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## Tabita Rezaire

Tabita Rezaire's path as an artist, devotee, doula, and cacao farmer is all geared towards manifesting the divine in herself and beyond. As an eternal seeker, Tabita's yearning for connection finds expression in her cross-dimensional practices, which envision network sciences - organic, electronic and spiritual - as healing technologies to serve the shift towards heart consciousness.

Embracing digital, corporeal and ancestral memory, she digs into scientific imaginaries and mystical realms to tackle the colonial wounds and energetic misalignments that affect the songs of our body-mind-spirits. Tabita's work is rooted in time-spaces where technology and spirituality merge as fertile ground to nourish visions for connection and emancipation. Through screen interfaces, healing circles and land stewardship, her offerings aim to nurture our collective growth and expand our capacity for togetherness.

Tabita is based in French Guiana, where she is caring for AMAKABA a center for the arts of earth, body, and sky.

Her offerings have been shared widely - Centre Pompidou, Palais de Tokyo, Museum of Modern Art - Paris; MASP, São Paulo; Serpentine, ICA, V&A, Tate Modern- London; MoMa, New Museum, MoCADA - NY; Gropius Bau Berlin; and within international biennales in Sydney, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Lagos, Kochi, Athens, Helsinki, Busan, Berlin. She is represented by the Goodman Gallery.



Tabita Rezaire. Photo: Marcella Ruiz Cruz



Tabita Rezaire. Photo: Marcella Ruiz Cruz

Chus Martínez

# Tabita Rezaire: Calabash Nebula

*Tabita Rezaire. Calabash Nebula* is the title of an exhibition presenting recent works by Tabita Rezaire, *OMI: Yemoja Temple* (2024), the result of a collaboration between Rezaire, the artist and architect Yussef Agbo-Ola, and the biologists Alex Jordan and Anja Wegner from the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Konstanz and *Des/astres*, the last chapter of a trilogy including *Mamelles Ancestrales* (2019) and *Orbit Diapason* (2021). Jordan, a marine biologist who has collaborated with TBA21 in the past and the author of a world-famous experiment that proves that fish are capable of passing the mirror test and Wegner, a researcher investigating the capabilities of fish to become the architects of their own environments invited Rezaire and Agbo-Ola to join them on a trip to Tanzania.

Their research focused on a better understanding of the cognitive abilities of fish. Fish are too often perceived as being “stupid” and the lab Jordan leads has spent decades trying to describe the way fish perceive as well as how they are different from other beings but are still intelligent forms of life. Jordan often says humans “can’t help but take ourselves as the measure of all things. To leave our human world of experience and to put ourselves into the world of a fish is all but easy.”<sup>1</sup>

This change of perspective inspired the *Omi Temple*. Designed as a pavilion by Olaniyi Studio, the work is composed of a skin made of knitted textiles dyed indigo blue in Nigeria using centuries-old techniques. The fabric acts as the waters of Lake Tanganyika, where Jordan and Wegner have been conducting extensive research over the years. It shows abstract representations of the lake and sea organisms discovered and studied by the artist-scientist team during their dives in Tanzania and in other research stations. Inside the temple is a sonic experience combining ritual chants interwoven with

<sup>1</sup> Harald Rösch, “Interview with Alex Jordan: ‘Fish are not stupid, they’re just different!’,” Max Planck Institute (August 31, 2021), <https://www.mpg.de/17380891/alex-jordan-interview-fish>.

a recording of artistic and scientific reflections on the water ecosystem of the future. In the past two decades we have been exposed to information, research, and data that support new evidence of life. The materiality of this data is often expressed in a graphic forms, creating a new objectivity that invites the viewers to embrace what science discovers automatically and says about life. However, a growing number of people, probably an unprecedented number, choose to ignore important findings about the climate, about water, about the impact human activities have on other living beings. There are plenty of explanations for this phenomenon; a simple one is the growing feeling of losing touch with reality that many citizens are experiencing. A sense of loss of individual relevance has awakened a sense of frustration that brings individuals closer to radical solutions, shortcuts that create the illusion of a transformative force running through society. This constitutes an unconscious reason for the growing interest many artists have shown in traditional forms of forming attachments to the bigger and fundamental questions that affect the health of the planet and the texture of the cosmos. This is the case for Rezaire, not only with this work but throughout her practice. She turns to myths, knowledge, and cognitive practices exercised by non-Western cultures often suppressed by the Colonial power and their way of structuring the extraction of natural, physical, and mental resources from the occupied territories. *OMI: Yemoja Temple* is dedicated to the water spirit of Yemoja. The Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria give thanks to the water spirit known as Yemoja, an ancient goddess believed to be the maternal figure to the hundreds of nature-based Orishas the Yoruba people revere. Orishas are the deities venerated by almost all West African peoples. The term "deity" is misleading since it implies an anthropomorphic figure, but Orishas are more abstract, more of a force than a form. Yemoja worship has a function in society; it brings a community together. This celestial being is seen as a caring, protective, and healing figure, and her association with water and the seas provides a sense of calmness and communion.

The second work on view is a hut that houses *Des/astres* (2024), a video work that continues Rezaire's investigation into visualizations and readings of the skies. A wooden hut with a roof of palm leaves houses a spherical screen and a series of hammocks made in the traditional Kali'na handwoven cotton from French Guiana. The recreation of a communal place in

a rural village in French Guiana or other Indigenous places is a clear allusion to the fact that we should put aside what we think we know about astronomy to contemplate other kinds of knowledge and ways of interpreting the stars. But, as the title says, while our society has always been keen on asking the stars for clues about our future, what the stars actually talk about is the ecological disasters our species originated. Divided into four sections: forest, water, stone, and cosmos, every section reflects on both calamities and also emerging cosmo-visions as well as the spiritual and ecological answers forming a new political force worldwide. Departing from the local context of French Guiana, the work opens up to speak of global affaires:

Forest: Amazonian forest, deforestation, industrial farming, sacred trees and the connection between earth and cosmos, trees and plants as technology to travel through worlds.

Water: mercury pollution in rivers, the plastic ocean, drought, water spirits, sacred waters, underwater cosmos, primordial waters.

Stone: roche mère, mountain creation and disappearance, stones circles, solar alignment, stones as technology to understand and observe sky travels.

Cosmos: the spaceport in French Guiana, space colonization, western approach to sky intimacy.

There are two very important elements in Rezaire's work: learning from ancient knowledge to imagine a new way of life and the importance of the artistic practice in enhancing what neuroscientists call conceptual blending<sup>2</sup>. Technology and a wild editing are a perfect method to mimic the way the brain actually generates ideas—blending very different scenarios, testimonies, images, and vital relations. This blending happens unconsciously and creates a sense of ubiquity that the brain needs to come to terms with new ideas, to ignite complex cognition. Differently from the Cartesian mental space, full of grids and order, the visual methods used by Rezaire resembles the new cognitive theories that privilege somatic states and emotional reactions in human value-creation and decision-making. The stories, scenarios, images, music, and the creation of a universe where many different elements that define our relationship with nature and spirituality come together are an efficient way of enhancing

<sup>2</sup>Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending And The Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

another way of knowing the real. Rezaire's works are invested in continuous somatic marking by attaching emotional-normative weight to images. The range of stimuli that can potentially induce emotions is infinite in her works. Rezaire does not only constantly reference visual blending, but also reflects on how blending is a fundamental tool used by those who try to make us commit to a certain course of action. Blending—a rapid integration of scenarios of very different origin with stimuli of very different sources—is arguably the primary tool in political and religious-moral debates today, where human scale inputs are recruited, often polemically, in order to inspire somatic-emotional normative reactions in the listeners.

This exhibition introduces the possibility of conceiving art viewing as a form of substantiating cognitive storytelling by applying the methods of ancient, non-Indo-European cultures in order to provoke a vision, a panoptic of the multiple-scope blends that are constructed over the course of making a film, over the course of few years.

# Des/astres, 2024

Video installation (color, sound) with wood, palm leaves, traditional Kali'na and Lokono handwoven cotton and palm leaf hammocks from French Guiana 61 min.

Commissioned and co-produced by TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary and Fondation Louis Vuitton with the support of the French Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (DCJS)"

The installation *Des/astres* draws inspiration from the *maluwana* or 'home sky' a decorated wooden disc that is the central element of the *tukusipan*, the communal house of the Wayana, Indigenous people from French Guiana. This traditional space serves as a venue for assembly, celebration, and exchange under the protection of cosmic creatures. The installation's architecture resembles a carbet, a traditional Guyanese native construction characterized by its circular wooden structure and palm leaf roof. A circular video is projected onto the ceiling, creating an immersive planetarium-like experience. Visitors are invited to engage with the projection while reclining in the traditional indigenous hammocks that complete the installation, meticulously handcrafted from cotton or palm leaves following Kali'na and Lokono craftsmanship techniques, respectively.

