

Maina Boniface

Pamela Enyonu

Alexandre Kyungu

Option Nyahunzvi

Ngugi Waweru

**AFRICA 1:1**



Fondazione  
Musei  
Civici  
Venezia



CITTA' DI  
VENEZIA

**AFRICA 1:1**

**AFRICA 1:1 LAB**  
**Artists' residency program**  
**at AKKA Project Venice**

Artists in residence

Maina Boniface  
Pamela Enyonu  
Alexandre Kyungu  
Option Nyahunzvi  
Ngugi Waweru

Produced by  
AKKA Project  
Africa First

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**AFRICA 1:1**  
**Five African artists at Ca' Pesaro**  
**Exhibition**

Venice  
Ca' Pesaro  
International Gallery of Modern Art  
20 May – 1 October 2023

Curator  
Elisabetta Barisoni  
Lidija Kostic Khachatourian

In collaboration with  
AKKA Project  
Africa First by Serge Tiroche

Exhibition design  
Francesca Boni

Coordinated image  
Headline



**AFRICA 1:1**







# AFRICA 1:1

AFRICA 1:1 LAB, an artists' residency project, sets up a bracing milieu for five young African artists to experience Venice's prolific art scene and breathe in their own creative offering, as the city gets ready for the Laboratory of the Future, the eagerly anticipated 18th Architecture Biennale curated by Lesley Lokko.

Born from the collaborative efforts of AKKA Project and Africa First, with the support of Ca' Pesaro, the International Gallery of Modern Art, AFRICA 1:1 LAB project has invited young artists from Kenya, Uganda, DRC and Zimbabwe to be part of a residency that took place at AKKA Project.

The project culminated with a large site-specific exhibition at Ca' Pesaro in Venice. The Ca' Pesaro palace is a testament to the strong cultural and artistic momentums of the 19th and 20th centuries. Collections of the museum include masterpieces by Italian artists from different schools of thought as well as international jewels by artists like Gustav Klimt and Auguste Rodin. Some, like Carrà and De Chirico along with other surrealists, have shaped the Art world as we know it today. Five different agents from Africa are introduced to metabolize this rich European substrate through their modes of creation.

Based on AKKA Project's premises, the artists have produced an original body of work inspired by the Ca' Pesaro collection, the palazzo itself and Venice as a whole.

This project features Pamela Enyonu, Alexandre Kyungu and





Artist's studio at  
AKKA Project

Ngugi Waveru brought a spectrum of reflection on identity, spaces of struggle, trauma and different socio-political spaces in between; Maina Boniface who reunited with the mother surface to his surrealistic echo, and Option Nyahunzvi explored new communions and unforeseen senses of spirituality. Through the contemporary response of these artists, AKKA Project wishes to foster new cultural exchanges and present an innovative palette to the Venetian taste.

# Youth itself had knocked on our door

Elisabetta Barisoni  
Head of Ca' Pesaro -  
International Gallery of  
Modern Art

When Lidija Kostic and Kristian Khachatourian told me about the idea of inviting some young emerging artists from the African art scene to Venice, developing a residence project in the lagoon city in collaboration with AKKA Project and Africa First, my first thought went to the words of the famous will of our first patron of the arts, Felicita Bevilacqua La Masa.

During 1898, the Duchess worked out her long and articulated will, where she had the chance to "remove a few pebbles from her shoe" against those who had damaged her at a patrimonial and family level and yet managed to shape a far-reaching project for the lagoon city. An exceptional figure, at the center of a crucial period in the Italian history of the Risorgimento and post-unification, Felicita assigned Ca' Pesaro to the Municipality of Venice, indicating for it a vocation for art, especially contemporary art. Starting from this reflection, it emerges how much the goals she achieved in life were balanced by those that, according to her will, the Municipality was then able to carry out in the palace on the Grand Canal.

Starting from 1902 in Ca' Pesaro was set up, indeed, the first true factory in the city, with the arrival of the works of the newly erected collection of modern art, coming from the Biennials by purchases and donations, the artists' studios on the third floor of the Palazzo and finally the Exhibitions of the Opera Bevilacqua La Masa. Without Felicita there would be no International Gallery of Modern Art as we know it today and neither would be established the Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation, the institution that organized the first and oldest artist residencies in modern national history.

I immediately found the idea of welcoming five African artists in residence to Venice and Ca' Pesaro a valuable project, if we consider the long tradition that links these places to the living presence of artists, studios and contemporary art. There is also a symbolic aspect of the whole event, which the young artists invited today have grasped since their arrival: Felicita's will expresses her desire to do good to others and to perpetuate this feeling over time, leaving it to future generations, generating a sort of large Bevilacqua La Masa family that welcomes penniless young artists to Venice, excluded from official exhibitions: "I leave my Venice palace and the house in the fondamenta under perpetual condition not to be sold, transferred or exchanged in whole or in part, and that it must serve the following uses:





the top floor for studies of young painters, and poor students, granted free of charge, or with very low rents; the 2nd noble floor to be rented in order to find the means for maintenance costs; the 1st noble floor and the mezzanines will have to be used, in whole or in part, as a permanent exhibition of Venetian arts and industries, for the profit, especially of young artists, who are often forbidden to entry to large exhibitions, so that, unknown and discouraged, they have no means to step forward, and are often forced to give up their artworks to retailers and corneres who are their vampires".

The suggestions of Felicita, the first voice of the fortune of the building, are now joined by the solicitations of Pamela Enyonu, the only woman invited to the Africa 1:1 project. Precisely on a 1:1 scale is the comparison between Pamela and the sumptuousness of the building in her narrative-dress, which welcomes the visitor at the base of the monumental staircase. The references of her work, as well as in the sound work installed in the permanent collection, are to the world of feminine, home and nostalgia, in the Greek sense of etymology as a yearning to return to the mother (the lullaby, the kiss of the good night, childhood memories) and towards what we consider, each in its own way, the homeland and safe haven of the soul. There are many links between Pamela and Felicita's thoughts, both in her philanthropic inspiration and in her fervent patriotic faith. And there are numerous references to the present women, women who represent the home, the domestic, the unwritten law, and caring figures who never rest, as the performance conceived by Pamela for the opening day seems to tell us.

Another actor, equally significant for the history of Ca' Pesaro and for its birth as a factory, is Nino Barbantini, who arrived in 1907 at the Directorship of the Modern Art Gallery of Venice, at the same time in the role of Secretary of the Opera Bevilacqua La Masa. A great figure of talent scout and art critic, in the first years of his activity Barbantini concentrated on some aspects of contemporary art, insisting on the idea of youth and on the love for the restless young people who animated the Italian cultural scene. Even today, in the residence that brought five young African authors from different countries and from different artistic and cultural backgrounds to the Museum, rebellion is a distinctive trait of the Ca' Pesaro factory, not only in the fabric and stitched words on Pamela's dress but also in the dramatic transfiguration of Option Nyahunzvi. A foreshortened view of the famous facciata of the Palazzo, with the rusticated ashlar work that distinguishes its constructive and decorative genius, becomes an opportunity for an intimate revisitation of the anxieties that run through the artist's soul. As in the marked and almost engraved line of Arturo Martini's sculpture, Option scores the paint and peels it to reveal the underlying paper. There is therefore a seductive result from a technical and expressive point of view, at the same time destabilizing in the iconography. An improbable gondola welcomes pieces of the body of an African zebra, while the algae rise menacingly from the foreground of the painting and the grotesque masks on the walls of the building become a series of monstrous monkey faces.





