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Beau Disundi Nzazi ANCHORINGSICKNESS The Residency Outcome

Beau Disundi Nzazi Artist in residence 2024 Venezia



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ANCHORINGSICKNESS The Residency Outcome

Solo exhibition by Beau Disundi Nzazi Nov 23 - Dec 7, 2024

The exhibition is the result of Beau Disundi Nzazi artistic residency in 2024

AKKA Project Contemporary African Art Gallery Ca' del Duca Sforza 3052 Venezia, Italy



About **Beau Disundi Nzazi**

Born in 1993 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Beau Disundi Nzazi is a visual artist whose work bridges his roots in Kinshasa with his current base in Brussels, Belgium. His practice engages deeply with the intersections of history, economics, and cultural identity, navigating the complexities of belonging in a globalized world.

Disundi's academic journey reflects his dedication to refining his artistic vision. He earned a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Interior Architecture from the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Kinshasa, a Bachelor of Arts from the École Supérieure d'Art de Dunkerque in France, and a Master of Fine Arts from ENSAV La Cambre in Brussels. These varied experiences have informed his interdisciplinary approach, enabling him to explore and critique complex cultural and historical themes.

His artistic practice spans a variety of mediums, including sculpture, installation, drawing, weaving, and engraving. His innovative use of materials is a hallmark of his work, drawing on cultural and regional significance. For example, Disundi incorporates cardboard, a material commonly associated with Kinshasa, transforming it into intricate visual forms such as engravings and sculptures. He also utilizes traditional techniques like woodcutting and silkscreen printing to explore themes of binary opposition and identity in flux. This versatility allows him to engage with both the conceptual and material dimensions of his art, creating pieces that resonate on multiple levels. A central theme in Disundi's work is the tension between acculturation and alienation. Through his art, he reflects the experiences of individuals navigating liminal spaces - caught between different cultural, historical, or social contexts. His work visualises these nuanced experiences, encouraging viewers to engage with the layered and often contradictory forces that shape identity and belonging.

Beau's explorations shed light on the enduring legacies of historical transitions and cultural exchanges. His art offers a lens through which to examine the complexities of contemporary identity, fostering dialogue between past and present, individual and collective, and local and global dynamics. By weaving personal narratives into broader historical contexts, the artist creates works that invite reflection on interconnected histories and the intricate realities of our shared world.

Narrowness

When in Venice...

Beau's residency at AKKA Project in Venice began as a profound journey into the city's intricate history and cultural layers. From the very start, he approached this experience with a combination of intellectual rigor and personal reflection. His deep dive into Venice unfolded through extensive research and hands-on exploration, as he immersed himself in the city's iconic museums, historical landmarks, and hidden corners. This methodical engagement allowed him to bridge the city's storied past with his own artistic vision, which often revolves around themes of environment, colonialism, and identity.

A central theme that emerged during the residency is the concept of **narrowness** - a characteristic he observed in the physical and symbolic dimensions of Venice. The city's intimate labyrinth of canals and tightly clustered buildings evokes a sense of enclosure, where every corner feels both protected and constricted. For Beau, this spatial quality mirrors broader historical and social frameworks, where confinement often plays a significant role in shaping individual and collective identities. Venice, with its paradoxical blend of openness to the world and its insular architectural character, became an ideal stage for these reflections. As he navigated the city's unique topography, Disundi began drawing parallels between Venice's architectural essence and the global systems that have historically enclosed and reshaped cultures. This resonated deeply with his artistic practice, which seeks to unravel the layers of historical influence and identity formation. The residency thus transformed into a dynamic interplay between Venice's physical environment and the conceptual inquiries at the heart of his work.

Through this residency, he not only explored Venice's beauty, but also, its complex history as a crossroads of trade, culture, and power. Each narrow street and canal became a metaphorical thread in the larger tapestry of his inquiry, inspiring new perspectives on the interconnectedness of past and present, local and global. His time in Venice has provided a fertile ground for expanding his artistic exploration, enriching his practice with fresh insights and a deeper connection to the narratives that define human experience.

In the following pages, Beau's artistic journey will be detailed, tracing his evolution from his formative years to his residency in Venice and the culminating exhibition, 'Anchoringsickness', presented at AKKA Project. This exploration of his work will illuminate how his unique perspective and diverse experiences have shaped a practice that bridges personal and collective histories, creating art that resonates with contemporary global discourses.