The video is divided into four sections: Forest, Water, Stone, and Sky, through which the artist explores humans' connection with the cosmos. The film shows powerful images of the Amazon rainforest, its sacred trees and waters, the megalithic stone circles of the region, and the struggles faced due to human extractivism, deforestation, industrial agriculture, and colonization processes. These images are juxtaposed with footage of interviews with local holders of traditions who reflect on the mystical process of traveling to other dimensions through spirits or dreams, while astronomers and researchers share their quests into far away galaxies. French Guiana being home to the European spaceport, the highly industrial journeys of rockets and telescopes is interwoven with traditional portals to the beyond, be it in a tree, a stone circle or a inhabited river.

*Des/astres* constitutes the third segment of a triptych investigating the interrelations between megalithic cultures and astronomical practices. This video installation prompts a contemplative examination of historical and contemporary perceptions of the universe, particularly focusing on the way the

peoples of the Amazon Basin have explored and travel through the cosmos. By interlacing scientific inquiry with sacred traditions, *Des/astres* reveals a rich tapestry of knowledge encompassing archaeology, astrophysics, mythology, mysticism, and traditional cosmologies. It offers a profound exploration of both modern and ancestral cosmological perspectives, encouraging reflection on our influence upon both terrestrial and celestial realms.

# *OMI: Yemoja Temple, 2024*

Installation with sound and indigo-dyed cotton fabric, wood, zip ties, calabashes, ceramics, cowrie shells, water, honey, coconut flakes, indigo vat

Co-produced by TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary and Schering Stiftung, Berlin, where the work was presented as part of the exhibition "Omi Libations" (April 25–July 7, 2024)

*OMI: Yemoja Temple* by Tabita Rezaire and Yussef Agbo-Ola is an installation that honors the Orisha Yemoja and celebrates water as a vital source of life. The conceptual foundation for the work was fueled by a research trip to Tanzania that Rezaire and Agbo-Ola took with the scientists Alex Jordan and Anja Wegner from the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Konstanz. They studied the flora and fauna of the coral reefs off the island of Zanzibar and the ecosystem of Lake Tanganyika.

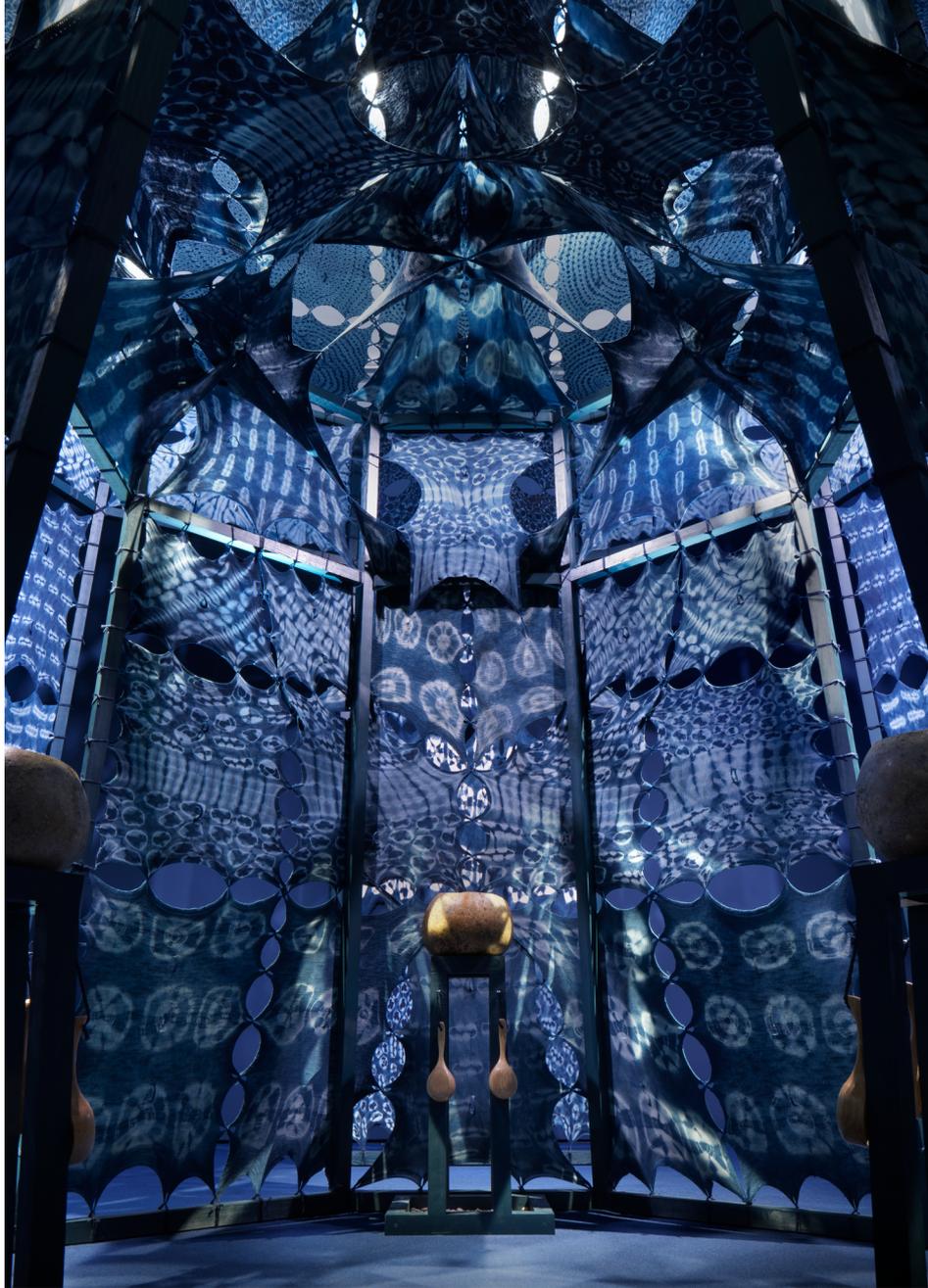
Inspired by African and Indigenous textile arts and biological and botanical studies, the installation employs stretched materials to create modular structures that reflect complex ecological systems. The textiles, dyed in deep indigo using traditional Nigerian methods, honor the ancestral practice of symbolic communication through fabric patterns. They feature motifs of oceanic creatures and corals inspired by the explorations of the Tanzanian seashore and its bodies of water.

The walk-through temple, designed by Olaniyi Studio, in the shape of a drop, symbolically representing water, the element which is the origin of life and which ensures its continuance, provides the visitor with a multi-sensory experience. Inside the temple, offerings such as coconut and honey are made to Yemoja, reflecting the Orisha's role as a divine protector of the oceans and rivers, whose worship originates from the Yoruba people's ancestral spiritual traditions. The immersive sound installation combines ritual chants with artistic and scientific reflections, connecting visitors to the historical and contemporary significance of Yemoja's realm.

*OMI: Yemoja Temple* is envisioned not merely as a physical structure but as an experiential space that bridges scientific inquiry with spiritual practice. It invites a deeper connection to the environment, integrating Indigenous knowledge systems with contemporary research to comprehensively understand water's significance in ecological and spiritual realms.

Tabita Rezaire was born in Paris, France, in 1989. Lives and works in Cayenne, French Guiana.

Yussef Agbo-Ola was born in Newport News, USA, in 1990. Lives and works in London, United Kingdom; Ibadan, Nigeria; and the Amazon rainforest.



OMI: Yemoja Temple. Photo by Jens Ziehe



OMI: Yemoja Temple. Photo by Jens Ziehe



OMI: Yemoja Temple. Photo by Jens Ziehe

## Yussef Agbo Ola

Yussef Agbo-Ola (b. 1990 Newport News, USA)  
Artist and Medicinal Architect

Yussef Agbo-Ola is the founder and creative director at Olaniyi Studio based in London, Ibadan, and the Amazon Forest. Born in rural Virginia in a multi-heritage Nigerian, African-American, and Cherokee household, his work reflects hybrid identities and relationships to different landscapes, ecologies, and cultural rituals. Agbo-Ola's multidisciplinary architectural and artistic practice is focused on interpreting natural energy systems, through interactive experiments that explore the connections between an array of sensory environments, from the biological and anthropological, to the perceptual and microscopic. His aim is to use diverse multidisciplinary research methods and design components, to reinterpret local knowledge and its environmental importance cross-culturally. His research outcomes manifest through architectural pavilions, material alchemy, interactive performance, experimental sound design, and conceptual writing.