On the previous page  
Artists' first visit at Ca' Pesaro  
with Elisabetta Barisoni

Above  
Elisabetta Barisoni, Lidjia Kostic Khachatourian  
and the artists visiting Ca' Pesaro



Barbantini would also have found "youth" in the relationship between the building, in its architectural majesty, and the powerful rendering of the forms created by Alexandre Kyungu. During the months of study, contiguity, research and visits to the rooms of Ca' Pesaro, Alexandre responded to the charm of the decorative elements of the architecture, above all the geometries of the historical floors of the noble floors and the entrance hall. In the project room of the Museum, he exhibits a series of works engraved on rubber, a waste, an industrial commonly used material, and transforms them into precious objects, decorated with the forms discovered at Ca' Pesaro and refracted on the bodies of visitors throughout the light. As if somehow Ca' Pesaro remained attached to the public's skin, Alexandre mixes, in a fantastic imaginative rendering, the seventeenth-century decorations of the building with the African tradition of decorating the skin. Confirmation that the initial intuitions of the project could yield excellent results also comes from Ngugi Waweru and Maina Boniface, "pure" painters, immersed in dialogue with the Museum's permanent collection and Western visual history. Ngugi makes magical the appearance of pairs of lovers, generated by flows of energy that envelop each other, against the background of famous Venetian settings. His stitched hearts or, as he expresses it, restitched after the inevitable tears that everyone's life brings with itself, stand out on the chests of imaginary and surreal lovers; the background is Venice, which Ngugi interrogates thinking of the ancient history that the stones themselves tell and which leads him to reflect on how many existential events have intersected, over the centuries, between these calli and between these canals

The reminiscences of the female strength in his homeland, Kenya, emerge in other works that Ngugi created during his residence in Venice, according to an energy that once again derives from Western Expressionism, from Edvard Munch, Franz von Stuck and from Early 1900s Secessions. Perhaps Ngugi together with Boniface are the authors who bear the most significant traces of the relationship with the European visual heritage, without this corresponding to a value judgement. Boniface Maina in particular has its roots in the universe of Italian metafisica, establishing a refined and symbolic dialogue with Giorgio de Chirico. His production is characterized by great attention to details, within a composition that plays on the false certainties of our eye: the symbols of piazza San Marco mix with a metaphysical tower, the only orthogonal architectural object of the whole painting, where a masked shaman sits. The position of this religious priest, who represents the removal of traditional African spirituality, is as classic as those of the saints in the great Venetian altarpieces. In the background, the clouds, on the contrary, accompany a landscape that is lost in the infinity of the African savannah, while numerous particulars and details lead us back to the archetypal religious symbols (the cow, the lamb) and to the perspective game of the stroboscopic illusion sought by the artist. Finally, the frame of the painting reveals a further surrealist game, as it recalls the decorative grafts of the ceilings of Ca' Pesaro, the trompe l'oeil made with large canvases framed in the Venetian ceilings. We find ourselves looking at the building, the beauty of its decorations and pictorial foreshortened views.





On the previous page  
Artists' first visit at Ca' Pesaro Artists working in the gallery



Each of the five invited artists found their way here. In their works, everything starts from and returns to Ca' Pesaro and its history, from the echoes of those who lived it in the modern era that we have mentioned above: Felicita, Nino, Arturo, Gino, Umberto, Diego, along with many others who will still live it. In the year of an architecture Biennale, that proposes itself as a Laboratory of the Future with the curatorship of Lesley Lokko, we can today confirm that the first intuitions related to the Africa 1:1 residence project have been satisfied and surpassed. Through a new view of the building, its protagonists, the collection, and the exhibition of the five African artists allows us to see things in a different light and with new sensory and symbolic solicitations.

Furthermore, the dialogue with a visual heritage as steeped in history as the Venetian one, and in particular that of Ca' Pesaro, has given rise to sparks that I am sure will give new stimulus to both interlocutors, us and the artists, as well as new reflection cue for the public and visitors.

I also imagine that the old masters exhibited in the permanent collection and the more recent ones arriving with the Gemma De Angelis Testa donation can welcome the five newcomers to the great creative factory of Ca' Pesaro, without fear of comparing themselves, without fear of sharing nor to expose. All together they can celebrate, still today and with ever greater strength, the far-sighted legacy of Felicita Bevilacqua La Masa and at the same time renew the exclamation that Barbantini reserved at the sight of Gino Rossi: youth itself had knocked on our door.

# AFRICA 1:1 LAB: Incubating African Artistry in the Venetian Lagoon

Lidija Kostic Khachatourian  
Co-founder of  
AKKA Project

The AFRICA 1:1 LAB is a groundbreaking artist residency program that aims to provide a nurturing environment for five young African artists to explore Venice's thriving art scene and engage in a dialogue with Ca' Pesaro's permanent collection. It offers a unique opportunity for these artists to immerse themselves in Venice's rich cultural heritage and produce art that reflects their own experiences, cultures, and identities.

It is worth noting that AKKA Project was transformed into a shared studio space, following the 18th Architecture Biennale theme curated by Lesley Lokko. The residency posed several challenges for the artists, including working in an unfamiliar environment, sharing the space, and completing their work within a specific time frame.



Artists working in the gallery

Despite the difficulties, the artists' diverse backgrounds and cultures brought new perspectives and ways of working, highlighting the challenges of human relationships when people come from different places and experiences.

The residency also raised crucial issues about creativity and the environment, as the artists questioned the role of the surrounding context in stimulating or blocking creativity. They explored how breaking the rules of how a space should be used could lead to new ideas and perspectives. Through their work, the artists challenged traditional ways of thinking about space and offered new ways of transforming it.

The AFRICA 1:1 LAB was more than just a residency program. It was a platform for African artists to showcase their artistry, engage in a global dialogue, and bring their unique perspectives and experiences to the table. The project has the potential to shift the dominant narratives around African artistry and inspire a new generation of artists to push boundaries and explore new frontiers.

It is truly a remarkable achievement to see Pamela Enyonu, Maina Boniface, Alexandre Kyungu, Ngugi Waweru, and Option Nyahunzvi being exhibited next to the masters like de Chirico, Rodin, and Kandinsky.



Artists around the city of Venice



# Dimensions of Art: A Dual Project Across the Grand Canal

Kristian Khachatourian  
Co-founder of  
AKKA Project

One of the most rewarding aspects of this project was the constant exchange and sharing of energy, thoughts, and perspectives, which made AFRICA 1:1 LAB a hub of ideas for both the artists and all those who worked behind the scenes.

A crucial question arose: how would their work be received? This led to numerous considerations. Through impromptu brainstorming sessions, the artists came to realize that they were working on a dual project: two sides of the Grand Canal (one side hosting the gallery, the other side Ca' Pesaro), two parts of the project - the creation and the exhibition. A dimensional transfer occurred: for the artists, AKKA Project Gallery became a home away from home, a safe space, a comfort zone that served as a studio and a hub for ideas. In this physical and conceptual space, their artworks had unmistakable meanings, definitions, and labels. However, as they left this safe place to be permanently hosted at the Ca' Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art, it's possible that those meanings and labels could change.



