



Josèfa Ntjam
swell of spæc(i)es

20 April — 24 November 2024 | Open Thur – Sun

Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia

Josèfa Ntjam's commission unfolds a new creation myth in which plankton forms a point of convergence between the deep ocean and outer space, biological and mythical realms, possible pasts and alternative futures.

Collateral Event of the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

OPEN THURSDAY TO SUNDAY FROM 12:00 TO 18:00

Housed in a pavilion in the courtyard of the Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia, Josèfa Ntjam's work takes the form of an otherworldly environment. The cosmic landscapes of a cyclical film morph on a large curved LED wall, enriched by a soundscape composed by Fatima Al Qadiri. Suspended jellyfish 'sound showers' play fragments of narration, while a membrane-like form emerges from the ground, diffusing electroacoustic frequencies and offering a resting space. These sonic sculptures are made from innovative materials such as biosourced resin and reishi mycelium.

The installation shapes a poetics of alterity, merging multiple perspectives and knowledge systems. The film fuses Dogon cosmogony and recent discoveries into a circular narrative of creation, featuring a cast of interspecies characters synthesised using artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools. Sources for these creatures include 3D models of marine life, scans of West African statues held in museum collections and photographs witnessing decolonial independence movements. Through her act of blending, Ntjam embeds histories subject to hegemonic erasure within marine and cosmic landscapes to enable their resurgence. This approach draws influence from electronic duo Drexciya, whose mythology tells of an underwater population born from the wrecks of the Atlantic human trade, and musician Sun Ra, who envisioned Saturn as a host planet for Afro-diasporic people.

"swell of spæc(i)es is an alchemical process in perpetual agitation, the alloying of ancestral genes with new image creation technologies."

EN DE

– JOSÉFA NTJAM



Ntjam's installation is housed inside a blue prism-shaped pavilion designed by UNA / UNLESS architecture studio, led by architect Giulia Foscarini. Its striking geometry stands in contrast to the organic forms emerging within.

In a satellite space at Palazzina Canonica – CNR-ISMAR (Istituto di Scienze Marine), Ntjam asks audiences to join her process of multiplying avatars of these histories into ever-new forms by creating their own AI-generated hybrid species from her dataset. These creatures will inhabit a virtual ecosystem on-site.

swell of spæc(i)es is complemented by a public programme organised with Ocean Space, ISMAR (Istituto di Scienze Marine) and Accademia di Belle Arti.

"And if the world were born from our aqueous ashes. Intertropical cosmogony of non-temporalities//I'm against// A heap of volcanoes sedimented in a black ocean that gave back to space a few stars of the sea"

– EXCERPT OF JOSÉFA NTJAM, *SWELL OF SPÆC(I)ES*



Visitor Information

The project consists of two venues. The main installation can be found in a purpose-built pavilion in the courtyard of the Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia. It is complemented by a satellite space at Palazzina Canonica CNR-ISMAR (Istituto di Scienze Marine).

Installation:

Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia
Fondamenta Zattere Allo Spirito Santo 423
30123 Venice, Italy

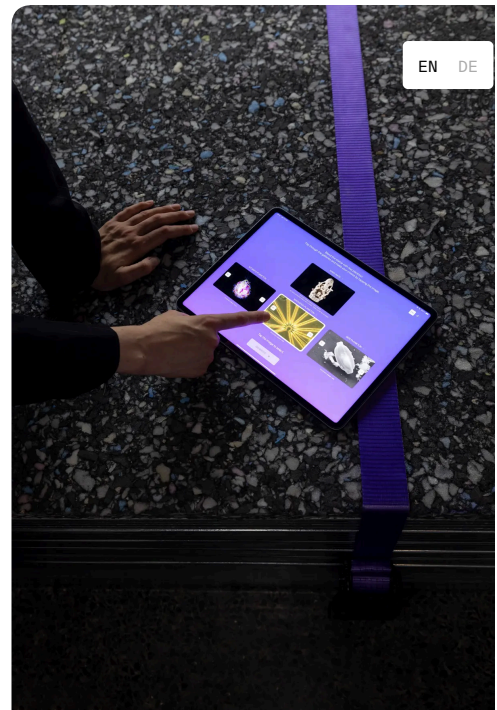
Satellite space:

Palazzina Canonica CNR-ISMAR (Istituto di Scienze Marine)
Castello 1364/A
30122 Venice, Italy

Opening Hours:

Open Thursday to Sunday from 12:00 to 18:00, including public holidays on Thursday, 25 April; Wednesday, 1 May; Sunday, 2 June; Thursday, 15 August; and Friday, 1 November.

Closed on Monday to Wednesday (except 22 April, 17 June, 22 July, 2 September, 30 September and 18 November)



swell of spæc(i)es: Extended Guide

This guide offers the opportunity to delve deeper into Ntjam's cosmic and oceanic landscape.



ARTIST

Josèfa Ntjam

Josèfa Ntjam is an artist, performer and writer whose practice combines sculpture, photomontage, moving image and sound. Collecting the raw material of her work from the internet, books on natural sciences and photographic archives, Ntjam uses assemblage — of images, words, sounds and stories — as a method to deconstruct the grand narratives underlying hegemonic discourses on origin, identity and race. Her work weaves multiple narratives drawn from investigations into historical events, scientific processes and philosophical concepts, to which she confronts references to African mythology, ancestral rituals, religious symbolism and science fiction....

[NTJAMJOSEFA.COM]

LEARN MORE





Press⁰⁶



Credits
Commissioned by LAS Art Foundation

JOSÉFA NTJAM TEAM

ARTIST
Joséfa Ntjam

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Ghost House

FILM SOUND COMPOSITION
Fatima Al Qadiri

SCULPTURE SOUND
Hugo Mir-Valette

ARTIST ADVISOR AND WRITER
Mawena Yehouessi

FILM PRODUCTION
Aquatic Invasion

SCULPTURE CONSTRUCTION
Förma Productions

PAVILION AND EXHIBITION DESIGN

UNA / UNLESS, Giulia Foscari

PRODUCTION

D.H. office

TECHNICAL PRODUCTION

FAXstudio

LIGHTING DESIGN

Studio Barthelmes

ORGANISED WITH

Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia, CNR-ISMAR (Istituto di Scienze Marine),
Ocean Space

ORGANISED FOR LAS BY

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WITH THANKS TO:

LAS team and Louise Nielsen, Ann-Charlotte Günzel, Amira Gad, Liz Stumpf; UNA / UNLESS (Giulia Foscari, Federica Zambelletti, Karol Czarzasty, Silvia Sandor, Olympia Simopoulou); Ocean Space, Venice (Markus Reymann, Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza, Marco Zapperlorto, Eleni Tsopotou, Valeria Bottalico, Barbara Nardacchione); CNR-ISMAR (Istituto di Scienze Marine), Venice (Mario Sprovieri, Francesco Falcieri); Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia (Riccardo Caldura, Carlotta Rossitto); Galerie Poggi, Paris (Jérôme Poggi, Camille Bréchnac); Nicoletti Contemporary, London (Camille Houzé)

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