Agbo-Ola holds a Masters in Fine Art from the University of the Arts London, and a Masters in Architecture from the Royal College of Art. He has created art and architectural commissions for the United Nations, Institute of Contemporary Art (London), Serpentine Gallery London, TEDx East End, BBC Arts, Venice Architectural Biennials, Palais de Tokyo, Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Arts Catalyst, and Lexus Automotive Innovation Centre Japan, among others. Agbo-Ola is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Architecture at Columbia GSAPP where he directs an experimental design studio within the Advanced Architectural Design program.

# *Omo Elu, 2024*

Omo Elu ☞ Yemoja as mother

Omo Elu ☞ Yemoja as healer

Omo Elu ☞ Yemoja as creator

Omo Elu ☞ Yemoja as water

Omo Elu ☞ Yemoja as ruler

Omo Elu ☞ Yemoja as dancer

Six indigo-dyed textiles

The production of this work was supported by IFN / Embassy of France in Nigeria and the Alliance Française, Lagos. Commissioned by Lagos Biennale, Nigeria, 2024

Courtesy Tabita Rezaire and Goodman Gallery

In the Yoruba language, *omo* means “child,” and *elu* is “indigo.” Indigo, a pigment imbued with symbolism, is used by many cultures for textile dyeing, object decoration, body adornment, and ritualistic healing practices.

The series features six textiles embodying a distinct aspect of Yemoja, the Mother Orisha (divine spirit) in the Yoruba tradition. Yemoja, honored as the deity of water and motherhood, is also the patron of indigo dyeing practices. *Omo Elu* is a tribute to the diverse shades of blue that symbolize Yemoja’s multifaceted nature. This sequence reflects her various incarnations: as mother, healer, creator, water, ruler, and dancer.

Rezaire’s engagement with indigo dyeing spans her exploration of traditional culture in Nigeria and her broader commitment to natural dyes through her farm cultivating plant dyes. *Omo Elu* represents a continuation of her journey into this sacred art form, crafted using her first indigo pit. Rezaire honors her journey as an apprentice under the guidance of elders of various cultural heritage, reinterpreting the sacred through her art.



Omo Elu, commissioned by Lagos Biennale (2024), Nigeria.  
Courtesy of Tabita Rezaire and Goodman Gallery

Joël Vacheron

# Tabita Rézaire : A Megalithic Space Program

Space technology closed the sky again, bounded it from above and sealed it whole.

— Peter Redfield, *Space in the Tropics: From Convicts to Rockets in French Guiana* (2000)

After *Mamelles Ancestrales* (2019) and *Orbit Diapason* (2021), Tabita Rézaire continues her exploration of the technologies and myths that, over time and space, have enabled human communities to cope with astronomical phenomena. Against the backdrop of French Guiana and the conquest of space, *Des/astres* (2024) provides insights into how the peoples of the Amazon basin perceive the heavens, “that other vastness that overhangs the forest.”

After several years of development, and some delay, the European Space Agency (ESA) has announced that the first flight of the Ariane 6 rocket would take place on 9 July 2024, from the launch site in Kourou, French Guiana. From the 1990s onward, the Ariane program enjoyed a prominent position in the commercial space transport sector, with few companies or governments able to match its performance in geostationary satellite launches. This situation has changed in recent years with the emergence of a new space industry fueled by the exponential need for navigation, observation, and telecommunication satellites. The ArianeGroup website—which is the consortium in charge of developing and manufacturing the rockets—stated that Ariane 6 should guarantee that “Europe will benefit from autonomous access to space.” This sudden call for European autonomy might seem paradoxical for people who, like Tabita Rézaire, have ancestral links with a territory where European first settled in the sixteenth century: “But who is really benefiting from the Arianes that are taking off and the satellites that are orbiting our horizons?” She asks, in relation to a situation that “divides the Guyanese population between pride and resentment.” Adopting a perspective inspired by space anthropology, I aim to show how Rézaire’s films provide a remedy to this trouble by enabling anyone to delve into cosmogonies that exist beyond the coloniality and Eurocentric visions of the space industry.

## Exploration

With the launch of Sputnik 1 into orbit in 1957 and Yuri Gagarin's first manned flight in 1961, the spectacular progress of the Soviet Union's space program raised a great deal of concern, as Western powers feared that the Soviets would "conquer" space. This period coincided with the start of a race for the control of outer space, and ever greater sums were spent on research programs to propel rockets and satellites. The French government began its own space project just after the end of World War II, from a launch base at Hammaguir in the Algerian desert. Following the Algerian War in 1962, the French government transferred progressively all its space operations to French Guiana. Since 1967, the Guiana Space Centre has become the official complex for all the missions developed by the French space agency (CNES) and, since 1975, the ESA. The Guiana Space Centre is located in a sparsely populated area along the Atlantic coast near Kourou. A city of around 25,000 inhabitants was built to respond to the requirements of the space program. Directly and indirectly, the aerospace industries employ around a third of the working force in French Guiana. The Ariane program is presented as an opportunity for economic and social development, but above all it is a demonstration that the hierarchies that guided colonial expeditions did not disappear with decolonization. When the settlement colonies ended on the African continent, the Kourou site made it possible to occupy and domesticate an area of tropical forest to run programs fully piloted from Europe. Thus, the principal recipients of the missions carried out from Lac Bois Diable—the name of the location of the launch pad means literally Lake Wood Evil—belong to very homogeneous groups who share very specific interests and desires.

To be competitive, players in space industries must comply with agendas set by the military-industrial complex and a singular idea of exploration that is deeply rooted in the expansion of the European colonial powers:

We are simply getting a repeat of white American-European heteronormative, capitalist imaginations of what outer space can be and this is done without thinking. It is done as though this is natural. As if it was the only human

<sup>3</sup> Joël Vacheron, "Interview with Lisa Messeri," *IDP401* (2018).

configuration that exists here and therefore exists elsewhere. [...] They have colonial history upon which they are drawing, which is about the triumph of technology and the relationship between technology and progress.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1980s, following an influential report that defined the priorities of the American space program in the years ahead, Ronald Reagan asserted that outer space should be “opened up to commerce.” As during the so-called “Great Discoveries,” the neoliberal vulgate envisioned the heavens as a vast and empty zone, entirely destined to be explored and domesticated. A “terra nullius” or a “last frontier” that could open up access to unlimited resources and extractions. Recent innovations in the (new) space industry are embedded in the same old stories that, since the fifteenth century, have justified the “genocide of indigenous peoples and the destruction of their environment.”<sup>4</sup> Ariane 6 is part of this great saga which gives a minority the unfettered power to explore on behalf of the whole of humanity. Meanwhile, in the name of civilization, religion, or modernization, the ancestral and complex connections that the peoples of the Amazon basin, and beyond, have maintained with the skies and the forests have been systematically denied or destroyed.

“What, I ask, could it mean to provincialize outer space?” asks Peter Redfield in his 2002 book *The Half-Life of Empire in Outer Space*. This question refers to Dipesh Chakrabarty who, at the turn of the millennium, wrote *Provincializing Europe*. According to him, the European models of thought developed throughout modernity are part of provincial intellectual traditions and historical regimes which, even if they may appear neutral, do not have a monopoly when it comes to establishing universal truths. In this decolonial perspective, space exploration should be considered from its capacity to embody a “pluriversal cosmology,” to use Arturo Escobar’s term, in which ontologically different visions can co-exist and reinforce each other.

## Pluriversality

“A cultural system that can launch earth satellites can dispense with gods entirely,” said Leslie White on the impact of Sputnik 1 on the relationship between certain human communities and

<sup>4</sup> Malcom Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2021).

planet Earth. As soon as satellites populated the sky, the whole civilization—a generic and categorical *we*—had to evolve to the point where it could occupy a godlike position. Jane Young offers an interpretation of space exploration based on accounts gathered from Native American populations. In particular, she recounts this anecdote about an anthropologist who worked with the Inuit in Alaska during the Apollo program. When the researcher mentioned the first moon landing by American astronauts, the Inuit began to laugh:

We didn't know this was the first time you white people had been to the moon. Our shamans have been going for years. They go all the time. [...] We do go to visit the moon and moon people all the time. The issue is not whether we go to visit our relatives, but how we treat them and their homeland when we go."<sup>5</sup>

Young observes that the values and objectives surrounding the deployment of infrastructures or people in space were in conflict with native cosmological models, which are essentially based on the intimate relationship between individuals and the planets and stars. From a Western perspective, space exploration is seen as a linear journey to reach a planet or orbit. Astronomy and other sciences that study cosmic phenomena generally aim to retrace the timeline to understand the origins or future of the universe. In Native traditional cosmogonic worldview, time and space are centered more on interiority than exteriority and, particularly during ritual activities, the exploration of the cosmos manifests itself in a syncretic fusion of the present, the past, and the future. Even when a myth occurs “in the past” or “in the beginning,” the events are never fixed in a given timeline or located in a specific place. Instead, myths are seen as ever-present, continually informing the here and now.