Artists around the city of Venice

All artworks have their own meaning, but they also receive significance from the context in which they are placed. A recurring circumstance in Italian art history is that artworks produced for devotional purposes, and therefore placed in churches, were then bought and transferred to museums, decontextualizing the work and modifying its purpose and meaning. This is because those devotional artworks are no longer related to other religious symbols but are now beside other artworks. Following this line of thought, we can consider how the artworks at Ca' Pesaro, which have been an inspiration for the African artists, change their contextual definition when put in relation to these new works.

The project's broader goal is to remove the lenses, gazes, and biases that the Western world has inherited from its history. This project showcases African art: it's vibrant, fresh, elegant, and complex. We can go even further: if African artists work in a project space in Venice, are we talking about African or Venetian artifacts? What do they become once they are acquired by the Ca' Pesaro collection? These difficult questions should lead visitors into the exhibition.

The residency aims to bridge connections, be a place of transition, and offer new opportunities to Venice itself. This city has always been a place of transition; that's how it was born, and it's the reason that allowed it to become one of the most influential places in Europe for arts and culture. Arguably, Venice has been the perfect host for AFRICA 1:1.

We hope that AFRICA 1:1 will offer new perspectives to enrich the cultural dialogues taking place in Venice.



Artists around the city of Venice

# Creativity for Social Change

Tania Giancesin  
Co-founder and  
Board member of  
Moleskine Foundation

"So, how does the outlaw artist undertake the perfect crime?

What's the first step? What's the recipe?

There is no recipe." (From "Creativity - The perfect crime", Philippe Petit)

Well, when it comes to creativity we are on the same track.

There is no magic formula for creativity. Everyone interprets it in their own way.

But it can be declined, contextualized, and explored from different points of view.

It is often trivialized. It is thought to be an innate talent. Or something abstract. Something that cannot be "touched".

But if we look at it from an etymological point of view, we discover a curious thing.

Maria Sebregondi, Co-founder and president of Moleskine Foundation, explores it like this:

Creativity, from the Latin, create (verb), nouns creatio, creator, creativus.

Perhaps an ancient Sanskrit root kra, which then gives rise to the Greek word keir, keiros, the hand.

I particularly like to think of creativity in its connection with the hand, with doing. The hand is a very complex instrument, it has more than 27 bones, small bones that together produce extraordinary skills. A tool that builds other tools.



In a spiral, growing, infinite movement of creation and transformation. And, by the way, in Latin to create has the same root as to grow.

The hand often symbolizes action, and movement in many writings (Egyptian, Mayan, Aztec hieroglyphs, etc). Its representation is among the first artistic expressions (the Cueva de las manos).

Creativity means triggering a concrete transformation process, it means getting to work.

The creation of hands is linked to wisdom, to know-how, there is no creation without knowledge, which itself relies on exploration. Hands are an exploration tool, they are touch, curiosity, exploring things in a physical way.

For this reason, creativity is within everyone's reach, and it is a collective value, a value to be shared, with many hands, and many skilled tools at work for transformation.

The key point is precisely this: there is no creation without knowledge, which itself relies on exploration. We deduce that to be creative you need to know: explore, study, go deep, and have an iron – constant – stainless discipline.

Just Philippe Petit, a tightrope walker, an artist of the wire, and a "disobedient" figure par excellence, has followed an iron discipline throughout his life. Each of his projects – or crimes as he defines them – was obsessively studied down to the smallest detail. Months, years of study, training, concentration, millimetre calculation.

In addition, there can be no true transformation without contamination. Without "kneading" one's creativity with the leaven of the community.

Borrowing the words of Adama Sanneh (Co-founder and CEO of Moleskine Foundation), "Creativity is ultimately an act of communication; it intrinsically connects us with ourselves and with others. That's why if we think of creativity, we have to think of it as part of a community. Especially nowadays, that we've realized more than ever that our destinies are interconnected. There is a beautiful word that can help us articulate this concept: Ubuntu."

If it literally means "humanity", in practice the meaning is much more articulated and complex.

Ubuntu can be summarized as the philosophical belief that connects all of humanity: what we are is the result of the life of an infinity of other people; each is a hologram of the whole society.

According to a famous interpretation - which came to life as an aphorism in itself - ubuntu means: I am because we are.

We can be inspired by those who preceded us, by those who create in the contemporary world at other latitudes, by those who find new solutions to ancient problems because they change their gaze, subvert thinking, turn upside down to see another perspective or look a labyrinth from above to see the way out.

Creativity often lies in a "gap" path, of displacement of perception. It has an implicit nature, often hidden. You can't "see" creativity itself. We can be creative, act creatively, and think creatively. To create an artwork, a project, an artifact to solve a problem, to change the world.

Can Creativity change the world? Perhaps an obvious question. A concrete utopia.

As far as I'm concerned, we can turn it into an affirmation and write: Creativity can change the world.

I believe that every creative act can change our world. Every small, imperceptible action can shift/change our perception of the world and have a concrete impact on our life and the life of our communities. We are all connected. Among humans, animals, plants, the entire ecosystem.

And influencing the community in a creative way allows us to trigger positive, generative, regenerating social change.

The goal may seem too ambitious, and at times, impossible.

But, to get back to our "outlaw" and visionary tightrope walker, "If taking the first step is to face the Impossible, taking the second step is to deceive the Impossible. Whatever I'm doing, the only way I can succeed is not to stop, as if the impossible wasn't watching! I ignore his presence and focus on advancing on the wire" (Philippe Petit).

# Maina Boniface



Maina Boniface (b. 1987) is a Kenyan artist based in Nanyuki, where he was born. His primary artistic media are painting and drawing, through which he explores the inconsistencies and conflicts inherent in human interactions within physical space. Maina's work seeks to reconcile traditional art-making techniques with contemporary concerns, resulting in tension and experimentation in his artistic process.

Central to Maina's artistic practice is distorted, often exaggerated figures that embody the anatomical study of the human form. These figures are intricately drawn with interwoven lines, giving them a muscular appearance. By using figures, Maina mirrors the daily decisions of existing within a defined space, inviting the viewer to reflect on their own physical and social interactions.

Maina's process involves layering paint and inks on varied substrates, symbolizing the foundational aspects upon which individuals expose or personalize themselves. This approach allows the artist to converse with the work and explore imaginative possibilities. The backgrounds in his compositions serve as supportive highlights and contributors to the overall depth of the artwork, drawing the viewer's eye and sometimes limiting their perspective.

Through his work, Maina initiates a dialogue that questions the societal constructs of today. His art serves as a medium for exploring the human condition and the tensions that arise within social and physical spaces.





Maina Boniface'  
at AKKA Project



Maina Boniface at Ca' Pesaro



On the left  
Maina Boniface outside Ca' Pesaro

On the following page  
Maina Boniface working at AKKA Project





During his residency at AKKA Project, Maina sought to deepen his understanding of the metaphysical influences on art, including the thought processes, use of materials, and execution techniques employed by artists in this movement. His hope was to gain inspiration from the architectural designs of buildings, which he could easily explore using various means of movement within the city.

Upon being selected for the AFRICA 1:1 LAB residency project, Maina felt both excitement and anxiety as he contemplated the significance and potential impact of his work. He found particular interest in the sculptures, paintings, frescoes, and architectural designs of the Ca' Pesaro museum, as well as the works of De Chirico, Ileana Ruggeri, Mario Sironi, and Giacomo Manzù, each room offering its unique ambience.