"Narrow: an intimate and labyrinthine atmosphere, where space is often reduced and confined. It is a city where everything feels enclosed, both in its architecture and its topography."

Beau Disundi Nzazi

Kinshasa - Nsiamfumu - Venice

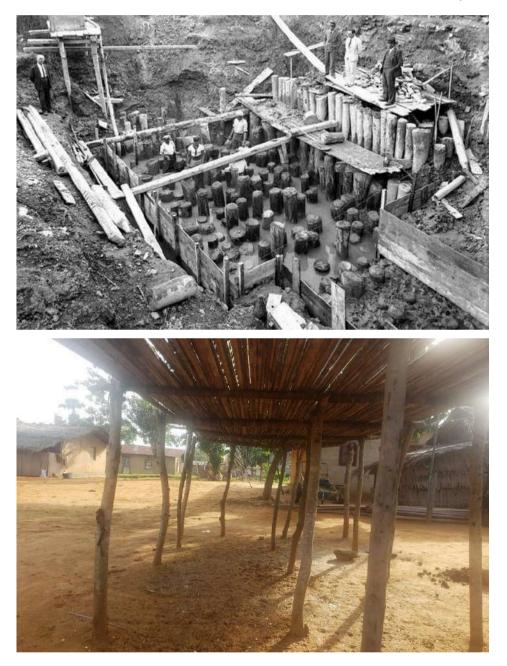
A Journey into History

In April 2023, artist Beau Disundi Nzazi embarked on a transformative journey to the Kongo Central region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Traveling from Kinshasa to the coastal village of **Nsiamfumu**, he immersed himself in the artisanal fishing practices that define the region's cultural fabric. Accompanied by local guides and cultural interlocutors, Disundi explored the **mutalaka**, a wooden structure used to dry local fish, in order to salt and dry it, giving it the appearance of dried salted codfish.

During this visit, the artist was struck by the natural shape of mutalaka's wood, a structure both functional and emblematic of the community's relationship with their environment. However, it was only later, during his residency in Venice, that he found a deep connection between the mutalaka and the very foundations of this city. In Venice, he observed the wooden piles that support the entire city, a hidden yet essential architectural feature that sustains its labyrinthine canals and historic buildings. This parallel between Nsiamfumu's mutalaka and Venice's wooden foundations unveiled a deeper understanding of how the concept of **structure**, both physical and symbolic, underpins societies in vastly different geographies.

For Beau, the wooden piles of Venice became a metaphor for the interconnectedness of histories and cultures, much like the mutalaka had symbolized the lifeline of the fishing community in Nsiamfumu. The two structures - one rooted in a coastal Congolese village, the other beneath a city steeped in global maritime trade - echoed each other in their silent yet critical roles. These structures reflect not only the practical needs of their communities but also the ways in which societies build their foundations - literally and metaphorically - on shared histories of labor, resourcefulness, and survival.

Disundi's exploration of Venice allowed him to revisit and reframe his impressions from Nsiamfumu, linking these two seemingly disparate worlds through their architecture and their relationships with water. The constricted spaces of Venice, marked by its intricate balance between land and sea, resonated with the narrow, purpose-built forms of the mutalaka. This discovery enriched Nzazi's ongoing inquiry into how physical structures mirror broader historical, economic, and cultural narratives, offering a new reflection on the forces that shape human environments across time and space.



The Foundations of Venice underwater Source: piecesofvenice.com.

Mutalaka in Nsiamfumu Picture taken by the artist during his trip





Makayabu - Codfish - Baccalà

A Symbol of Connection and Colonisation

Beau's exploration of **makayabu** - the salted, dried codfish found in Congolese markets - has driven him to undertake a broader investigation into the role of **codfish** in the history of globalisation. This unassuming marine creature has profoundly shaped economic and cultural systems across continents, serving as both a vital resource and a symbol of exploitation. Salted and dried, cod enabled long sea voyages, sustaining explorers and colonisers as they expanded trade routes and established empires. It became a commodity that connected disparate worlds while simultaneously symbolising domination and displacement.