This anecdote shows that imagination vary constantly according to time, place, and the type of relationships that communities forge with terrestrial or extraterrestrial phenomena. Rézairé's work—particularly in the three-part series consisting of *Mamelles Ancestrales* (2019), *Orbit Diapason* (2021) and *Des/astres* (2024)—is precisely about (re)valuing multiple and pluriversal visions of the cosmos emanating from marginalized or invisibilized communities. In particular, the visions of those

<sup>5</sup> Jane Young, “‘Pity the Indians of Outer Space’: Native American Views of the Space Program,” *Western Folklore* vol. 46 (1987).

who experience their connection to the planets and stars independently of the technological, political, economic, or heroic agendas of a self-assured “we.” “We are not the only kind of we,” wrote Eduardo Kohn, and human communities do not have the same powers, the same rights, the same means nor the same priorities to interact with the cosmos and the forests. Instead of repeating and projecting the same capitalist imaginations, Rézaire’s films are an invitation to perceive the wider world through the perceptions and experiences of “others,” i.e. human or non human identities considered uncivilized, inferior, or irrational in the categories inherited from colonial expansion.

## Circles

*Des/astres* is based on the discovery of a circle of stones in the Brazilian state of Amapá, near the border with French Guiana. This megalithic monument, which probably dates back to 2000 BCE, is known as the *Parque Arqueológico do Solstício* (Solstice Archaeological Park), because the placement of the stones suggests it could be a temple or observatory built according to the winter solstice. The film animates this megalithic space station through a wide range of myths—scientific, historical, cultural, or spiritual—that shape cosmic realities, in order to make us feel the vibrational frequencies that unite all beings with the Earth and the cosmos. This echoes the work of Katherine McKittrick who proposes that the lived experiences of Afrodiasporic populations compose a vast corpus of dissident and “rebellious” methodologies which, in various ways, have in common that they challenge dominant systems of knowledge. McKittrick refers in particular to the influence of music—rhythms, sonorities, improvisation, adaptation, remixing, and so on— to stimulate epistemological reflection:

The images are not intended to carry clear meaning. They are looped, and the loop represents what I and what we cannot say or hear or see or remember just as it establishes a repetitive circuitous, and circular but also inaccurate representation of coming to know. The loop is not intended to be meaning-making; the loop can only show fragments and moments of knowing.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 15.

In the same vein, Rézaire's films take shape through intertwining rhythms and loops. She interweaves (counter-)narratives that show the endless relationships—poetic, contemplative, spiritual, ritual, vibratory—that the peoples of the Amazon Basin have, or had, with the heavens, “that other immensity that hangs over the forest.” For Rézaire, knowing and respecting the stars is a way of “destabilizing” the colonial foundations of modernity. Her latest film is a megalithic space program propelled by the power of Indigenous and Afrodiasporic myths. The extent of the connections between astronomy and megalithic cultures shows that exploring space does not necessarily mean projecting oneself physically and materially into space, with all the disasters (*désastres*) that this entails on Earth and in the universe. Space exploration can be motivated by the simple desire to meet the entities that populate heavens and the planets to make sure that they do not suffer the same tragedies as here on Earth. This message is all the more important at a time when debates about the environmental crisis are constantly reviving the fantasy of total control of the planet, thanks in particular to satellites “suffocating the Earth with their dream of progress.”

Joël Vacheron is a sociologist and writer based in Lisbon. He is a senior lecturer and research fellow at the ECAL/HES-SO in Lausanne where he teaches visual anthropology and media studies. He has written several journal articles and book chapters on art, technology, society and coloniality. He is co-founder of the Centre Culturel Afropea and, in 2024, defended a doctoral thesis entitled 'Unseeing' space imagery: a critical study of the colonial foundations of cosmic exploration.

# Wisdom from a Yemoja Priest

## On the Creation

In the beginning of life, every human being was living with Olódùmarè<sup>7</sup> —God in heaven<sup>8</sup>. They were all enjoying life, living well. At that time, each Orisha<sup>9</sup> had their own way of dressing: Eshu<sup>10</sup> in red and black clothes. Obatala<sup>11</sup> in white. Shango<sup>12</sup> wears red clothes. Oshun wears yellow.

They all live together in heaven, until at a certain point, they start fighting. There was a revolution among the Orishas. When the argument began, it brought about tragedy, and a physical altercation broke out and they started beating each other. When this happened, Olódùmarè told the Orishas that they should move away, that they should go to the second life, which is on earth.

This Odu<sup>14</sup> describes revolution, tragedy, and argument. It tells of the time when all the Orishas fought against each other, but also how earlier they fought with God. When fighting with God, Olódùmarè was angry and upset. He said, “I don’t want to see any of you,” and declared that they will never lay eyes on him again. They know how Olódùmarè is, they know who he is, but Olódùmarè said they will not see him again the way they used to see him.

After that, Olódùmarè sent Ọrunmila to the earth. Olódùmarè gave Ọrunmila Iyerosun, the yellow powder that we use to divine, and two chickens. After giving him the two chickens and the powder, Olódùmarè prepared the chain that he will use to drop down into life, onto earth. When Ọrunmila descended from the heaven down the chain, he saw a lot of water. It was the ocean.

<sup>7</sup> Olódùmarè is the Yoruba name for God or creator.

<sup>8</sup> The word “heaven” stands for the translation of the Yoruba word Orun. Orun is often translated to heaven, although it doesn’t share the Christian connotation. The Orun could be similarly be translated as cosmos, source, cosmic realm.

<sup>9</sup> Orishas are Yoruba deities, or cosmic principle, often associated with forces of nature.

<sup>10</sup> Eshu is the orisha of chance and change.

<sup>11</sup> Obatala is the orisha of wisdom and purity.

<sup>12</sup> Shango is the orisha of lightning and the guardian of the sacred drum.

<sup>13</sup> Oshun is the orisha of love and fertility.

<sup>14</sup> Odu is a sacred sign, encapsulating different stories. The whole Yoruba tradition is enclosed in 256 Odus, which are used for divination.

Then he saw a tree, we call it the Iroko tree. Orunmila jumped on top of the tree. He used the Iyerosun, the yellow powder, and spread it in the water, which transformed it into sand. He then used the two chickens: put them down and the chicken used their feet to spread all the sand. That is how the earth began.

Once he did this, he called the other Orishas to join. He went back to heaven and told them everything has been set up. And that's why we say Orunmila is the one who set up life for the other Orishas. Olódùmarè uses Obatala as a gatekeeper. Before everybody pass, they have to go through Obatala to come to earth. So, the Orishas are now moving one by one through the gate, reaching the earth.

Then, another fight starts in heaven. It was caused by the Iyami, the witches<sup>15</sup>. They want to know who is the leader among them. After the fight, they want to go to earth but Olódùmarè said they cannot go there, because they started that fight. But the Iyami have serious power and they found a magical way to get to earth. They watched Olódùmarè when he was creating the people. They always had the power to see. Whatever Olódùmarè does, they can see it. For example, when there was a hole in the heaven Olódùmarè covered it with spider's web and kept three people there. Then Olódùmarè asked each Orisha what was kept inside the hole. The Orishas didn't know, but the Iyami could tell Olódùmarè, we know what you keep in there; they then tell Olódùmarè all about the three people who were inside.

From that time on, because of the fight, Olódùmarè said, they cannot follow the Orishas to earth. So they looked for a hiding place, a maze. They went to hide inside a tree in heaven and then saw Orunmila on his way to earth. They begged Orunmila to take them along. But Orunmila said, "I cannot take you." They started crying and Orunmila said, "OK, I know what I can do." Orunmila transformed the witches into a seed and swallowed them. That's how they crossed the gate.