The prospect of displaying his own work alongside that of such extraordinary artists as De Chirico, Fontana, Rodin, and Kandinsky filled Maina with both pride and anxiety.

The residency posed several challenges, including navigation through Venice's maze-like streets, creating work that reflects the museum space and collection while maintaining his native heritage, and adapting to a city vastly different from his hometown. Despite these obstacles, Maina found comfort in his collective in Nairobi, which provided support and a sense of community during his time in Venice.



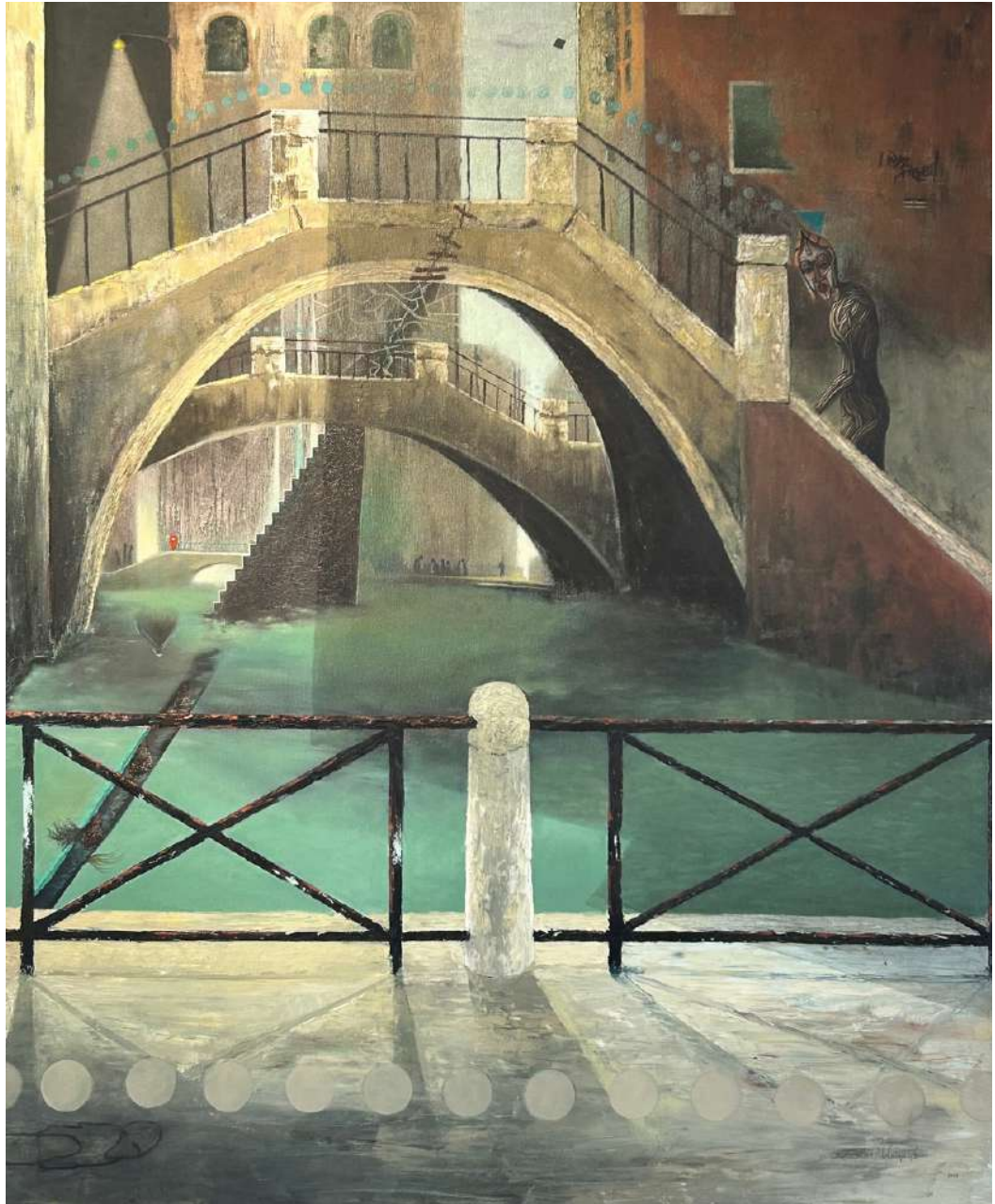




On the previous page  
Maina Boniface working at AKKA Project

On the left  
Maina Boniface's studio at the gallery





Maina Boniface  
Navigating Venice  
2023  
Oils on canvas  
120 x 100 cm



On the left  
Maina Boniface  
San Mündü Piazza  
2023  
Oils on canvas  
120 x 100 cm





Maina Boniface  
Is it appropriate?  
2023  
Oils on canvas  
100 x 120 cm

# Pamela Enyonu





Pamela Enyonu is a Ugandan artist who was born in 1985 and currently lives and works in Kampala.

Her style is inspired by stories, materials, and the process it takes to transform them into works of art. Pamela's works explore narratives on gender, identity, empowerment, and self-awareness. She is particularly interested in the "untokenized" experiences that occupy the intersection of empowerment, mental health, and identity, and she engages with different communities through collaborations, workshops, and seminars.

During AFRICA 1:1 LAB residency, Pamela kept an open mind, allowing herself to embrace the different experiences she was exposed to. She was overwhelmed by the colors, textures, sounds, and smells of Venice when she arrived, and navigating the large number of tourists daily was a challenge. As an artist from the global south, negotiating spaces that are predominantly and historically white is always an interesting challenge.

Pamela used the holographic will of the Duchess Felicita Bevilacqua La Masa, where she bequeathed the building to young Venetian artists, as a point of departure to create a dialogue with the history of Ca' Pesaro and its collection. She was intrigued by the feminist undertones of the act of expressing a woman's will and having that will respected, in a time where women did not have or wield such power, and the significance of that act today. Pamela's work engages with these feminist themes, challenging traditional power structures and amplifying the voices of those who have been historically marginalized.



Felicità Bevilacqua La Masa's  
marble bust at Ca' Pesaro

Out of the collection, she was most drawn to the masterpieces "Un Fantasma Percorre L'Europa", "The Thinker", and "Three Triangles".

Pamela hopes that her works will sit comfortably among the thinkers and image makers in Ca' Pesaro and inspire meaningful dialogue that expands the cultural narratives of Venice. The most challenging part of her residency in Venice was the time, access, and language barriers of the archival materials she was interested in.

As an artist who predominantly works alone in her studio, Pamela was pleasantly surprised by the experience of working with other artists during her residency. She was able to form bonds and hold meaningful dialogues with her fellow artists on diverse topics, and it was a privilege to have a front seat into the processes of the people she has come to respect and admire.

Pamela studied Art and Design at Kyambogo University Banda in Kampala, and her artistic career began with a residency at 32 Degrees East in Kampala in 2017, where she focused on identity, trauma, and healing. Her work in Venice builds on this foundation, exploring similar themes through the lens of Black Feminist Thought which centers rest as resistance. Pamela was also invited to participate in another artist's residency in Paris, France, on the occasion of Africa 2020, and concluded her residency at AKKA Project in Venice, Italy, hosted by ProHelvetia, Zurich, Switzerland, in 2022



Pamela Enyonu's  
at the gallery





Pamela Enyonu's studio at the gallery



HOME IS TO BED  
SAFE COMFORTABLE,  
(REST)

AND ACCEPT  
WHO I AM.  
ESHER SWEENEY

ERE I  
CED  
LY AND  
VEY.

