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IN VENICE  
FORUM

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A Guide to the Venice Biennale

**THROUGH AN AFRICAN LENS**

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# THROUGH AN AFRICAN LENS

COVER IMAGE

**Gerard Sekoto** (South African 1913-1993), *Self Portrait*,  
invited to Venice Biennale Arte 2024 curated by Adriano Pedrosa.

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# NO LONGER OUTSIDERS

African artists will be a dominant force at this year's Venice Biennale



*Wherever you go, and wherever you are at this year's Venice Biennale, you will always encounter African artists.*

**I**n a further consolidation of the African continent's unstoppable presence at the Venice Biennale, which opens to the public on Saturday, 20 April 2024, this year a total of 13 African countries will present official national pavilions. It is the largest-ever participation by African nations in the 129-year history of this Italian art spectacle. First time participants include Benin, Ethiopia and Tanzania, while Senegal will participate for the first time with its own pavilion.

Adding to the overall mood of positivity, an outsize number of artists from Africa and its globe-spanning diaspora will show in various exhibitions across Venice. Works by over 50 modern and contemporary artists from more than a dozen African countries – among them Kudzanai Chiurai, Inji Efflatoun, Ben Enwonwu, Ibrahim El-Salahi, Gabrielle Goliath, Gerard Sekoto and Irma Stern – are scheduled to appear in curator Adriano Pedrosa's main curated exhibition, *Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere: Nucleo Contemporaneo / Nucleo Storico*. Artists from Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa will be especially dominant.

Additionally, artists of African descent will prominently feature in the pavilions of longstanding exhibitor nations from Europe and North America. Kapwani Kiwanga, a Canadian artist of Tanzanian descent, will represent Canada, while celebrated British filmmaker John Akomfrah, who is of Ghanaian descent, will represent Great Britain. French Caribbean artist Julien Creuzet will represent France. Portuguese-Angolan artist Mónica de Miranda will appear with others in the Portuguese national pavilion. Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise, a controversial collective made up of some two-dozen Congolese artists, will represent The Netherlands.

The everywhere presence of African artists at this year's Venice Biennale – in the main curated exhibition spread across the Giardini and Arsenale, as well as 18 of the 88 national pavilions and two of the 30 collateral projects – speaks more broadly to emergence of the Global South as a cultural force in Venice. In 2015, Nigerian-born curator Okwui Enwezor became the first African to artistically direct the Venice Biennale. Now, in a first for South America, Brazilian-born Pedrosa has been tapped to curate this year's edition.

Pedrosa's title for the 2024 Venice Biennale, *Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere*, quotes a series of text-based neon works by Paris-born and Palermo-based collective Claire Fontaine (aka Fulvia Carnevale and James Thornhill). The artwork spells out the phrase "foreigners everywhere" in several different languages and was inspired by the name of an Italian anti-racist collective, *Stranieri Ovunque*. Pedrosa's curatorial approach emphasises themes of migration and decolonization.

"Artists have always travelled and moved about, under various circumstances, through cities, countries and continents, something that has only accelerated since the late 20th century – ironically a period marked by increasing restrictions regarding the dislocation or displacement of people," says Pedrosa. The primary focus of the 2024 Venice Biennale, adds Pedrosa, is thus "artists who are themselves foreigners, immigrants, expatriates, diasporic, émigrés, exiled, or refugees – particularly those who have moved between the Global South and the Global North."



**Chloé Quenum** - *Epopée* (2023), ©Arthur Pequin, Benin Pavilion 2024





# MAIN EXHIBITION

Simon Lekgetho, *Self Portrait* (South African 1957), invited to Biennale Arte 2024 curated by Adriano Pedrosa.  
Revisions Collection Courtesy of Norval Foundation. Image courtesy of Amber Alcock.



**T**his year's Venice Biennale looks set to deliver a vivid encounter with kindred strangers, many from the African continent and its diaspora. This guide provides an overview of who is showing where.