When they get to earth, Orunmila asked them to come out, but they said no: "No we are not coming down again because we love your stomach, your bladder, your intestine is good food for us." It made Orunmila sick. The wise Eshu, whose wisdom is greater than all the Orishas, saw what was happening to Orunmila, and asked what was going on. Once Orunmila explained the situation, Eshu asked: "Can you get me

<sup>15</sup> Iyami are a covenant of very powerful ancestral mothers, who have mastery of occult powers. They protect women and young girls.

an egg?" Ọrunmila prepares an egg and palm oil for Eshu, who eats it. When Eshu finishes, he tricks the Iyami out of Ọrunmila's stomach, telling them that in Ọrunmila's body they only have a little intestine and bladder, whereas he can provide a lot of intestines and bladders. The Iyami came out, and when they got out, they turned to Eshu, who told them, "No, I was just kidding, there is no anything." Then Ọrunmila cursed the witches, telling them that they would "no longer be able to fly in the afternoon. You will only fly at night and all that you will be able to eat will be intestines and bladders. You will not live in the house; you will live at the crossroad." And that is why when we kill a goat, we say that all the goat's interiors belong to the witches.

After that the Orisha came down to earth, each of them settled in a different place. Shango is living in Oyo, Yemoja is in Shaki, and Obatala in Olofin, so all of them went to different areas, and set up there, and that is how life began.

## On Yemoja

The earth was originally covered in water, but then Orunmila spread a powder that parted the water, creating the oceans we know today. When the Orisha arrived on earth, Yemoja was the one to take care of the ocean. But there is a difference between Yemoja and Olokun. Olokun, who early on had a small source of water, like a stream, asked Olódùmarè to give him the power to spread it. That's why the sea and the ocean meet. And if you look closely, you will see it looks as if they want to fight. When the sea's water goes into the ocean, the ocean throws the water back to the sea, because they are not friends. Yemoja always looks at Olokun disdainfully, saying, "You were a small stream before you became big. I am your mother."

And that's why we call Yemoja the mother of all Yorishas. She is married to Obatala and they have three children together. The first child is Obalujé, the Orisha of sickness. The second one is Orisha Dada, the owner of wealth. And the third one is Shango, the Orisha of thunder. In the Odu, we say that revolution is Dada, which is the world. Obalujé is sickness, which is tragedy. And Shango

<sup>16</sup> The Iyami often take the forms of birds, hence the reference to flying.

<sup>17</sup> Yemoja is the orisha of water and motherhood.

<sup>18</sup> Olokun is another water orisha.

is argument, because he always fights with everyone and that is what is happening today: revolution, tragedy, and argument.

Yemoja is married to Obatala, and they live together. Obatala molds the people out of clay and Yemoja fetches the water for Obatala to create the people. Olódùmarè is the one who passes the spirit on to the people.

After some time living together, Obatala started drinking palm wine. Yemoja doesn't like it when he drinks. Every time Obatala drinks wine, he loses his mind. One time, when he was drunk, he molded the albino and the hunchback. Yemoja was very upset and left him, ending their marriage.

When she was away, Yemoja met a hunter. The hunter told Yemoja he wanted to marry her. She answered that he cannot, and he said, I will marry you. Yemoja agreed and said this is my taboo<sup>19</sup>: "my breasts are longer than anybody else's." The hunter said: "don't worry, I won't say anything about you, I won't curse you." He added, "I am a hunter and a warrior. There is a room in my house that no woman can enter. Please don't enter that room."

They lived together. One day, the warrior went hunting and left his war attire outside in the sun to dry. A couple of hours later it was about to start raining and Yemoja was wondering what to do. She took a stick, covered her eyes with a cloth and used the stick to throw the clothes into the secret room. As she did it, the hunter man knew immediately. He ran in and said: "you didn't listen, Yemoja, you with the long breast!"

Yemoja was upset. She started leaving the place. As she was going on the road, the hunter used his power to turn into a mountain, so that Yemoja wouldn't be able to go. As Yemoja saw this, she got upset, fell down and turned into water. This is why when you go to the ocean you see the mountain there.

Shango, hearing that his mother was in trouble, rushed to save her. He saw the mountain and used a chain to break the mountain into seven pieces so that Yemoja was able to pass, and leave. This is why, in some place when you get to the ocean, in the middle of the ocean you see the mountain and water that follow each other.

<sup>19</sup> Traditionally, taboos are foods one cannot eat, observances or restrictions one must comply with for harmonious living.

## On Spirits

Let me tell you. We have Orishas, and we have Irunmolé. Irunmolé are the descendants of spirit that come from the heaven to earth. The Iyami, Obatala, Yemoja, Ongun, Eshu, Oya, Orunmila, and Oshun are the descendants of God who came all the way from heaven. Shango is an Orisha because he was born by Irunmolé. Shango, Obaluajé, and Dada are Orisha.

In heaven, there is no money. It's when they get to earth that they start spending money. Money and spending started on earth and they are what spread arguments. Where there is money, the revolution follows. But when there is no money, arguments follow. When someone is poor, tragedy follows, they might kill themselves or get sick.

The Irunmolé are many, they are spirits moving through the air, which we can't see. The wind is Irunmolé. And other elements, like water and fire. At some point Olodumaré told the Irunmolé to come back to the heaven. The orisha stayed underground. We believe that we were all created by God and each of us belong to an orisha. The reading will tell you which Orisha you belong to, and what are your taboos. That's why we go for initiation.

## On Priesthood

The role of the priest in the community is to be a truthful person. The priest is given the power of justice to settle disputes. When sickness or any change reaches the town, the priest makes offerings, gives sacrifice to send the ill away and to call the Irunmolé and Olódùmarè, for apology. The priest is also a healer. They deal with justice because they have looked into all these stories of what has happened to the Irunmolé and the Orishas and they use these to settle conflicts among people.

They also have a political role, making sure the town is moving forward. In the old days, we used to say that the priest is the judiciary, making the law as a member of the king's legislative council. The role has changed after the white people came to enslave us and disorganized the customs that our people used before. But the king of the town still knows a priest, who is always beside him, if anything happens, ready to be called upon.

In the old days we used to do the divinations for the year, to see what will happen where we live and all the taboos for the year ahead. At that time there will be no war, no sickness, nothing

like that will happen in that town. So that's one of the jobs of the priest. You can do that for yourself and your family. So that you will always be saved throughout the year.

I was born into the religion. My grandfather and my father were in the religion, so I inherited the religion. I became a priest when I was about 20 years old, and I remain a priest to this day.

## On Space Travel

The Irunmolé live in heaven, they live on planets. Most of the planets are inhabited by the Irunmolé. Some of them come to earth as spirits that we cannot see, which move through the air. Covid-19, for example, was a spirit. Many illnesses come from these planets.

The white people have tried to go and see who Olodumaré is but they cannot get to the place in their spacecraft. You can't see who Olodumaré is. Olodumaré already told us: "you cannot see me. Your spirit is in your body. When you are alive, I'm alive with you. When you die, you return."

There is no need to go see other planets, but there are times when the power comes and while you sleep Olodumaré or Irunmolé take you somewhere, like other planets, in your dreams.

## BIO

Babalorisa Omikunmi Egbelade is an immensely respected figure within the Yorùbá spiritual community, holding the position of Baale Yemoja—the head of all Yemoja devotees in Yorùbá land and the custodian of Yemoja Temple of Ibadan, Nigeria. Coming from a lineage Orisha priests, Omikunmi Egbelade is a living repository of knowledge. He possesses an extensive understanding of Òrìṣà and Ifa verses, as well as a profound grasp of the ancient rites intrinsic to the Indigenous Yoruba religion (Ìṣẹ̀ṣe).

He shoulders the responsibility of preserving an endangered lineage of Orisha priests, recognizing the urgency of safeguarding Ìṣẹ̀ṣe practices. As the chief host of the Yemoja Ibadan Festival, Omikunmi Egbelade continues to uphold the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the Yorùbá people, ensuring that the connection between devotees and Orisha Yemoja remains vibrant and enduring.

As a prolific writer, Omikunmi Egbelade has made profound contributions to sharing the history and experiences of the Yorùbá spiritual tradition with the world. His books, including *OBI: The Word of God in Kolanut and Coconut*, *YEMONJA: Tranquil Seas Turbulent Tides*, and *ÈGBÉ: The Sacred Tie That Binds*, serve as invaluable resources that illuminate the depth and richness of Yorùbá culture and spirituality.

## PUBLIC PROGRAM

*Tabita Rezaire.*

*Calabash Nebula*

October–December, 2024  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza  
and other locations

The public program accompanying *Calabash Nebula* offers a wide variety of activities, talks, and workshops designed to offer visitors opportunities to connect more intimately with the skies, bodies of water, and ancestral traditions. It expands the scope of biological and ecological research to take a more holistic approach, interweaving Indigenous technologies and wisdom systems while highlighting and celebrating the importance of water in sustaining life.

The public program for the exhibition *Tabita Rezaire. Calabash Nebula* has been generously supported by the French Institute in Spain, Real Observatorio de Madrid, FECYT | Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology, and BSC Barcelona Supercomputing Center – Centro Nacional de Supercomputación, Educathyssen, and Organismo | Art in Applied Critical Ecologies.