Sound piece  
WHAT DO YOU  
MISS ABOUT  
HOME?

S  
D  
CUPX

... there's a pain only long  
Creator.  
a joy only sweetness of  
When I left home,  
I thought I would  
miss you... mhmpt...  
but even the smell of  
path home is missed  
I miss the tall dark grasses  
by the fence tree  
I miss our two matoke  
Plants...

On the right  
Pamela Enyonu's studio at the gallery

On the following pages  
Pamela Enyonu's works in progress  
Details



Home is safety



... would only  
... I thought  
... I left  
... only gives.  
... only gives.  
... thought  
... gives.  
... thought

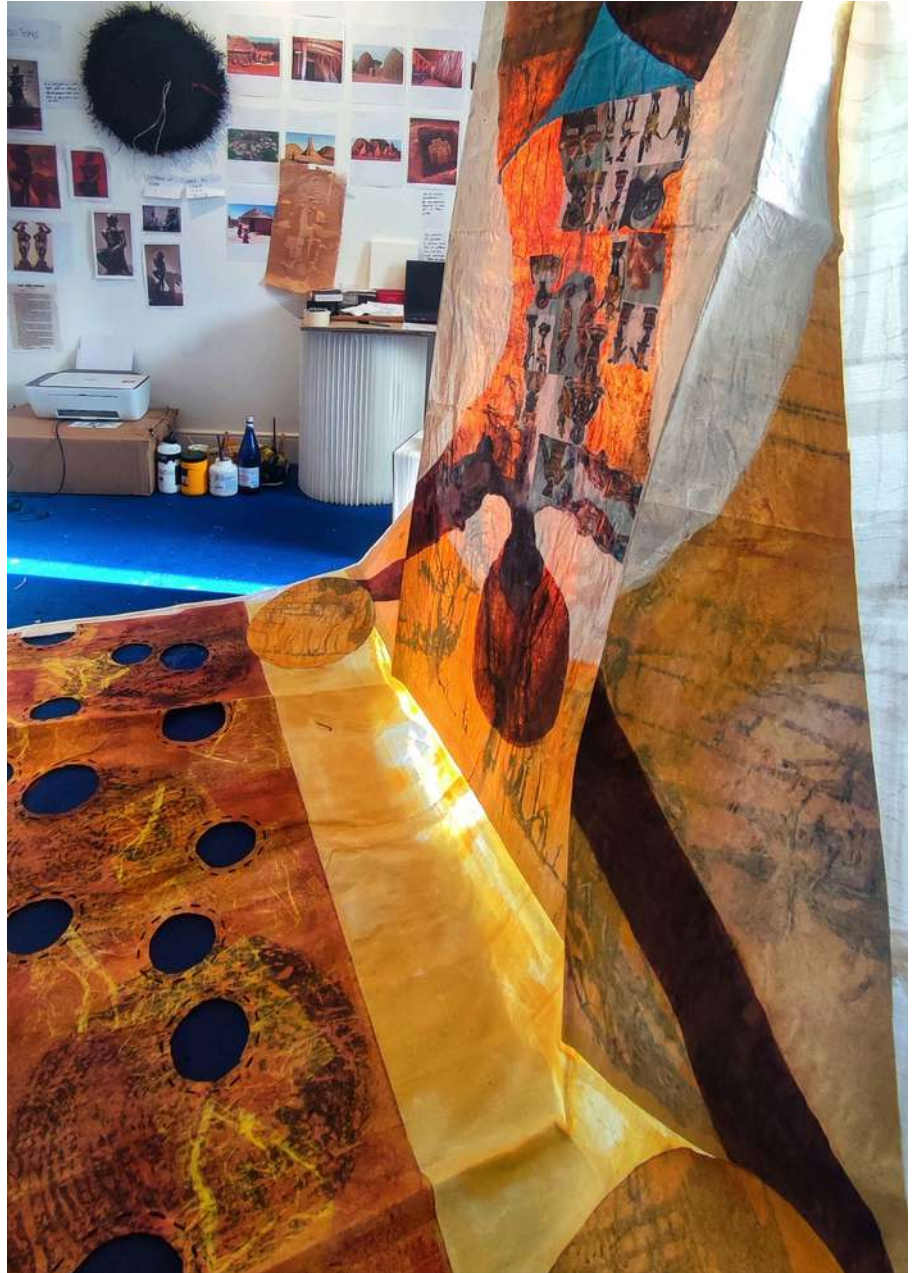






On the previous page  
Pamela Enyonu's work in progress  
Detail

On the right  
Pamela Enyonu's work in progress  
Detail







Pamela Enyonu  
Red borders  
2023  
Mixed media, acrylics and  
hand-made paper on canvas  
110 x 80 cm



Pamela Enyonu  
Enough  
2023  
Mixed media, acrylics and  
hand-made paper on canvas  
110 x 80 cm



# Alexandre Kyungu





Alexandre Kyungu at  
AKKA Project

Alexandre Kyungu Mwilambwe, is a visual artist living and working in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. His artistic practice combines painting, drawing, sculpture and installation to explore and address notions of migration and identity, borders and space, and signs and symbols.

Alexandre Kyungu uses doors and rubber as a support and subject to link the themes of urban cartography and body scarification (Nzoloko) in order to explore the parallel and the imaginary between urban cartography and body scarification.

Nzoloko, the Lingala word for scarification, means to scratch, etch, burn, mark, or carve designs, images, or words superficially into the skin. The incisions made during this process leave behind permanent alterations to the body that store information about a person's identity, origin, and history, ultimately acting as an ancestral passport while negotiating pre-colonial social, cultural, and political boundaries.

Alexandre Kyungu Mwilambwe reappropriates the practice of scarification in his work to serve as an intermediary element linking his ancestral African identity to cartography, allowing him to confront issues of accessibility, encounter and mobility on a global scale.

In conclusion, his work functions as a "cartographic essay" in which he attempts to construct a new and global world by merging and juxtaposing maps of different cities with scarification. It is a way for him to question and redefine cities and their cartography in order to erase the boundaries between people in their living spaces and give birth to a unique territory in the imaginary space of his works.



On the left  
Ca' Pesaro Floor's detail  
Above  
Alexandre Kyungu at Ca' Pesaro





Alexandre Kyungu's  
work in progress  
Detail



When he was selected for a residency at AFRICA 1:1 LAB, his goal was to find the link or connection that connects his work, the city of Venice and the Ca Pesaro Museum and also to find the right material for his projects, as he believes that materials and techniques are essential to express himself as an artist. His residency project was oriented towards questioning and exploring the relationship between his artwork and the architecture of the building. During his research on the permanent collection of the Ca' Pesaro Museum, he was inspired by the architecture, the history, the archives, the library and the emblematic artists whose works are on display. He was particularly inspired by the architecture of the museum and believes that his project will create a dialogue with the architecture of the building and bring a new perspective to the museum's collection.

Alexandre Kyungu Mwilambwe was born in 1992 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, where he currently lives and works. He studied art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kinshasa. He is also a co-founder of the Vision Total group.