## MAIN EXHIBITION

**Title:** Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere: Nucleo Contemporaneo and Nucleo Storico

**Curator:** Adriano Pedrosa

**Artists:** Of the 331 artists and collectives on view, 54 will be from Africa. They are Mariam Abdel-Aleem (Egypt), Leilah Babirye (Uganda), Ezekiel Baroukh (Egypt), Baya, aka Bordj El Kiffan (Algeria), Aly Ben Salem (Tunisia), Mohammed Chebaa (Morocco), Kudzanai Chiurai (Zimbabwe), Inji Efflatoun (Egypt), Uzo Egonu (Nigeria), Ibrahim El-Salahi (Sudan), Ben Enwonwu (Nigeria), Hamed Ewais (Egypt), Dumile Feni (South Africa), Victor Fotso Nyie (Cameroon), Sàngódáre Gbádégesin Àjàlá (Nigeria), Gabrielle Goliath (South Africa), Tahia Halim (Sudan), Nazek Hamdi (Egypt), Mohamed Hamidi (Morocco), Evan Ifekoya (Nigeria), Mohammed Issiakhem (Algeria), Nour Jaouda (Egypt), Mohammed Kacimi (Morocco), Bouchra Khalili (Morocco), Kiluanji Kia Henda (Angola), Shalom Kufakwatenzi (Zimbabwe), Grace Salome Kwami (Ghana), Maggie Laubser (South Africa), Simon Lekgetho (South Africa), Bertina Lopes (Mozambique), Esther Mahlangu (South Africa), Ernest Mancoba (South Africa), Josiah Manzi (Zimbabwe), Mohamed Melehi (Morocco), Gladys Mgudlandlu (South Africa), Sabelo Mlangeni (South Africa), Ahmed Morsi (Egypt), Effat Naghi (Egypt), Malangatana Valente Ngwenya (Mozambique), Taylor Nkomo (Zimbabwe), Uche Okeke (Nigeria), Lydia Ourahmane (Algeria), George Pemba (South Africa), Mahmoud Saïd (Egypt), Gerard Sekoto (South Africa), Doreen Sibanda (Zimbabwe), Lucas Sithole (South Africa), Irma Stern (South Africa), Twins Seven Seven (Nigeria), Ahmed Umar (Sudan), Agnes Waruguru (Kenya), Susanne Wenger (Nigeria), Nil Yalter (Egypt), Ramses Younan (Egypt)

**Overview:** Pedrosa's main curated exhibition will showcase contemporary and historical work under separate titles. "Nucleo Contemporaneo" will privilege work by contemporary queer artists, outsider artists, folk artists and indigenous artists. This section will also showcase Italian curator Marco Scotini's Disobedience Archive, a video archive focusing on the relationships between artistic practices and activism.

"Nucleo Storico" is devoted to the idea of global modernisms and modernisms in the Global South. Spread across three rooms, it will present works – mostly paintings but also works on paper and sculpture – by artists from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East active in the period 1905 to 1990.

**Venues:** Giardini and Arsenale





# AFRICAN PAVILIONS

Maggie Laubser, *Meidjie* (c. 1930s, invited to Biennale Arte 2024 curated by Adriano Pedrosa.  
Revisions Collection Courtesy of Norval Foundation. Image courtesy of Amber Alcock.



## AFRICAN PAVILIONS

### 1. Benin

Title: Everything Precious Is Fragile

Curator: Azu Nwagbogu

Artists: Chloé Quenum, Moufouli Bello, Ishola Akpo, Romuald Hazoumè

Venue: Arsenale

**Overview:** "Everything Precious Is Fragile" will explore the rich history of Benin, touching on themes such as the slave trade, the Amazon motif, spirituality, and the Vodun religion. It also delves into the contemporary realm with the Gèlèdé philosophy, focusing on "rematriation", a feminist interpretation of restitution that advocates not only the return of objects but also Beninese philosophy and ideals predating the colonial era.