\*All public program events are free of charge.

### *Calabash Nebula*

Artist talk. In English with simultaneous translation into Spanish  
Auditorium, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Monday, October 7, 6:00 pm  
First-come, first-served basis until capacity is reached

Artist Tabita Rezaire and curator Chus Martínez discuss the interplay between ancestral traditions, memory, scientific investigation, and digital languages.

### *Offerings to the Orisha Yemoja, conducted by José Ramón Hernández / OSIKÁN*

Monday, October 7 opening (by invitation).  
Saturday October 26, 11:00 am– 2:00 pm.  
Sunday November 10, 11:00 am– 2:00 pm  
(no RSVP needed)

The *OMI: Yemoja Temple* is a space created by Tabita Rezaire in collaboration with artist-architect Yussef Agbo-Ola, dedicated to the deity Yemoja, the mother of rivers and water in West African Yoruba culture and its diaspora. In this culture, water is imbued with profound significance, and the ritual of pouring liquid is a significant form of offering.

During these sessions, visitors are invited to engage in this tradition by making an offering inside the installation, combining different elements such as indigo, honey, and coconut flakes and offering them to Yemoja. We invite you to engage to fertilize their intentions to birth, nurture, or release elements within themselves, their lives, communities, or the broader world. José Ramón

Hernández, artistic director of OSIKÁN, will be choreographing the offerings.

### *Calabash Nebula. Walkthrough visits*

*Calabash Nebula. Walkthrough visits*  
Guided tours. In Spanish  
Exhibition space, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

Guided visit led by Carolina Bustamante and Silvia Ramírez (La Parcería collective) (joint visit to the *Colonial Memory in the Thyssen-Bornemisza collections* exhibition).  
Friday, October 11, 1:15 pm and 5:15 pm.  
Sunday, October 13, 10:30 am and 4:00 pm

Guided visit led by Madrid Negro on Saturday night (joint visit to the *Colonial Memory in the Thyssen-Bornemisza collections* exhibition).  
Saturday, October 19, 9:00 and 10:00 pm  
Registrations to [hola@conciencia-afro.com](mailto:hola@conciencia-afro.com) (by order of arrival)

Guided visit led by astrophysicist José Antonio Caballero. Saturday, November 16, 9:00 pm. By previous registration through the Educathyssen website

Guided visit led by Raisa Maudit. Saturday, November 2, 9:00 and 10:00 pm. By previous registration through the Educathyssen website.

Thematic guided tours, led by Carolina Bustamante and Silvia Ramírez (La Parcería collective), Madrid Negro, José Antonio Caballero, and Raisa Maudit at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

### *Create Your Constellations*

Workshop. In Spanish  
Real Observatorio de Madrid  
C. de Alfonso XII, 3, Retiro, 28014 Madrid  
Saturdays: October 26, November 23, and December 14, 11:00 am  
For children aged 5–8 (max 15 children, each accompanied by up to two adults). Register for this program on the Educathyssen website  
Activity in collaboration with the Real Observatorio de Madrid

This workshop, led by astrophysics Miguel Querejeta, Marina Rodríguez Baras, and Alba Vidal García, will teach children to identify and create constellations, enriching their perception of the night sky and deepening their understanding of outer space.

### *Sky Readings—Part 1*

Online conference. In English with simultaneous subtitled translation into Spanish  
TBA21's YouTube live  
Wednesday, November 6, 6:00 pm  
Activity in collaboration with Organismo | Art in Applied Critical Ecologies

A dialogue between scientist Aouefa Amoussouvi and artist Yussef Agbo-Ola, moderated by writer Joël Vacheron on spatial constructions and cosmogonies that unfold restorative and decolonial futures. The Western perspective has established itself as the “scientific,” and therefore “correct,” vision of outer space.

This panel explores the studies of space excluded from the dominant narrative and how these can create new, decolonial perceptions of space and potential futures.

## Celestial Readings: How Do We Perceive the Skies?

Conversation, workshop, and guided tour. In Spanish  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Real Observatorio de Madrid  
(C. de Alfonso XII, 3, Retiro, 28014 Madrid)  
Friday, November 8, 5:00–7:00 pm

(Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza)  
Saturday, November 9, 11:00 am–12:30 pm  
(Real Observatorio de Madrid)

For young people (ages 12–16).

Limited to 20 participants. Register for this program on the Educathyssen website.

Activity held within the framework of Science Week, in collaboration with the Real Observatorio de Madrid and Educathyssen

This two-sessions activity is an unique opportunity to engage with Tabita Rezaire’s universe and explore her cosmos from historical, artistic, and scientific perspectives. The first session, led by Rufino Ferreras and Marina Avia Estrada and held at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, includes a guided tour of the exhibition *Tabita Rezaire. Calabash Nebula* and a walkthrough of selected works from the museum’s collection related to astronomy and the ancient humans’ fascination with the cosmos. The second part will take place the following day at the Real Observatorio de Madrid, where members of the Observatorio Miguel Querejeta, Marina Rodríguez Baras, and Alba Vidal García will show the participants its stellar facilities and allow them to experiment a solar observation with a telescope.

## Sky Readings—Part 2

Conference. In English and Spanish with simultaneous translation  
Auditorium, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Wednesday, November 27, 2024, 6:30 pm  
First-come, first-served basis until capacity is reached

Activity in collaboration with Organismo | Art in Applied Critical Ecologies

A conversation between researcher Tania Safura Adam, artist Bouchra Khalili, and physicist Diego Blas, about the historical intersections between science, culture, and religion in sky readings. Throughout history, different communities and groups

have interpreted and studied the skies in innumerable ways. Looking at the sky has directly impacted the development of humans’ systems of belief and their sociopolitical structures. The conversation will explore the meaning of these readings and how they parallel contemporary artistic and scientific interpretations of outer space.

## Cosmovisions. Mythology, Art, and Astronomy

Conference. In Spanish  
Auditorium, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Wednesday, December 4, 6:00 pm

First-come, first-served basis until capacity is reached

Activity in collaboration with the Real Observatorio de Madrid

In this series of two mini-conferences, astronomers from the Real Observatorio de Madrid will discuss the significant role the sky has played throughout history and its various perceptions and depictions. In the first part, Marina Rodríguez Baras will delve into the historical and cross-cultural interpretations of the sky, while in the second part, Miguel Querejeta will explore the intersection between art and celestial phenomena.

## Organic and Synthetic Voices (Singing with AI), with Maria Arnal and Fernando Cucchietti

Performative lecture and conversation.  
In Spanish

Auditorium, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Tuesday, December 10, 6:30 pm

First-come, first-served basis until capacity is reached

Activity in collaboration with Organismo | Art in Applied Critical Ecologies, facilitated by FECYT | Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology and BSC Barcelona Supercomputing Center – Centro Nacional de Supercomputación. Curated by Lluís Nacenta

# PARTICIPANTS BIOGRAPHY

Yussef Agbo-Ola is the founder and creative director at Olaniyi Studio based in London, Ibadan, and the Amazon Forest. Born in rural Virginia in a multi-heritage Nigerian, African-American, and Cherokee household, his work reflects hybrid identities and relationships to different landscapes, ecologies, and cultural rituals. His multidisciplinary architectural and artistic practice is focused on interpreting natural energy systems, through interactive experiments that explore the connections between an array of sensory environments, from the biological and anthropological, to the perceptual and microscopic. His aim is to use diverse multidisciplinary research methods and design components, to reinterpret local knowledge and its environmental importance cross-culturally. His research outcomes manifest through architectural pavilions, material alchemy, interactive performance, experimental sound design, and conceptual writing

Aouefa Amoussouvi is a research scientist based in Berlin, Germany. She is currently researching the history and alternative narratives of science through the prism of intersectional feminism and coloniality. She is especially interested in exploring how technology creates opportunities as well as ethical challenges within Western and non-Western contexts.

Marina Avia Estrada is Head of Exhibitions and Public Programs at TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary. She holds a Master in Critical and Curatorial Studies from Columbia University and a Master in Contemporary Art History and Visual Culture from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. She has previously worked at institutions such as IPCNY New York, Wallach Art Gallery, Tabacalera Promoción del Arte, and AECID. She is a regular contributor to the Spanish art magazine *Exit Express*.

Diego Blas is a Spanish physicist and researcher, ICREA research professor at the IFAE (Institute de Física d'Altes Energies). His research focuses on theoretical cosmology, gravitational physics and the study of dark matter and gravitational waves.