He has participated in several exhibitions such as in 2023: group show "OFF THE GRID" at Hosfelt Gallery in San Francisco.  
2022: Dakar Biennale OFF international exhibition "Shadowing" organized by NoirConceptart, place de souvenir/Dakar Senegal.  
2022: "SLOWLY ARRIVING" at Kunsthau Baselland, Basel/Switzerland  
2022: SYNERGIES community: equity: Elan Cadiz, Cartography: Scarification: Alexandre Kyungu, Calabar Gallery/ NY USA  
2021: Black Resilience and Sustainability, Calabar Gallery/ NY USA  
2020: international online exhibition "Art Off-Screen" organized by Eileen jeng lynch curator of visual arts Wavehill in NY, USA.  
2020: Doors, Eyes and Marks tribal, AKKA Project Gallery in Dubai.



Alexandre Kyungu  
Nzoloko de Venise  
2023  
Incision on rubber  
155 x 156 cm



Alexandre Kyungu  
L'Ombre/The Shadow  
2023  
Incision on rubber  
120 x 107 x 20 cm





Alexandre Kyungu  
Nzoloko comme reflect à Venise I  
2023  
Incision on rubber  
160 x 113 cm

On the following page  
Alexandre Kyungu's work installed  
at Ca' Pesaro







# Option Nyahunzvi



Option Nyahunzvi is an artist from Zimbabwe whose artistic practice is rooted in his spiritual beliefs and Shona culture. His work explores the relationship between ancestral spirits and the living, as well as themes of community, tradition, and identity. Option's art serves as a personal expression of his spiritual beliefs and cultural heritage, while also resonating with universal appeal. His artistic style features layers of blended colors, intricate contour lines, and a sense of depth and texture. The process of pasting and removing strips symbolizes one's need to absorb and release various energies in order to create balance within oneself. The scenes he creates invite the viewer to participate in the imagination of not only what could possibly be but also what could have been.

During the AFRICA 1:1 LAB residency, Option was asked to create a dialogue with the history and collection of Ca' Pesaro, where he spent time researching and learning about the permanent collection. The baroque architecture of the building and the 19th- and 20th-century collection of paintings were the most interesting parts of Ca' Pesaro for him.

Option found it challenging not to have a private space in the house during the residency because of different cultural beliefs amongst his colleagues, but he enjoyed being in the same space as other artists because it provided access to ideas and criticism, even though it could be distracting at times. He shared his doubts with his colleagues and found it useful to exchange ideas with them.



Option was born in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1992 and graduated with a Certificate in Visual Arts and Design from Harare Polytechnic College in 2015. He has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including Art The Hague at Galerie SANAA in Utrecht, NL (2018); Meeting of the Minds, National Art Gallery of Zimbabwe in Harare, ZB (2018); Healing Power at Museum Voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, NL (2019); Kwatinobva Kunoyera (Sacred Origin) at Unit London Gallery in London, UK (2021); Vangurds at Unit London Gallery in London, UK (2022); Face the Nation at Pacers Gallery in Lagos, NG (2022). He has also completed various artist's residencies.





Option Nyahunzvi  
at Ca' Pesaro

On the following page  
Option Nyahunzvi  
at AKKA Project



Artists' studio at AKKA Project









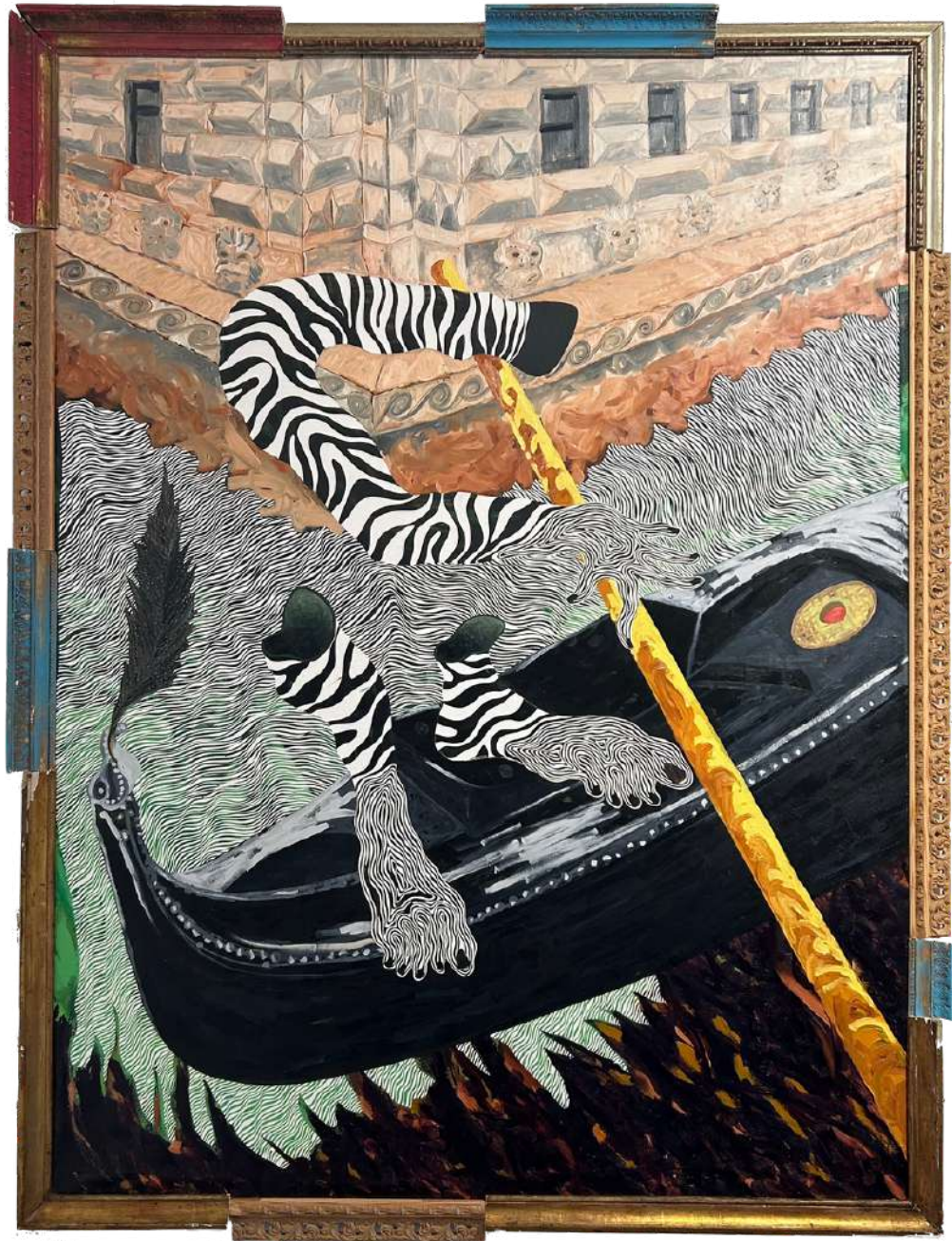
Above  
Option Nyahunzvi's studio at AKKA Project

On the previous page  
Option Nyahunzvi's work in progress  
Detail





Option Nyahunzvi  
at AKKA Project



Option Nyahunzvi  
Black Gondolier  
2023  
Acrylics, oils and  
cutting on canvas  
160 x 120 cm



# Ngugi Waweru



Ngugi Waweru is a multimedia artist born in Nakuru but he grew up in Nairobi. Unlike most artists who capture their art aptitude in their primary school years, Ngugi is a self-taught artist. He experimented with art after observing his friends practising art, who had already graduated from art school. He prefers doing woodcut prints art installations and mixed-media painting on canvas. Having already cultivated a passion and skill in the art, Ngugi resolved to embrace it full-time, and to him, art has been an alternative to discovering himself. He signed up for a community talent search and emerged the winner in the printing category with a woodcut print artwork. This motivated him to attend more workshops and exhibitions to have a wider understanding of art. By then he and his friends had already formed a collective of artists by the name Wajuku Arts. He teaches children and youths in order to help them foster the same enthusiasm that he has for art. In 2015 Ngugi emerged as the 2nd runner-up in the Manjano art competition. He works and lives in Nairobi. As part of Wajukuu artists who participated in Documenta 15, Ngugi's art installation was collected by Neue Galerie in Kassel and with Wajukuu artist collective they won the Arnold Bode Prize 2022.