Romuald Hazoume, *Roulette Béninoise* (2004), Baryte print

### 2. Cameroon

Title: Nemo propheta in patria ("no man is a prophet in his own land")

Curators: Paul Emmanuel Loga Mahop and Sandro Orlandi Stagl

Artists: Jean Michel Dissake, Hako Hankson, Kendji & Ollo Arts, Patrick-Joël Tatcheda Yonkeu, Guy Wouete, Angelo Accardi, Julia Bornefeld, Cesare Catania, Adélaïde Laurent-Bellue, Franco Mazzucchelli, Rex and Edna Volcan, Giorgio Tentolini, Liu Youju

Venue: Palazzo Donà delle Rose, Fondamente Nove, 5038



### **3. Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**

**Title:** Lithium

**Curators:** Michele Gervasuti and James Putnam

**Artists:** Aimé Mpane, Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga, Eddy Eketé, Jean Katambayi Mukendi, Cédric Sungo, Steve Bandoma, Eléonore Hellio and Michel Ekeba of the collective Kongo Astronauts

**Venue:** Gervasuti Foundation - Palazzo Canova, Calle longa Santa Caterina, Cannaregio 4998 - 5001/a

### **4. Egypt**

**Title:** Drama

**Curator/ artist:** Wael Shawky

**Venue:** Giardini

**Overview:** The oldest of the African national pavilions in Venice, Shawky's presentation will take historiographical and literary references as starting points for his concentrated narratives, in which he interweaves fable, fact and fiction. Tackling notions of national, religious and artistic identity through film, performance, painting and sculpture, Shawky frames contemporary culture through the lens of historical tradition, and vice versa.

### **5. Ethiopia**

**Title:** Prejudice and belonging

**Curator:** Lemn Sissay

**Artist:** Tesfaye Urgessa

**Venue:** Palazzo Bollani, Castello 3647

**Overview:** Painter Tesfaye Urgessa is best known for his large figurative works that reflect his personal experiences with racism after moving from Ethiopia to Germany. His work fuses Ethiopian iconography with motifs and domestic scenarios typical of contemporary European figurative painting.

### **6. Ivory Coast**

**Title:** The Blue Note

**Curator:** Simon Njami

**Artists:** Jems Koko Bi, François Xavier Gbré, Sadikou Oukpedjo, Franck Abd-Bakar Fanny, Marie Claire Messouma

**Venue:** Centro Culturale Don Orione Artigianelli - Dorsoduro 947

**Overview:** In 2007, French-Cameroonian curator Simon Njami courted controversy when he and artist Fernando Alvim curated the African Pavilion at the invitation of Venice Biennale artistic director Robert Storr. What was missed in all the noise was Njami's preference for working with progressive artists. His selection this year includes the French-Ivorian photographer François-Xavier Gbré, known for his fastidious yet experimental landscape photographs of a transforming West Africa.



Agnes Waruguru, *Private Springs II* (2020), Sold by Strauss & Co, R 22 278 (USD 1 174)

## 7. Kenya

Title: Roots of Return

Curator: Edward Mwaura Ndekere

Artists: The Mutuma Marangu Sculpture and Art Collection (TMMSAC) including Elkana Ong'esa, Gerald Oroo Motondi, Robin Okeyo Mbera, John Tabule Abuya Ogao, Peter Kenyanya Oendo, Charles Duke Kombo

**Overview:** The exhibition features stone sculptures made from basalt rock by a group of master sculptors shown at the Nairobi National Museum during the inaugural Africa Climate Summit and Africa Climate Week in 2023. Basalt rock has an extraordinary ability to capture and store carbon. The artists of TMMSAC believe that their stone pieces, which are diligently worked and polished, can provide a bridge across unreconciled but associated fields including geology and climate.