Carolina Bustamante (La Parceria) is a researcher, curator, and cultural manager with a degree in Art Conservation from Universidad Externado de Colombia and a Master's in Contemporary Art History and Visual Culture from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Her work focuses on two main research areas: anti-colonial and anti-racist critique and motherhood, childhood, and play from a political and public perspective. She is a co-founder and member of La Parceria.

José Antonio Caballero holds a PhD in astrophysics and is a favorite son of El Escorial. His research encompasses a wide array of celestial objects including stars of all types, brown dwarfs, and exoplanets, alongside developing cutting-edge instrumentation for both ground-based and space telescopes. As a graduate of the Complutense University of Madrid and holding a PhD from the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands, Caballero was honored with the award for the best doctoral thesis in astronomy in Spain for the

year 2006-2007. Subsequently, he served as a support astronomer at the Roque de Los Muchachos Observatory. His career has included prestigious postdoctoral positions at the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy, the University of Heidelberg, the Complutense University, and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). Moreover, he has been a tenured scientist at the National Institute of Aerospace Technology. Presently, he is a research scientist at the CSIC's Center for Astrobiology and actively participates in science communication, particularly linking it to the arts and music. His contributions can be experienced on Radio Clásica and Radio 3, seen in *Astronomy* magazine, and through his performances on stage with members of Lagartija Nick, Lori Meyers, and Los Planetas.

Conciencia Afro is a cultural initiative founded in 2016 focused on reclaiming, celebrating, and disseminating the realities and knowledge of the Black, African, and Afro-descendant communities in Spain.

Rufino Ferreras Marcos is an artist with degrees in educational sciences and Spanish history. Since 1995, he has been an educator and later the head of educational development with projects such as EducaThyssen.org, Nubla, Nosotras, and Musaraña. He has taught at several universities, trained different educational institutions and official bodies, and participated in several research projects.

José Ramón Hernández is a graduate of the University of the Arts of Cuba and the founder of Osikán - Vivero de Creación. His interdisciplinary work encompasses artistic practice, curating, and cultural management, with his creative research exploring Afro-descendant rituals, marginalized bodies, memory, migration, and spirituality.

OSIKÁN is a creative incubator for research and action, bringing together artists, specialists, activists, and communities. It serves as a space for encounters and participation, imagining sensitive strategies to foster critical dialogues and heal social wounds in today's living and working contexts. OSIKÁN aims at activating creation with the desire to engage with the earth - germinating collective learning, curatorial projects, partnerships, critical thought, wanderings, and dreams.

Bouchra Khalili is a Moroccan-French visual artist. Khalili utilizes film, video, installation, photography, and printmaking to explore themes of imperialism, colonialism, and memory politics. Her work, influenced by Morocco's artistic traditions, examines migration, anti-colonial struggles, and marginalized communities.

Raisa Maudit (artist, curator, writer, and director of Storm And Drunk) was born in La Palma. She has a background in contemporary art, classical music and composition, programming, and video game development. Through multidisciplinary processes, she resorts to multiple systems of representation to analyze and show the contradictions and blind spots in the dominant narratives of the system. From a transfeminist approach, she builds a particular

universe in which popular culture and the performative possibilities of identity result in polyhedral works where music, scenography, performance, text, theory-fiction, video, sculpture, installation, robotics or curatorship intermingle to raise other possible realities that give way out of those blind spots of the system. Her work aims to provide a genealogy of dissent offering possible social transformations from revising forgotten knowledge.

Madrid Negro is an artistic research group based on the memory of Black and Afro-descendant people in the city of Madrid.

Silvia Ramírez (La Parcería) holds a PhD in Fine Arts and her interdisciplinary research explores the intersections of history, art, and memory, with a focus on the political dimensions of artistic practices. Her work delves into historical and biographical narratives related to displacement, disappearance, and absence, using language and archives to rewrite the past through a personal and experimental lens. She has participated in various group exhibitions in Spain and curated the series *Artists in the Interstices* (2023). She is a member of La Parcería.

Tabita Rezaire's paths as an artist, devotee, doula, and cacao farmer are all geared toward manifesting the divine in herself and beyond. Her yearning for connection finds expression in her cross-disciplinary practice, which envisions network sciences as healing technologies to facilitate a shift toward heart consciousness. Embracing digital, corporeal, and ancestral memory, she digs into scientific imaginaries and mystical realms to tackle the colonial wounds and energetic misalignments that affect our bodies, minds, and spirits.

Marina Rodríguez Baras has a PhD in astrophysics from the Autonomous University of Madrid with honors. She is a researcher at the Real Observatorio de Madrid, part of the State Astronomers Corps. Her research focuses on astrochemistry in stellar formation processes, providing insights into the origins of life. She is involved in the SUL4LIFE project, funded by the ERC Advanced Grants.

Tania Safura Adam is a researcher, curator, and founder of Radio Africa, focusing on Black diasporas and African popular music. She has curated notable exhibitions like *Microhistorias de la Diáspora* and *Blue Black Futures*. She is currently directing the research project *España Negra* and leading the Iberian Black Studies seminar at Museo Reina Sofía. Adam also hosts the Radio Africa program on betevé and recently published the essay *Voces negras: Una historia oral de las músicas populares africanas Vol. 1*.

Miguel Querejeta studied physics and Hispanic philology, and has a PhD in astrophysics from the University of Heidelberg. Since 2017, he has been a researcher at the Real Observatorio de Madrid and part of the State Astronomers Corps. He has more than 150 scientific publications and has received several awards throughout his career. His research focuses on galaxy structure and evolution.

Joël Vacheron is a professor and researcher at the École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL) where he teaches visual arts and the sociology of media. As an independent journalist, he regularly collaborates on editorial projects in the areas of art and photography.

Alba Vidal García completed her PhD in astronomy and astrophysics from the Sorbonne University in Paris. She started working at the Real Observatorio de Madrid in 2022, where she develops her research works and assists as a support astronomer. She has been part of two projects funded by the ERC Advanced Grants, on top of having received several excellence grants. Her research focuses on galaxy formation and evolution.

TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary is a leading international art and advocacy foundation. Established in 2002 by philanthropist and art patron Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza, the foundation stewards the TBA21 Collection and its outreach activities, which include exhibitions as well as educational and public programming.

TBA21 is based in Madrid, working in association with the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, and has other important poles of action in Venice (Italy) and Portland (Jamaica). All activity at TBA21 is collaborative and fundamentally driven by artists and the belief in art and culture as accelerators in social and environmental transformations and ultimately in the service of peace. We understand peace as a continuous practice in the affirmation of life, diversity, and coexistence, and aim to theorize, rehearse, and advocate for peacebuilding practices together with artists.

**TBA21-Academy** is the foundation's research arm, fostering a deeper relationship with the Ocean and wider ecologies by working as an incubator for transdisciplinary inquiry, artistic production, and environmental advocacy. For more than a decade, the Academy has catalyzed new forms of knowledge emerging from the exchanges between art, science, policy, and conservation in long-term and collaborative engagement through fellowships, residency programs, and activities in a wide variety of formats.

Among its main projects are the art center Ocean Space (Venice), the independent study program Organismo | Art in Applied Critical Ecologies (Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza), Alligator Head Foundation (Port Antonio, Jamaica), *The Current* Pacific/ Mediterranean/Caribbean, the online initiative Ocean-Archive.org with OCEAN / UNI, and Bauhaus of the Seas Sails.

The Academy offers artist residencies at the **Alligator Head Foundation**, a Jamaican-based marine conservation organization initiated by TBA21 in 2015, focusing on the intersection of science, art, and community. During their stay, artists engage in community-focused practices and workshops, strengthening the integration with local initiatives, enhancing national and global policy for ecological resilience, and, in turn, informing and expanding TBA21-Academy's regenerative methodologies.