Ngugi participated in the residency project AFRICA 1:1 LAB and was excited to expand his practice. He spent some time researching and learning about the permanent collection at Ca' Pesaro. The most interesting artwork for him was "Death and the Maiden" by Edward Munch. He appreciated the story of how Ca' Pesaro came to be a space for artists who otherwise had no place to work. When thinking about his work hanging next to De Chirico, Fontana, Rodin, Kandinsky, and other extraordinary artists, he was not intimidated but excited to be included with them.



Ngugi did not encounter any significant challenges during his residency in Venice. He is part of the collective Wajukuu in Nairobi and was used to working in shared spaces. He exchanged ideas with his colleagues on various topics, including art, politics, colonization, religion, and sexuality.

Ngugi found the architectural design of Venice amazing and was excited to visit the city. His best memory in Venice was visiting the Peggy Guggenheim Museum and seeing Francis Bacon's artworks.

He participated in numerous group exhibitions and art fairs such as Paper 2, Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, KE (2015); Manjano, Village Market, Nairobi, KE (2015); Kenya Art Fair, Serit Center, Nairobi, KE (2015); Wajukuu Art Exhibition, Kuona Trust, Nairobi, KE (2017); Young guns, Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, KE (2017); Review, Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi, KE (2018); Kenya Art Diary Exhibition, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Nairobi, KE (2018); Our Stories, Human Stories, InGenio Arte Contemporanea, Turin, IT (2018); Documenta 15, Kassel, DE (2022). What if not the world? Kunstverein Arnseberd, DE (2022-2023); Informal digitalization, Wajukuu, Nairobi, KE (2023).



Ngugi Waweru  
at Ca' Pesaro

His artistic practice utilizes installation, sculpture and painting to explore the relationship between people and their environments. During his residency, he is working on a series of paintings called "if walls could talk." In this body of artwork, he is imagining stories or the untold stories the walls have witnessed.

Venice, as he knows, is a very old city. Not many things there are new and one is always immersed and surrounded by history in every part of the city. At the time of Casanova's birth, the city of Venice thrived as the pleasure capital of Europe, ruled by political and religious conservatives who tolerated social vices and encouraged tourism. Today, among many other things, it is known for its reputation for romance and is a destination unlike any other.

As he walks through the streets of Venice, he notices the walls are natural, rough, casual, and have simulated marks of ageing. This rustic look makes Venice's architectural design embrace the beauty of imperfection which makes it a warm and inviting space that feels cozy and comfortable, thus making it a romantic destination.

In this series, he is giving voices to the wall through his paintings. Romanticism and eroticism, sacred love or secular love, pain and joy caused by love. Most of his paintings are ropes tangled figures which represent the flow of different energies in our bodies, mostly two figures. The figures have two elements, that is, they appear stitched together. The inspiration for this series is from the city of Venice and its rustic walls.

Ngugi Waweru's work in progress  
Detail







Ngugi Waweru painting at  
AKKA Project

On the following page  
Ngugi Waweru painting at  
AKKA Project







Ngugi Waweru at AKKA Project



Ngugi Waweru  
Conservative bubble  
2023  
Acrylics on canvas  
130 x 100 cm





Ngugi Waweru  
Filling the holes  
2023  
Oils and acrylics on canvas  
130 x 100 cm





Ngugi Waweru  
If walls could talk  
2023  
Acrylics on canvas  
130 x 100 cm

## **AFRICA 1:1**

### **Five African artists at Ca' Pesaro**

**20.05 -**

**01.10.2023**

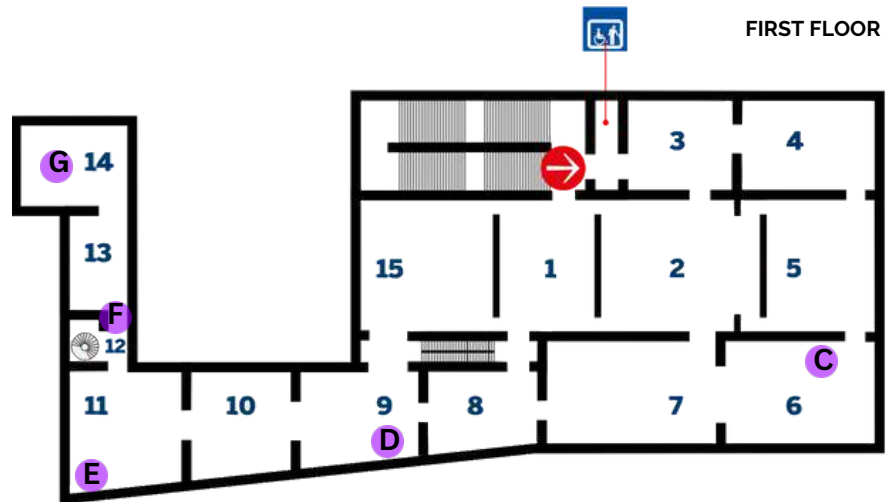
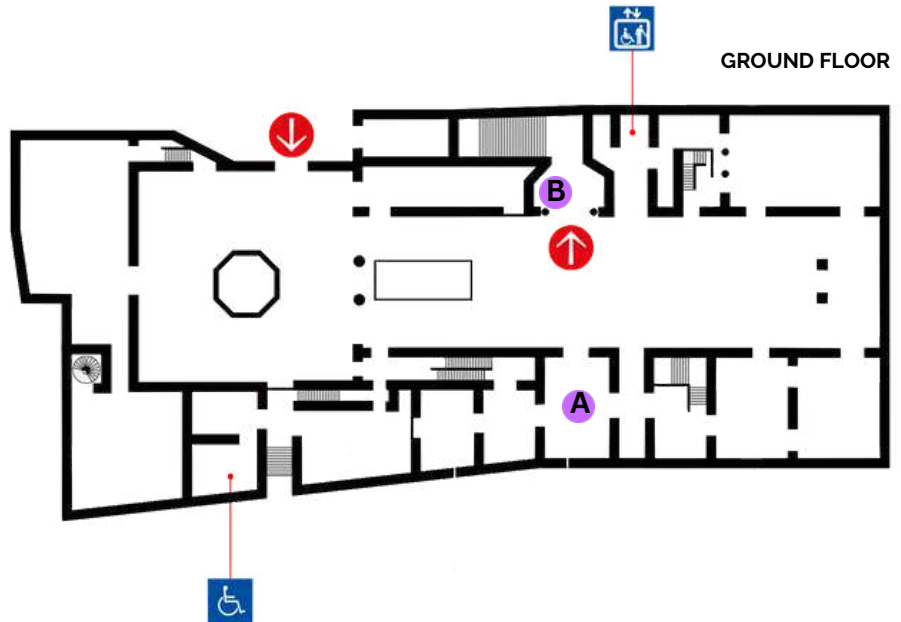
Ca' Pesaro, International Gallery of Modern Art welcomes AFRICA 1:1 Five African artists at Ca' Pesaro, an exhibition of site-specific works created by Option Nyahunzvi (b. 1992 Zimbabwe), Pamela Enyonu (b. 1985 Uganda), Alexandre Kyungu (b. 1992 DRC), Boniface Maina (b. 1987 Kenya) and Ngugi Waweru (b. 1987 Kenya). The exhibition is the result of a project brought forward by AKKA Project, Africa First and Ca' Pesaro which, in the spirit of the 18th Architecture Biennale, created AFRICA 1:1 LAB, Artists Residency Program, an artist residency project that has brought five young African artists to experience the vibrant Venetian artistic environment and, at the same time, to offer their personal creative contribution to the city, which is preparing for the 18th Architecture Biennale's Laboratory of the Future, curated by Lesley Lokko.