Yinka Shonibare, *Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 11.00 hours* (1998), Sold by Strauss & Co, R 364 160 (USD 19 159)



Prince Twins Seven-Seven, *Noah's Ark*, Sold by Strauss & Co, ZAR 79 730 (USD 4 199)





Ben Enwonwu MBE, *Path Through Trees* (1960), Sold by Strauss & Co, ZAR 624 250 (USD 32 842)

## 8. Nigeria

Title: Nigeria Imaginary

Curator: Aindrea Emelife

Artists: Tunji Adeniyi-Jones, Ndidi Dike, Onyeka Igwe, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Abraham Oghobase, Precious Okoyomon, Yinka Shonibare and Fatimah Tuggar

Venue: Palazzo Canal, Rio Terà Canal, Dorsoduro 3121

Overview: Nigeria Imaginary presents different perspectives and constructed ideas, memories, and nostalgias of the country, including an intergenerational and diasporic lens, to imagine a Nigeria for the future.



## 9. Senegal

Title: Bokk – Bounds

Curator: Massamba Mbaye

Artist: Alioune Diagne

Venue: Arsenale

**Overview:** Painter Alioune Diagne's solo showcase in the Senegalese pavilion crowns a year of ascendance. Winner of the public vote at the 2023 Sovereign African Art Prize, earlier this year Diagne presented eight paintings in his pointillist style that each explored the theme of illegal migration at sea. Refined over time, Diagne uses small modules, which he calls "unconscious signs", to constitute a final image.

## 10. South Africa

Title: Quiet Ground

Curator: Portia Malatjie

Artists: MADEYOULOOK (Molemo Moilola and Nare Mokgotho)

Venue: Arsenale

**Overview:** The exhibition is focused on the possibilities of personal and communal repair in a context of being "foreign at home" and will feature a newly commissioned sound installation, *Dinokana* (2024) by collaborating artists Molemo Moilola and Nare Mokgotho, aka MADEYOULOOK. Their work addresses forced migration and land dispossession in South Africa. The exhibition, and its parallel public programmes, will focus on the many ways that the dispossessed reconnect with the land through processes of rehomeing and land rehabilitation, rooted in indigenous knowledge

"The South African Pavilion, which features the work of art collective, MADEYOULOOK, is curated by Portia Malatjie with a exhibition titled *Quiet Ground*. It is a call to calm and reparative restfulness rooted in black and indigenous land-based practices in a world reeling with displacement, conflict and landlessness".



Installation view of *Mafolofolo: a place of recovery* (2022) at documenta fifteen, courtesy MADEYOULOOK and documenta15, photograph by Frank Sperling

### 11. Tanzania

Title: A Flight in Reverse Mirrors

Curator: Enrico Bittoto

Artists: Happy Robert, Naby, Haji Chilonga, Lutengano Mwakisopile

Venue: La Fabbrica del Vedere, Calle del Forno 3857

### 12. Uganda

Title: Wan Acel | Tuli Bamu | Turibamwe | We Are One

Curator: Elizabeth Acaye Kerunen

Artists: Artisan Weavers' Collective, Sana Gateja, Taga Nuwagaba, Xenson Ssenkaba, Jose Hendo, Odur Ronald