In Congolese markets, makayabu remains a staple, an imported product with deep colonial roots. Disundi's artistic practice interrogates this history, using the codfish as a lens to examine the interconnected legacies of colonialism and globalization. For him, makayabu embodies the duality of dislocation and resilience - on one hand representing the imposition of colonial economies, and on the other reflecting the adaptive strategies of local cultures that have incorporated it into their traditions. In the previous pages: Mutalaka and wooden boat in Nsiamfumu Pictures taken by the artist during his trip

His investigation of codfish transcends its historical role, becoming deeply personal as well. The fish's migration from the cold waters of Norway to distant ports mirrors the artist own journey from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Europe. Through this lens, codfish becomes a poignant metaphor for his experience of navigating life between two worlds, negotiating the tensions of cultural displacement and synthesis.

Makayabu

Le Poisson Salé, Bien Séché



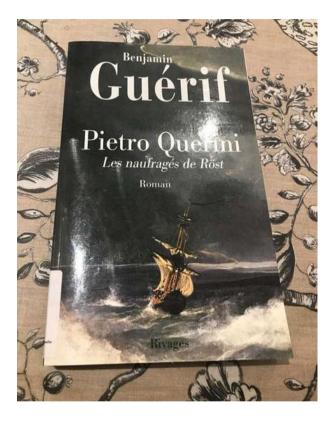




In this sense, Beau's residency in Venice became a turning point in his inquiry, offering a platform to expand his exploration of the codfish as a symbol of colonialism and capitalism. During his research, he uncovered the story of **Pietro Querini**, a 15th-century Venetian merchant who, after a shipwreck off the coast of Norway, encountered dried cod. Querini introduced this fish to Venice, where it became known as **baccalà** and was integrated into the city's culinary traditions, remaining a beloved staple to this day.

In the previous pages: Makayabu cardboard; Baccalà shop at Rialto fish market in Venice. Pictures taken by the artist.

Above from left: Dried local fish on the mutalaka in Nsiamfumu; Codfish at Rialto fish market in Venice. Pictures taken by the artist.

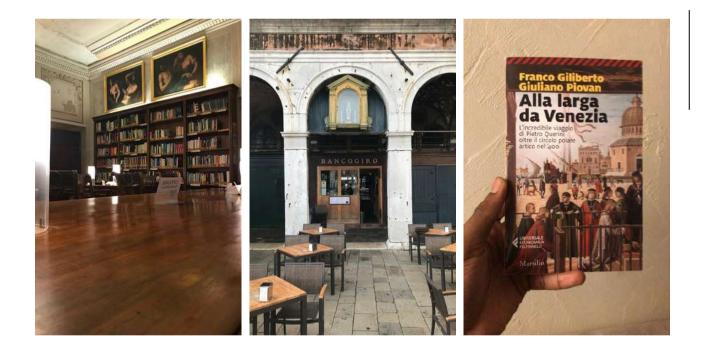


Book cover of Pietro Querini: Les naufragés de Röst by Benjamin Guérif. Picture taken by the artist.

For Beau, Querini's story held a striking resonance. Like Pietro, whose journey was marked by unexpected encounters and transformative discoveries, the artist himself perceives his own life and work as a kind of **dérive** - a creative wandering through histories, places, and ideas. Reflecting on this, he notes, "When you go and you don't know where this leads, you find parts of yourself."

His time in Venice provided a space for such wandering, allowing him to weave together the threads of history, identity, and artistic expression.

The fact that the same fish is known as makayabu in Congo and baccalà in Venice underscores the global connections Disundi seeks to explore. It highlights how a single commodity can carry multiple cultural meanings, reflecting both shared histories and localized adaptations.



Again, the narrowness of Venice's alleys and canals became a powerful metaphor in the artist's work. They represent the constraints imposed by globalisation and colonialism, which often narrow and confine cultural identities. Yet, these same constraints can inspire resilience, adaptation, and ingenuity - qualities that are evident both in the cultural histories he examines and in his own artistic practice. Through his work, Disundi continues to uncover the complex interplay of connection and confinement that shapes the global narrative, bringing new perspectives to the historical and cultural forces that define our world. Above from left: Querini-Stampalia Library view; Old Bancogiro spot at Rialto fish market in Venice; Book cover of Alla Larga da Venezia by Franco Giliberto and Giuliano Piovan. Pictures taken by the artist.





From Cardboard to Grid

Material as a Metaphor

Beau's artistic materials embody his journey through diverse cultural and historical landscapes. While studying architecture in Kinshasa, he discovered makayabu cardboard, traditionally used for packaging salted fish. This material, repurposed in local Congolese markets, serves as a symbolic bridge between indigenous practices and global systems. The artist embraced it as a primary medium to delve into the intersections of Congolese culture and the colonial histories linked to the codfish trade.