# CURRENT AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

## Exhibitions

Re- stor (y)ing Oceania  
Ocean Space, Venice, Italy  
Curated by Taloi Havini  
23.03 - 13.10.2024

The Ecologies of Peace  
C3A Centro de Creación  
Contemporánea de Andalucía,  
Córdoba, Spain  
Curated by Daniela Zyman  
Opening April 26, 2024  
26.04.2024 - 30.03.2025

Wu Tsang. La gran mentira de la muerte  
MACBA, Barcelona, Spain  
20.07 - 03.11.2024

Petrit Halilaj y Álvaro Urbano.  
Lunar Ensemble for Uprising Seas  
MACBA, Barcelona, España  
11.10.2024 - 12.01.2025

Tarek Atoui. Al-Tāriq  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,  
Madrid, Spain  
Curated by Daniela Zyman  
18.02 - 18.05.2025

The Murder of Crows  
Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller  
Le Fresnoy, Tourcoing, France  
28.02 - 05.05.2025

UNOC  
VILLA ARSON, NICE  
Coral curatorial team  
Biennale des Art de Nice  
9 May - 30 September, 2025

The Current IV: Caribbean  
Ocean Space, Venecia, Italia  
Otras montañas, las que andan sueltas  
bajo el agua (other mountains, adrift  
beneath the waves)  
Curated by Yina Jiménez Suriel  
2023-2025

ASSEMBLING WITH THE PLANET  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,  
Madrid, Spain  
Curated by Daniela Zyman  
July 1 - September 28, 2025

JOHN AKOMFRAH  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,  
Madrid, Spain  
Curated by Tarini Malik  
November 4, 2025 - February 8, 2026

## Research Programs

Organismo | Art in Applied Critical Ecologies  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,  
Madrid, Spain  
Independent study program  
October 2024 to June 2025

The Current IV: Caribbean:  
"otras montañas, las que  
andan sueltas bajo el agua"

(other mountains, adrift beneath the waves)  
Curated by Yina Jiménez Suriel  
2023 - 2025

## Digital and educational programs

TBA21 on st\_age  
www.stage.tba21.org  
Season 05, 2024

OCEAN /UNI Fall semester  
bárawa  
October 9 - November 27 2024

OCEAN / UNI  
Culturing the Deep Sea  
The Anglerfish Chronicles  
2022 - 2024

Ocean- Archive  
Seafloor Futures: Science and Fictions  
in Deep Dimensions  
Mae Lubetkin  
Digital residence 2023/2024

## Loans

— CURRENT

Olafur Eliasson "The Glacier Melt Series"  
Walid Raad "The Constables"  
Jose Dávila "Woman in Bath"  
Asunción Molinos Gordo  
"Cuánto río allá arriba!"  
Water  
Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium  
Curator: Louma Salamé  
Duration: 19 de octubre 2023  
- 10 de marzo de 2024

Sandra Vásquez de la Horra  
"America without Borders"  
Paulo Nazareth "Untitled,  
from white ethnography series"  
Rashid Johnson "The New Negro  
Escapists Social and Athletic Club (Kiss)"  
Cecilia Bengolea "Lightning Dance"  
Pierre Mukeba " (Alikuwa amekufa  
kwa uchawi.) (Pietà)"  
Taysir Batniji "GH0809 (nº7)"  
Selma Selman "Self-portrait (Snake)"  
Selma Selman "Self-portrait (Two Women)"  
Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa "Huertos  
de los Ch'olti"  
Nohemí Pérez "Cóndores sin vida"  
Nohemí Pérez "Incendio en la casa  
de la zarigüeya"  
Inci Eviner "Harem"  
Maxwell Alexandre "Untitled (from  
the series Golden Shower / Pardo é Papel)"  
*Colonial Memory in the Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Collections*  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,  
Madrid, España  
Curators: Juan Angel López, Andrea Pacheco,  
and Yeison Fernando García López  
Duration: 25 June - 20 October 2024

— UPCOMING

Olafur Eliasson "Eye see you"  
 Cerith Wyn Evans "A Community Predicated  
 on the Basic Fact Nothing Really Matters"  
*Phantom Vision*  
 Light Art Museum, Budapest, Hungary  
 Curator: Bori Szalai  
 Duration: August 1 2024 - June 30 2025

Rirkrit Tiravanija "Untitled 2014-2016  
 (curry for the soul of the forgotten) (three)"  
 Rirkrit Tiravanija "Untitled (angst essen  
 seele auf, frankfurter allgemeine,  
 september 15, 2008)"  
*Rirkrit Tiravanija. Das Glück ist nicht  
 immer lustig*  
 Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany  
 Curators: Jenny Schlenzka, Yasmil

Raymond and Christopher Wierling  
 Duration: 12 September 2024  
 - 12 January 2025

John M Armleder "Global Domes XII"  
 Cibelle Cavalli Bastos "Run Naked  
 With The Wind Dressed Up in Courage"  
 Cibelle Cavalli Bastos "Thou Art"  
 Olafur Eliasson "Your welcome reflected"  
 Olafur Eliasson "Your uncertain  
 shadow (colour)"  
 Olafur Eliasson "New Berlin Sphere"  
 Tracey Emin "I Dream of Sleep"  
 Carsten Höller "Half Clock"  
 Paul McCarthy "Crown"  
 László Moholy-Nagy "Color study (   
 Pink arch and glass block)"  
 Ivan Navarro "Floor Hole"  
 Ernesto Neto "A candle to earth"  
 Finnbogi Pétursson "Sphere"  
 SUPERFLEX "Vertical Migration"  
 Cerith Wyn Evans "One evening  
 late in the war..."  
*Light, Sound & Senses*  
 Heidi Horten Museum, Vienna, Austria  
 Curator: Julia Hartmann  
 Duration: 20 September 2024  
 - 23 March 2025

Simone Fattal "Pearls"  
*Calling the nymphs /  
 Summoning the nymphs*  
 Académie de France à Rome  
 - Villa Medici, Rome  
 Curators: Caroline Courrioux  
 Duration: 3 October 2024 - February 2025

Gabriel Chaile "La Malinche"  
 Gabriel Chaile  
 Tabakalera, Donosti, Spain  
 Curators: Ane Agirre and Jone Uriarte  
 Duration: 23 October 2024 - 2 February 2025

Bill Viola "Silent Mountain"  
 Bill Viola  
 NEO Contemporary Art Space,  
 Budapest, Hungary  
 Curator: Tamás Végvári  
 Duration: 16 November 2024  
 - 2 March 2025

Allan Sekula "Middle Passage",  
 chapter 3, from Fish Story  
*Ocean*  
 Louisiana Museum of Modern Art,  
 Humlebaek, Denmark  
 Curators: Poul Erik Tøjner, Tine Colstrup,  
 and Kaspar Thormod  
 Duration: 11 October 2024 - 27 April 2025

Pavlo Makov  
 SAATCHI GALLERY, London, UK  
 Duration: December - January 2024/25

Teresa Solar Abboud "Intraterrene"  
 Teresa Solar Abboud  
 "What was left on my body"  
 Teresa Solar Abboud  
 "What was left on my body"  
 Teresa Solar Abboud "Forma de fuga:  
 Nacimiento de las islas"  
*Teresa Solar Abboud.  
 Sueño máquina de pájaro*  
 MACBA, Barcelona, Spain  
 Duration: October 31 2024 - February 23 2025

Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller  
 "The Murder of Crows"  
 Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller  
 Le Fresnoy, Tourcoing, Francia  
 Curator: Pascale Pronnier  
 Duration: February 28 2025 - May 5 2025

## Exhibition

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Paseo del Prado, 8  
28014 Madrid (Spain)  
[www.museothyssen.org](http://www.museothyssen.org)

October 8, 2024 - January 12, 2025

Curator  
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Curatorial Assistant Intern  
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Registrar  
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Press and Institutional Relations of the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza  
[Gema Sesé, Alicia Barrigüete, Lucía Villanueva](#)  
[comunicación@museothyssen.org](mailto:comunicación@museothyssen.org)

TBA21 Communication  
[Assunta Jiménez](#)  
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TBA21 National Press  
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[lydia@scott-andco.com](mailto:lydia@scott-andco.com)

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Tabita Rezaire [Amakaba] x Yussef Agbo-Ola [Olaniyi Studio], *Omi: Yemoja Temple, 2024*, Installationsansicht der Ausstellung *Omi Libations* bei der Schering Stiftung, Berlin.  
Foto: © Jens Ziehe

Tabita Rezaire [Amakaba] x Yussef Agbo-Ola [Olaniyi Studio], *Omi: Yemoja Temple, 2024*, Installation view of the exhibition *Omi Libations* at the Schering Stiftung, Berlin.  
Photo: © Jens Ziehe

Omo Elu, commissioned by Lagos Biennale (2024), Nigeria. Courtesy of Tabita Rezaire and Goodman Gallery

Tabita Rezaire. Photo: Marcella Ruiz Cruz

## Booklet

Texts  
[Chus Martínez](#), [Omikunmi Egbelade](#),  
[Tabita Rezaire](#) and [Joël Vacheron](#)

Translation  
[Ignacio Vidal-Folch](#)

Editors  
English [Orit Gat](#)  
Spanish [Luis Bernal](#)  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza Editorial Team: [Ana Cela](#), [Catali Garrigues](#) and [Ángela Villaverde](#)

Graphic Design  
[Ana Domínguez](#)  
[Constanza Ale](#)  
[Marc Vidal](#)

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