The residencies saw the creation of five working spaces, real studios, at AKKA Project and at the same time the immersion of the young African artists in the cultural context of Venice and of Ca' Pesaro in particular. Through the study of the Gallery's history, of the original documents and artists' works in the permanent collection, the five artists-in-residence constructed new dialogues with the city's visual tradition and with the history of the palazzo on the Grand Canal.

# Five African artists at Ca' Pesaro:

- ALEXANDRE KYUNGU **A**
- PAMELA ENYONU **B F G**
- NGUGI WAWERU **C**
- MAINA BONIFACE **D**
- OPTION NYAHUNZVI **E**





## ABOUT AKKA PROJECT

Established in 2016 in Dubai, AKKA Project has fast become a point of reference for African Art in the region. Lead by a passion for beauty, first as art collectors and then as cultural entrepreneurs, Lidija Kostic Khachatourian and Kristian Khachatourian gave AKKA Project its distinguished nature and the peculiarity of its approach. AKKA project overcomes the traditional gallery programming supporting art collectives, privileging cultural exchanges, hosting art residencies, providing resources to enhance the work of young and experimenting artists, and organizing trips to the major art capitals of Africa. Today, AKKA Project offers a dynamic experience, showcasing unique Contemporary Art from Africa and supporting cultural initiatives, still focused on promoting and supporting artists from the African continent. The galleries in Dubai and Venice are intimate spaces capable of showcasing a rich variety of media carefully selected. The founders make sure that every artwork and project communicates a personal journey, through the unique experiences in exploring the African art scene and its kaleidoscopic diversity.

AKKA relishes the freedom the gallery space offers, to reinvent what "Gallery" can mean, artistically, conceptually, and as a force for change within the wider community.

# Thank you note

We are thrilled and honored to have been part of the team that made this residency project possible. We firmly believe that art and culture are essential aspects of human life, providing insights into our past and present, and facilitating cross-cultural understanding.

In these challenging times, with so many complex issues dividing us, it is more important than ever to foster dialogue and exchange ideas. As Dostoevsky once said, "Beauty will save the world." This residency project has enabled us to do just that by bringing together a group of exceptional young artists from Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to live, create, and engage in dialogue with one of Europe's most important museums.

The residency was marked by several important milestones, including almost the first inclusion of African artists in Ca' Pesaro's permanent collection, including also a female artist among a predominantly white male artist roster. But perhaps the most significant milestone was the opportunity for an African narrative to take center stage in the dialogue, often overshadowed by trends or filtered through a Western lens.

Visitors to the exhibition are taken on a journey through each artist's work, which encompasses reinterpretations and reflections on art and artisanal traditions from the past, as well as interactions with Ca' Pesaro and the city of Venice. The artworks amplify the artists' voices and provide focused insights into crucially important matters such as colonialism and neocolonialism, racial and gender equality, civil rights, and economic and political justice for a continent that boasts 1.6 billion people, the highest growth of middle-class, the youngest population on the planet, and incredibly strong economic growth - all of which is also the focus of this year's Biennale.

Working closely with Pamela Enyonu, Maina Boniface, Alexandre Kyungu, Ngugi Waweru, and Option Nyahunzvi has been an enlightening and refreshing experience, filling us with renewed energy and motivation to support creative minds to express themselves and bridge the cultures of the places we call home: Africa and Venice. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to be part of this extraordinary project.

Lidija Kostic Khachatourian and Kristian  
Khachatourian  
Founders of AKKA Project

## ABOUT AFRICA FIRST

Africa First was founded by Serge Tiroche in 2017 as a platform to collect, support and promote Contemporary Art from the continent. Via its website, newsletters, digital media, art fairs, gallery collaborations, auctions, a global museum lending program, artist residencies, sponsorships, prizes and commissions, as well as advisory work for a multitude of institutions in the art ecosystem, Africa First has been recognized extensively for its empowerment of African Contemporary Art.



# Thank you note

How exciting to be writing this.

I'll start with thanking Lidija and Kristian for the amazing initiative and for inviting me to support it! I couldn't think of a project more aligned with the mission statement of Africa First to "support and promote emerging African artists through innovative collaborations that disseminate their practice to international audiences."

What could be better for 5 promising artists than to have daily access to a variety of mentors including each other, full financial support, the opportunity to find new inspiration in Venice and to showcase their practice in the phenomenal edifice that is Ca' Pesaro, Italy's only national museum for modern and contemporary art in Venice? And to do so in front of such broad audiences during the penultimate summer months when millions of tourists and art lovers are passing through... nothing.

I am grateful to Elisabetta Barisoni, Director of Ca' Pesaro, for entrusting us with this project and for timing it so impeccably with the African theme of the 2023 Architecture Biennale curated by Lesley Lokko, The Laboratory of the Future (that is Africa of course)

Last but not least, I must thank the 5 incredible artists – Option Nyahunzvi, Alexandre Kyungu, Boniface Maina, Ngugi Waweru and Pamela Enyonu - who have taken on the challenge to make their best work ever. Some I have known and collected and some I'm discovering as we go.

Good luck dear friends. I'm sure you will stun them with your ingenuity and talent, and demonstrate how diverse and exciting the African art scene is, and the limitless treasures there are to discover, now and in future.

Serge Tiroche  
Founder of Africa First

## ABOUT CA' PESARO - INTERNATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

The Ca' Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art in Venice is one of the most important baroque palaces in the city, designed by the famous Italian architect Baldassarre Longhena, and one of the vital hotspots for international modern art. Founded on the occasion of the second edition of the Biennale in 1897, the modern art collections of Venice found their definitive home in Ca' Pesaro in 1902. Since its foundation, the Gallery's history has been in a constant state of flux, not only thanks to the succession of Biennales and the new works that constantly entered the collection, coming directly from the international pavilions, but also thanks to the many gifts that have been made over time by artists, patrons, associations and institutions.

The palace became the property of Duchess Felicita Bevilacqua La Masa, who decreed the present usage of the building, bequeathing it to the city in 1898 as a Museum of Modern Art.

The collection was enriched over the years by further acquisitions and donations. The Gemma de Angelis Testa donation, recently inaugurated, and the artworks acquired consequently to the AFRICA 1:1 exhibition both underline that Ca' Pesaro is always eager to enlarge and enrich its permanent collection, also contemplating new genres and origins.

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## **AFRICA 1:1**

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