In Europe, Nzazi integrated the metal grid into his artwork, a structure that reflects the Western preoccupation with order and classification. By intertwining cardboard and canvas within the grid, he creates compositions that examine the balance between emptiness and fullness, chaos and control. The grid functions as both a limitation and a catalyst for creativity, echoing the tensions experienced in navigating two cultural realms.

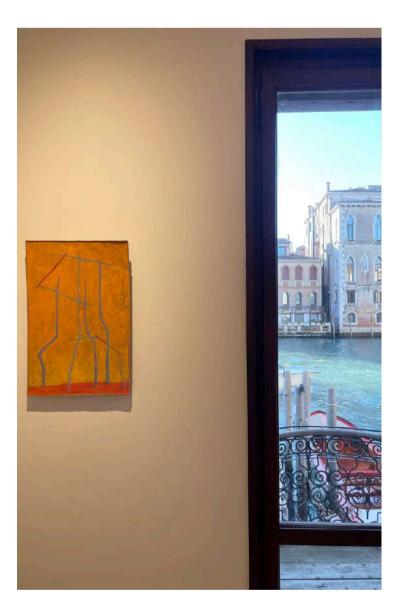
For Disundi, the act of weaving the grid is profoundly personal. It symbolizes a healing journey, reconciling the masculine and feminine facets of his identity. The grid's rigidity represents the masculine, while the softness of the woven materials signifies the feminine. Together, they form a harmonious composition that mirrors the artist's broader pursuit of balance amidst the intricate layers of identity and history.



Above: Works on cardboard in progress by Beau Disundi Nzazi at AKKA Project Venice pop up studio

In the previous pages: Installation shot of Strangest start, 2024, pastels and pen on makayabu cardboard, 39 x 174 cm





In the previous page: Beau Disundi Nzazi at AKKA Project Venice with makayabu cardboards

On the left:

Installation shot of Mutalaka à Nsiamfumu, 2024, pastels on makayabu cardboard, 58 x 39 cm



Above from left (installation shot): Anchoringsickness / Dérive, 2024, pastels on makayabu cardboard, 58 x 39 cm L'Ecart entre Bruges, Venise at Nsiamfumu, 2024, pastels on makayabu cardboard, 58 x 39 cm Girovagare sull'acqua alta, 2024, pastels on makayabu cardboard, 39 x 58 cm



Above from left (installation shot): Extraction landscape, 2024, pastels on makayabu cardboard, 39 x 58 cm Cercle d'Equité Ottoman, 2024, pastels on makayabu cardboard, 58 x 39 cm

In the next page: Installation shot of Attrape lune au crépuscule, 2024, pastels on makayabu cardboard, 58 x 117 cm





The Kongo Cosmogram

Cycles and Cultural Transformation

The **Kongo Cosmogram** is an ancient symbol that has long held significant meaning for the people of the Kongo region, reflecting the cyclical nature of life, death, and spiritual rebirth. It is a visual representation of life's continuous flow, with its distinct shapes and orientations symbolising various stages of existence and the interconnections between the living, the dead, and the divine. For Beau Disundi Nzazi, the Kongo Cosmogram offers more than just a representation of time; it becomes a framework for understanding the movement of cultural identity, migration, and history.

In his work, Beau employs the Kongo Cosmogram as a tool to interpret the personal and collective transformations that occur across time. His use of the symbol is not just about visual representation but about articulating a deeper understanding of how cultural forces, histories, and identities cycle and evolve. The cosmogram acts as a compass, guiding individuals through their own journeys of selfdiscovery, displacement, and the search for belonging, while highlighting the entangled histories of Africa and the wider world.

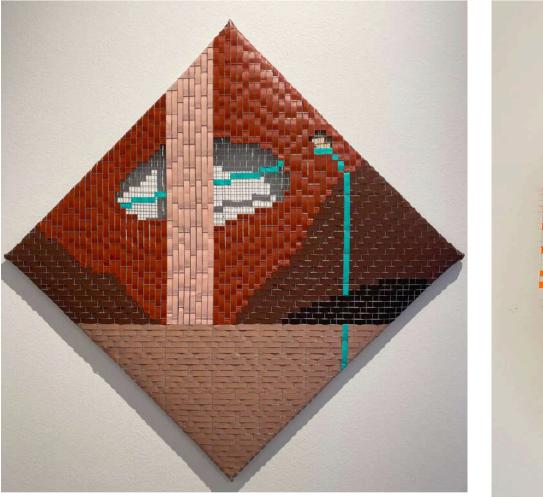
The artist draws parallels between this cosmogram and his own experiences of **exodus** - the feeling of being in a constant state of movement and flux. Just as the cosmogram illustrates the ongoing, cyclical nature of existence, Disundi reflects on how he navigates through different cultural identities and historical narratives. His artistic process becomes a way of retracing these steps, understanding how the past and present intersect, and seeking a kind of spiritual and cultural return. In the previous page: Burning bush, 2024, acrylics on canvas and metal grid, 75 x 75 cm