Venue: Bragora Gallery, Castello 3496

### 13. Zimbabwe

Title: Undone

Curator: Fadzai Veronica Muchemwa

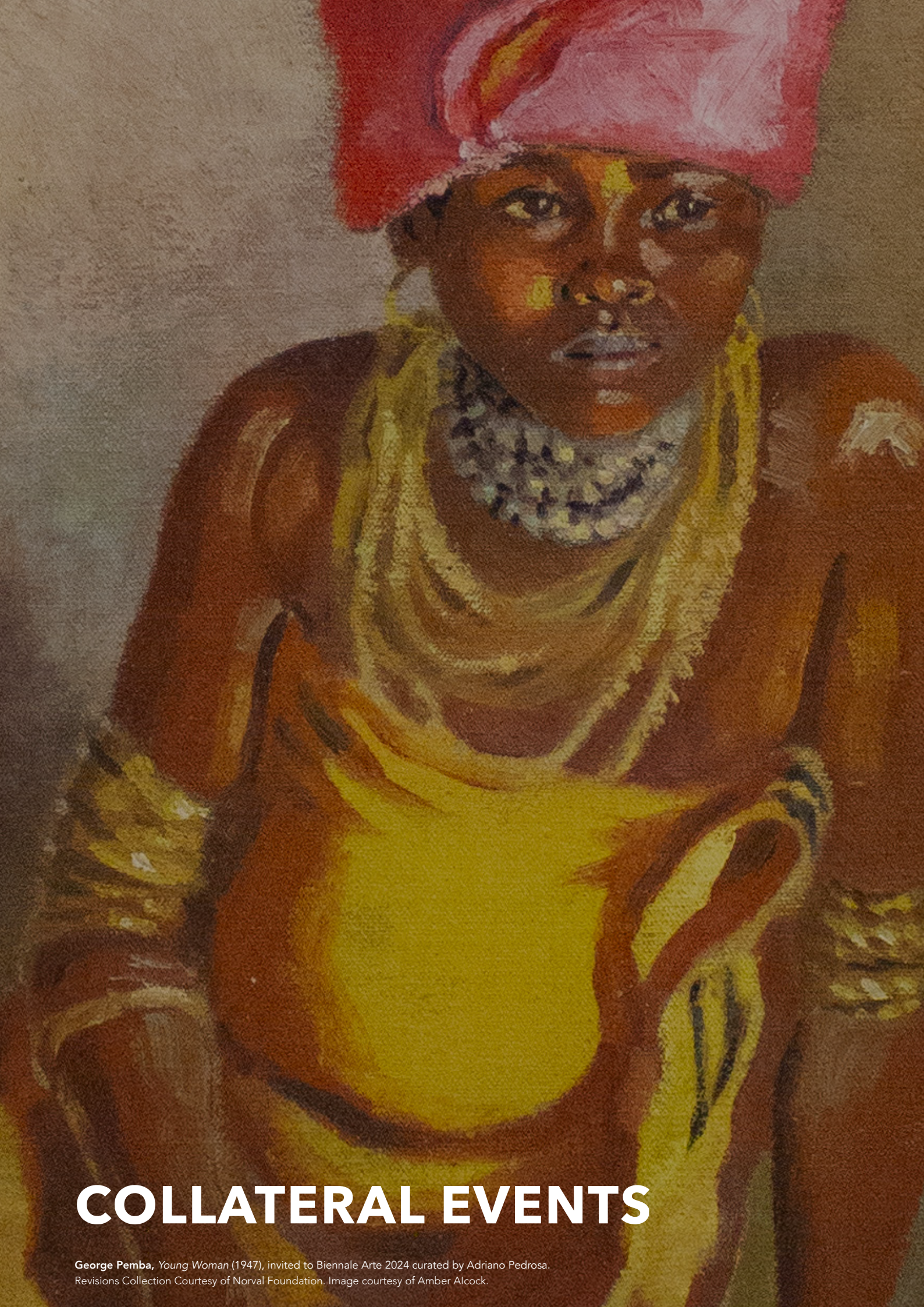
Artists: Gillian Rosselli, Kombo Chapfika, Moffat Takadiwa, Sekai Machache, Troy Makaza, Victor Nyakauru

Venue: Santa Maria della Pietà, Castello 3701



Malangatana Valente Ngwenya, *Crowd of Beasts* (1967/69), Sold by Strauss & Co, ZAR 51 156 (USD 2 699)





# COLLATERAL EVENTS

George Pemba, *Young Woman* (1947), invited to Biennale Arte 2024 curated by Adriano Pedrosa.  
Revisions Collection Courtesy of Norval Foundation. Image courtesy of Amber Alcock.



## COLLATERAL EVENTS

### **1. Dread Scott's All African Peoples' Consulate**

**Title:** All African Peoples' Consulate

**Curator:** Paul Bright

**Artist:** Dread Scott (aka Scott Tyler)

**Venue:** Castello Gallery, Castello 1636/A

**Overview:** New York-based Dread Scott's installation creates a functioning consulate for an imaginary Pan-African, Afrofuturist union of countries, promoting cultural and diplomatic relations. Visitors can apply for an All African People's Community passport or visa. Those of African descent will receive privileged status, including a personalized passport, while visitors from other states will receive a visa allowing them to visit.

