with the present. Even in playful banter, cracks in the edifice of a unified Africa emerge as notions of linguistic, religious, and tribal difference are voiced. The threat of the police or of village vigilantes intent on driving out Africans, crackles in the air, dims the lights, silences the room to a whisper. An imagined solidarity that liquefies when continental nationalisms are articulated or when the mediatized presence of colonial pasts and imperial presents exert themselves in ways that render solidarity utopic. As Radio France blares its sounds, a TV silently flickers in the corner, American Empire broadcasting life. Nigerian Pidgin and French echo loudly in the room, so that Swahili and Somali are but murmurs. As men and women smoke cigarettes and eat fish brought in refrigerated trucks to Delhi from the western shores of India, a future is realized in waiting, a kind of liminality not marked by absence or passivity but through an active fashioning of temporality and geography that at once erases and erects borders.











The enacted upon is what remains. The delicate bones of the fish, once whole on the platter, sit in a pile on the plate. The cigarette butts in the ashtray, the structures, the statues, towering or in ruins, all mark a passage. The dogs in dark alleyways wait for us to exit the kitchen and walk these landscapes of possibility and precarity with them. As do the cats that we can't see, as they lay, invisible, in the dark.