The notion of exodus in his work refers to the forced migrations, displacements, and transformations that have shaped the African diaspora, as well as his own journey between the Congo and Europe. Each element of the Kongo Cosmogram resonates with this journey - representing an ongoing movement through multiple spaces, experiences, and cultures. It is a cycle that connects the individual to the collective history, offering a way to understand the deeply rooted ties that bind people to their past, their ancestors, and their evolving identities.

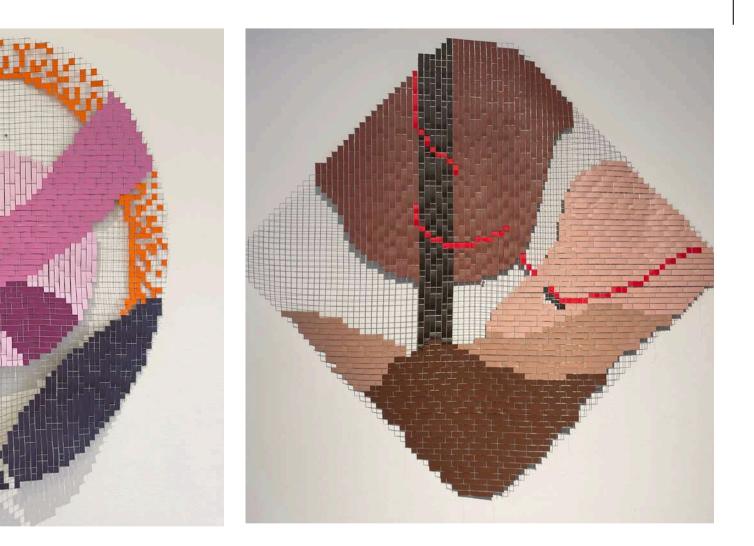
The Kongo Cosmogram serves as a reminder of how cultural elements, whether objects, practices, or memories, travel and transform across continents. The codfish, for example, mirrors this journey as it crosses from the waters of the North Atlantic to the African continent.

Through this symbolic framework, The artist invites us to consider the cyclical nature of history - not as a fixed narrative, but as an ongoing process of change, adaptation, and renewal. His exploration of the Kongo Cosmogram urges us to reflect on how we are part of these cycles, navigating our own paths through histories and experiences that are constantly in flux, always seeking balance, meaning, and connection. Below and on the next page (from left):

Odyssé, 2024, acrylics on canvas and metal grid, 100 x 100 cm Essaim, 2024, acrylics on canvas and metal grid, 100 x 80 cm Peregrination, 2024, acrylics on canvas and metal grid, 102 x 100 cm











Installation shot of Anchoringsicknness / Exodus, 2024, acrylics on canvas, velvet and metal grid, 120 x 160 cm

Anchoringsickness

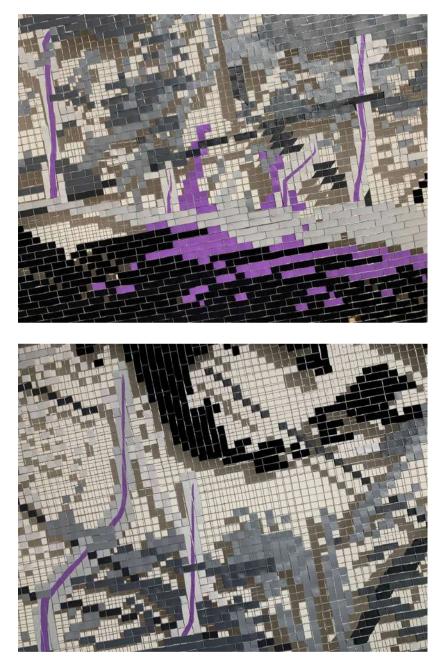
The Outcome of this Journey

Thus, the title of the show - 'Anchoringsickness' emerges from a deeply personal exploration of disconnection, both individual and collective, in a world that feels increasingly unmoored.