### **2. Passengers in transit**

**Title:** Passengers in transit (working title)

**Curator:** Paula Nascimento, Oyindamola Faithful and Roger Niyigena Karera

**Artists:** April Bey, Christa David, Euridice Zaituna Kala, Joana Choumali and Thandiwe Muriu

**Venue:** Ex Farmacia Solveni, Dorsoduro 993-994

**Overview:** This exhibition brings together five Afro-descent female artists from Africa, the Caribbean and the USA. It reflects different perspectives and explores diverse ways of thinking about human subjectivity, language and foreignness in dialogue with the Biennale's central theme, *Foreigners Everywhere*. Mozambican artist Euridice Kala is a graduate of the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg. Now based in Paris, she is known for sculpturally animating photographs – her own as well as those of others – in compelling, multi-format installations.





# AFRICAN ART IN VENICE FORUM

## African Art in Venice Forum

The African Art in Venice Forum (AAVF) is a public and free discursive platform presented every two years in Venice, Italy during the opening week of the Biennale Internazionale dell'Arte di Venezia.

The event provides new opportunities to discover, learn, discuss, explore, and exchange topics and projects related to contemporary art from Africa and its diasporas. The AAVF 2024 is presented by African Art Dialogues in collaboration with Strauss & Co and Africa No Filter

**We will be hosting the [forum](#) on Tuesday, 16th April at the Hotel Monaco and Grand Canal, Venice.**

*Follow us on our social media [@aavforum](#) or subscribe to our [newsletter](#) to be updated about this year's exciting program. As in our past editions, we are committed to promoting meaningful dialogue around Modern and Contemporary African Art and providing a base for a multiplicity of voices from across the continent.*



INVITATION

Gerard Sekoto (South African, 1913-1993), Self Portrait,  
invited to Biennale Arte 2024, curated by Adriano Pedrosa.

The Directors of Strauss & Co invite you to a breakfast  
to celebrate the opening of the African Art in Venice Forum

Tuesday 16 April 2024 at 8:30am  
at The Hotel Monaco & Grand Canal in Venice

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TIME: 8:30am -10:00am  
ADDRESS: Hotel Monaco & Grand Canal, Venice  
RSVP: [HERE](#)  
MORE: [www.straussart.co.za](http://www.straussart.co.za)

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The breakfast will be followed by the African Art in Venice  
Forum (AAVF) starting at 10:00am. View the full AAVF program  
on [www.aavforum.com](http://www.aavforum.com)

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 KRONE





Irma Stern, *The Smoker* (1945), Sold by Strauss & Co, Sold for ZAR 17 156 250 (USD 905 331)

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# Strauss & Co





A Flight in Reverse Mirrors — Tanzanian Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Nigeria Imaginary — Nigerian Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Lithium — Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Prejudice and belonging — Ethiopian Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Nemo propheta in patria  
(“no man is a prophet in his own land”)  
Carniofoliani Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Bokk - Bounds — Senegalese Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Quiet Ground — South African Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Everything Precious is Fragile — Benin Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

The Blue Note — Ivory Coast Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Undone — Zimbabwean Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Drama — Egyptian Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Wan Ace | Tuli Bamu |  
Turibamwe | We Are One  
— Ugandan Pavilion  
Venice Biennale 2024

Cervusati Foundation - Palazzo Carnova,  
Calle longa Santa Caterina,  
Canneregio - 4938 - 500714

La Fabbrica del Vedere,  
Calle del Ferro 9357

Palazzo Dotti delle Rose,  
Fondamenta Nove, 5038

Palazzo Boliani,  
Castello 3647

Santa Maria della Pietà,  
Castello 3701

palazzo Canal, Rio Terza Canal,  
Dorsoduro 3121

Centro Culturale Don Orione  
Artigianelli - Dorsoduro 947

Brigone Gallery,  
Castello 3486

Ca' d'Albi



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