"For me as an artist, it represents an inner tension, a kind of existential vertigo, that arises from the absence of coherent anchors. These anchors could be historical, cultural, or spiritual, yet their absence leaves us adrift, clinging to symbols, identities, or systems that fail to resonate with our true essence or lived experiences", says Beau.

This concept goes beyond the search for personal identity; it reflects a broader need to feel grounded in the world, to find a sense of belonging that bridges the personal and the universal. In reflecting on this, Disundi began to see how this disconnection also intertwines with larger structures: capitalism, colonialism, and globalisation have uprooted not just economies but entire cultures, histories, and identities. The term 'anchoringsickness' embodies this collective loss and dislocation from the foundations that connect individuals to something greater, be it a community, history, or the natural world.

Again, the artist states: "As an artist, my work seeks to engage with this fragility of stability. My own journey, shaped by global histories and cultural displacement, mirrors this larger narrative. 'Anchoringsickness' speaks to that experience: the push and pull between longing for roots and grappling with the reality of constant movement and transformation. Through this exhibition, I aim to navigate these tensions, asking how we might rediscover connection by embracing a more fluid and expansive understanding of what it means to belong in a world that is perpetually in motion."



Details of Anchoringsicknness / Exodus, 2024, acrylics on canvas, velvet and metal grid, 120 x 160 cm



Installation shot of Anchoricksickness, a solo show by Beau Disundi Nzazi at AKKA Project Venice, small works on metal grid

The Residency Outcome



Installation shot of Anchoricksickness, a solo show by Beau Disundi Nzazi at AKKA Project Venice,

Gestation

'Gestation (it looks like me now)" is a monumental installation by Disundi that serves as the cornerstone of the artist's practice, bridging his academic journey and professional explorations in Venice. Created as his thesis project for the Master of Fine Arts at ENSAV La Cambre (Brussels), the piece interrogates themes of globalisation, identity, and historical entanglements through a deeply symbolic representation of the codfish.

Central to the installation is a massive depiction of the codfish rendered in a pixelated, cartographic form. Its sheer scale transforms it into a metaphorical landmass, integrating maps and grids to evoke a sense of territoriality and movement. The fish's contours, reminiscent of digital mappings, suggest its dual nature as both a static and agile entity, emblematic of the processes of exploration, conquest, and economic transformation that have shaped the modern world.

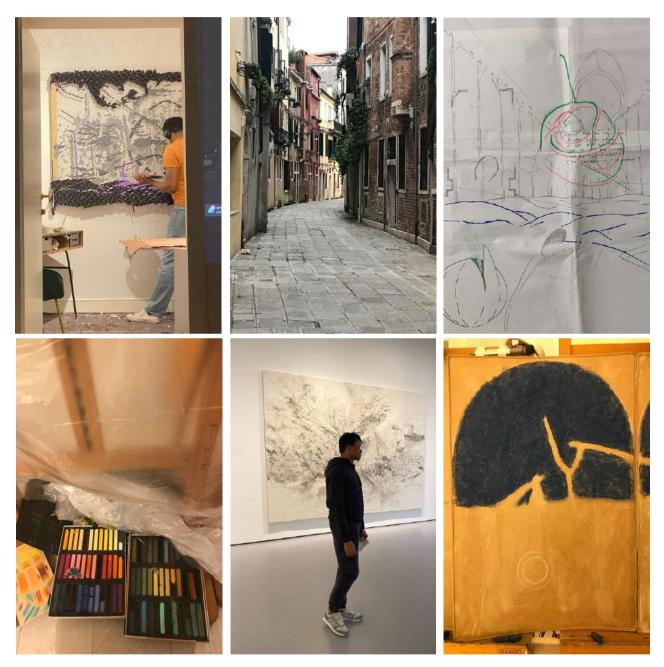
Surrounding the codfish are interwoven crosses, symbolising two interconnected forces of change: the deaths wrought by colonial exploitation and the spiritual disruptions of syncretic beliefs imposed through cultural imperialism. The codfish itself, central yet fragmented, becomes a vessel for the convergence of disparate histories, economies, and ideologies. Its form, both rigid and flowing, evokes the fluid but domineering nature of capital and globalisation. Disundi's use of archival materials and a dreamlike aesthetic reflects a meticulous blending of fact and fiction, creating a visual language that explores the links between Africa and the wider world. The work references the codfish's historic role in colonial expansion, from being a staple of maritime explorers to its contemporary identity as a luxury item with sociocultural implications in Kinshasa. This focus allows the artist to examine how commodities carry layered histories of exploitation, resistance, and cultural assimilation.

The work represents the beginning of Disundi's engagement with the concept of dérive - the act of wandering driftina and that uncovers new perspectives. This idea, developed further during his Venice residency, is integral to the artist's practice. The codfish, as a symbol of transformation, becomes a lens through which Disundi examines the intersections of history, memory, and identity. The installation challenges viewers to confront the hidden legacies of colonialism while considering how these histories shape contemporary cultural and economic landscapes.

Ultimately, the work positions the codfish as a multifaceted entity: a symbol of sustenance, a marker of historical violence, and an agent of globalization. Through its colossal presence, Disundi invites viewers to reflect on the forces that shape our world and the possibilities for reimagining the ties between past, present, and future.



Gestation (it looks like me now), 2024, acrylics on canvas, velvet and makayabu cardboard on metal grid 395 × 730 × 3 cm





Artist's Statement Beau Disundi Nzazi

"Congo gave me the cardboard, Europe the grid. Indeed, since my arrival in Europe, I've been weaving and meshing my thoughts, my quest, using a metal grid as a basic support to organize and present the elements that form an integral part of my creative endeavors, including doubts and questions. The grid carries this charge of order, this obsession with classification, which for me are characteristic of European thought and history. It's by hybridizing African and European sources, and more specifically Congolese and Belgian, and by placing the cardboard on the grid, that I can attempt to discover and reveal this multiple and complex identity that is undoubtedly mine. And through my particular case, both fundamental (for me) and derisory (for the rest of the world), I try to chronicle the history of our peoples, our regions, our cultures, our economies, and the shock of their encounter."

Beau Disundi Nzazi

Resume Beau Disundi Nzazi

Solo exhibitions:

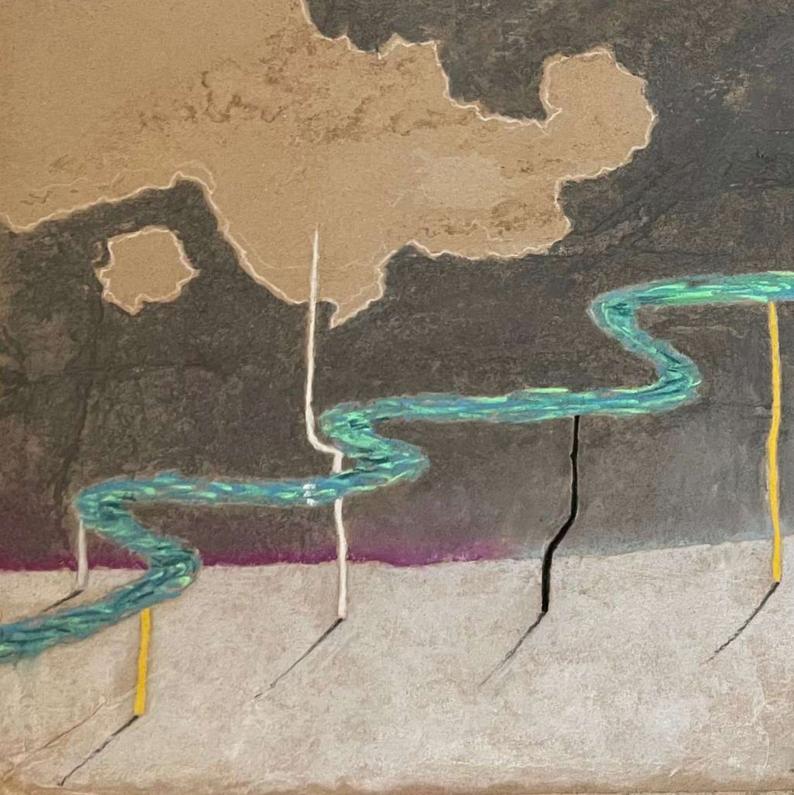
- Anchoringsickness, AKKA Project Venezia, Venice, Italy
- Amnésie collectif, Scac marestaing, Toulouse, France

Selected group exhibitions:

- Nexus, Artesio, Brussels, Belgium
 - Clap-clap-clap, 34zero Muzeum, Belgium
 - Le Sas, KBK Brussels, Belgium
- Décloisonnement, MDA, Brussel, Belgium
- VIII YEARS, Galerie Duret, Brussel, Belgium
- Lien Miroir, La Galerie 3.1, Toulouse, France
 - Breaking the mould: new signatures from The Democratic Republic of Congo, 198 contemporary Arts gallery, London, UK
 - Entre chien et loup, Tourist office, Nasbinals, France
- Art Tembo, French Institute, Kinshasa, D.R. Congo
- Biennale de Sculpteur de Ouagadougou, French Institute, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
 - Art Tembo, KinArtStudio, Kinshasa, D.R. Congo
- Permanent exhibition, Bilembo, Kinshasa, D.R. Congo

Residencies and Prizes:

- Residency AKKA Project Artist's Residency Program in Venice, Italy
- Research residency, Royal Museum for central Africa (RMCA, now: AfricaMuseum), Tervuren, Belgium
- Residency Scac Marestaing, Toulouse, France
- Residency Nasbinals, Lozère, France
- 2019 Residency Biennale de sculpture d'Ouagadougou,Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
 - Award Second price of Biennale de sculpture d'Ouagadougou, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
 - Residency Art Tembo, Kinshasa, D.R. Congo Award Public price of Art Tembo, Kinshasa, D.R. Congo





About AKKA Project

AKKA Project introduces an innovative dimension to the gallery experience, offering a vibrant showcase of unique contemporary art from Africa and cultural initiatives in Dubai, Venice, and Lugano. As a commercial gallery and project space, AKKA Project is dedicated to promoting and supporting artists of African descent.

Our galleries serve as intimate spaces carefully curated to encompass a diverse range of mediums. Each artwork and project we present reflects a personal journey, encapsulating the unique experiences encountered while exploring the multifaceted African art scene. In our commitment to nurturing and enhancing the creative process of our artists, AKKA Project organizes artist residencies in Venice, with a particular emphasis on young artists. We relish the freedom that the gallery space provides, allowing us to redefine the concept of a 'gallery' both artistically and conceptually, while also serving as a catalyst for change within the broader community.

We represent African contemporary artists working across disciplines, with a key focus on championing our artists through curated solo exhibitions and collaborative initiatives. We emphasize contextual specificity in art, focusing on the particular context in which a piece of art is created and understood. This involves considering the cultural, historical, social, and geographical factors that influence the artwork. By highlighting these aspects, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of the artwork's significance and relevance, ensuring that the art is not viewed in isolation but as part of a broader narrative that includes the artist's background, the societal issues they address, and the cultural traditions they draw upon. This approach allows for a more nuanced appreciation of the art and its ability to convey diverse perspectives and realities.

In addition to planned and curated exhibitions, AKKA Project facilitates presentations and exhibitions by visiting lecturers, guest artists and curators.

A.R.P. The Concept

The AKKA Project Venice **Artist Residency Program** is dedicated to young artists from Africa, providing them with an enriching experience at AKKA Project Venice, located in the cultural and artistic heart of the Venetian lagoon. Each year, the residency program invites 2-3 innovative artists to elevate their artistic practice in this vibrant international setting.

This residency complements the artistic and cultural schedule of AKKA Project, a gallery promoting contemporary art from Africa through its venues in Venice, Dubai, and Lugano. By supporting artists in their artistic and personal growth, the residency allows them to experiment with their creative processes in an international context. Artists have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the rich cultural heritage of Venice and Italy, creating new points of encounter and international art scenes.

AKKA Project organizes a tailored educational program built according to the ambitions, interests, and techniques of the hosted artist. This approach fosters a greater connection between the artist and the local environment, offering a comprehensive overview of the cultural landscape. In addition to visits to cultural sites in Venice and Italy, artists are invited to participate in talks and workshops with local artists, enhancing their exposure and engagement.

During the residency, artists create a dedicated portfolio of works rooted in their current practice, enriched by their experiences in Venice. This portfolio is then showcased in a solo exhibition at AKKA Project Venice at the end of the residency, highlighting the growth and development achieved during their stay.



The catalog is published on the occasion of the solo exhibition Anchoringsickness by Beau Disundi Nzazi. The exhibition is the result of Beau Disundi Nzazi's artistic residency at AKKA Project Venice from 14.09 to 28.11.2024.

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