



ABDOULAYE KONATÉ

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# Abdoulaye Konaté: The Master

*El Hadji Malick Ndiaye.*

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Born in 1953 in Diré (Mali), Abdoulaye Konaté is one of the most important figures in contemporary art. From 1972 to 1976 he studied at the Institut National des Arts in Bamako and pursued his education at the Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana from 1978 to 1985. He was the Head of the Division of the exhibitions at the Musée National du Mali (1895-1997), Director of the Palais de la Culture de Bamako (1998-2002) and Director of the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers Multimédia de Bamako (2003-2016).

Directing the *Rencontres africaines de la Photographie* (African Encounters of Photography), he received numerous awards. His works were the subject of several exhibitions and he took part in lots of international biennials. A long career marked by permanent research makes Abdoulaye Konaté one of the essential figures of contemporary art, which allows me to appoint him the title of Master. Master in his art, that is how an artist achieving recognition can be defined.

As far as Abdoulaye Konaté is concerned, this accolade is based on the path crossed by an art, that has not ceased to recreate our perception of reality. At the beginning of his artistic career he explored painting and acrylic. At first he adopted the classical education he received in Cuba, where drawing, starting from naked models, sharpened the eye and stimulated the mastery of shapes. He turned away from it very quickly though, to undertake a new one, characterised by two pillars that would shape the identity of his work, namely, the installations and the textile work.

The familiarization with the textile work started very soon during the 1960s. During this trial and experience period, Abdoulaye Konaté created film programmes, copied some posters and drew some new models for weavers from Mali who inspired him back.

The textile work is a cultural and heritage object and it is in the middle of African social dynamics (ceremonies, rituals, gifts). During these events it permits mutual exchanges and serves as a commercial product.

In the different regions of Mali, it has got a huge range of symbols, connected to social practices, as shown by the *finimugu*, (*fini*: fabric, *mugu*: cloth, in Bamana), most often used as simple shroud and jealously kept in cases by some elderly people as if they were waiting for their death.

The emblematic work *Bosnie, Rwanda, Angola* (1995) was made of the same fabric.

In the 1990s the artist, who saw the textile as a system of signs in his discourses, made a first turn towards the installations. These ones established themselves in several African countries, introducing a deconstruction of the presentation devices, which were connected with the changes in social and political life. In the case of Mali, 23rd March 1991 marked the popular insurrection against the dictatorial regime of General Moussa Traoré. In order to represent this accident and its violence, Abdoulaye Konaté exposed at the Musée National de Bamako a burnt-out car cove-

red with leaflets and newspapers accompanied by a multimedia installation playing the events on a loop.

From this installation on he started to introduce big textile boards in the background of his works. He referred to the clothes of Sénoufos musicians, made by strips and cottonnades.

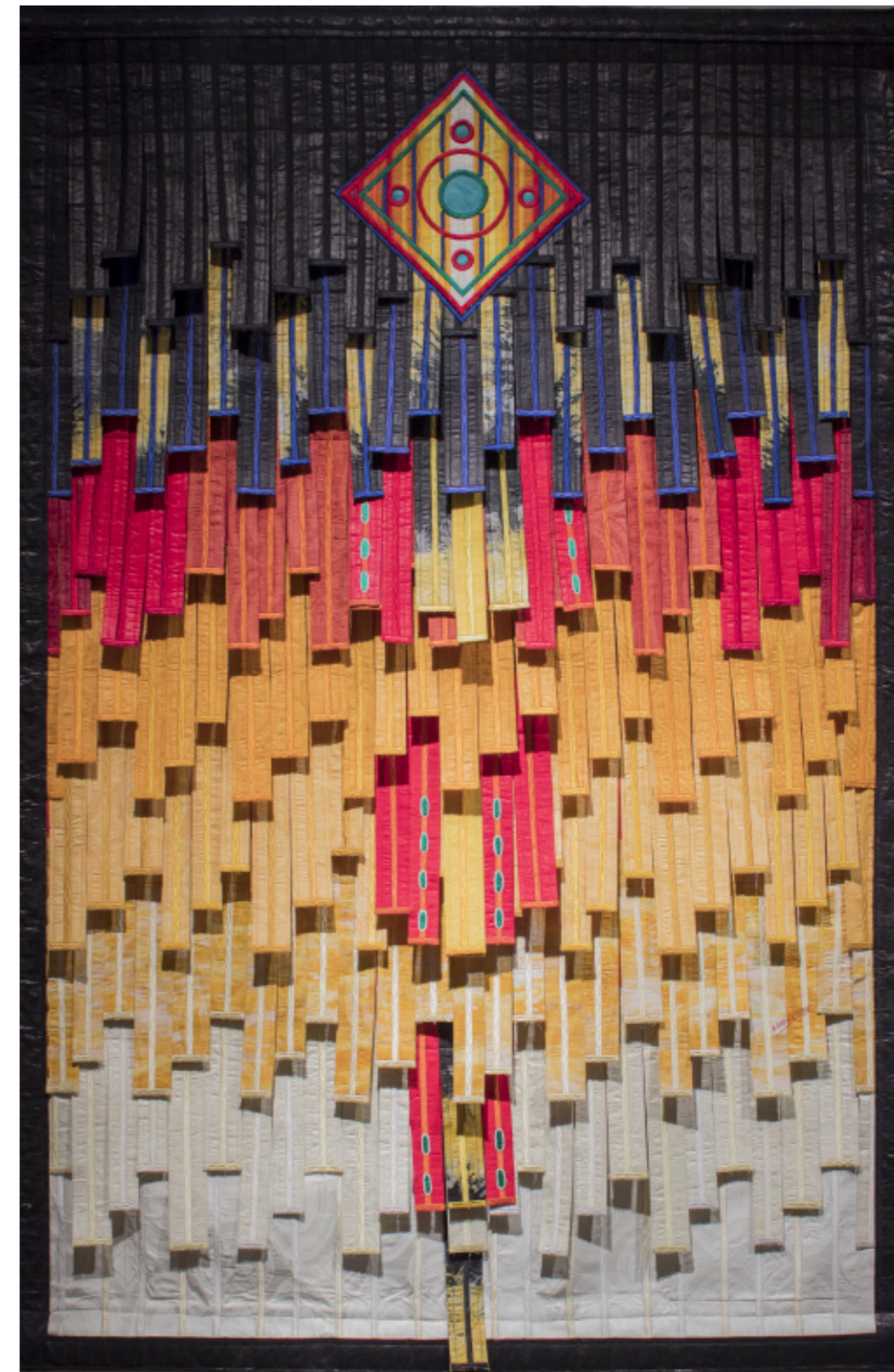
The piece of art *L'hommage aux chasseurs du Mandé* (Tribute to the Mandé hunters) (1994), thanks to which he received the Grand Prix Léopold Sédar Senghor at the Dakar Biennale of Contemporary African Art in 1996, ensued these researches.

In the same period, he designed some installations and practiced acrylic on paper, while introducing both strips of bazin and some cotton fabric in his works. The bazin gradually established itself and allowed the artist to break new ground in the work of colour, whereas the wax was used in the same way only later on. Connected with a double economic and cultural regime, he gave his work a certain importance because he imparted a real familiarity with the public. The work of Abdoulaye Konaté is distinguished by the use of fabric as material of preference, enhanced by a reinvented pictorial expression.

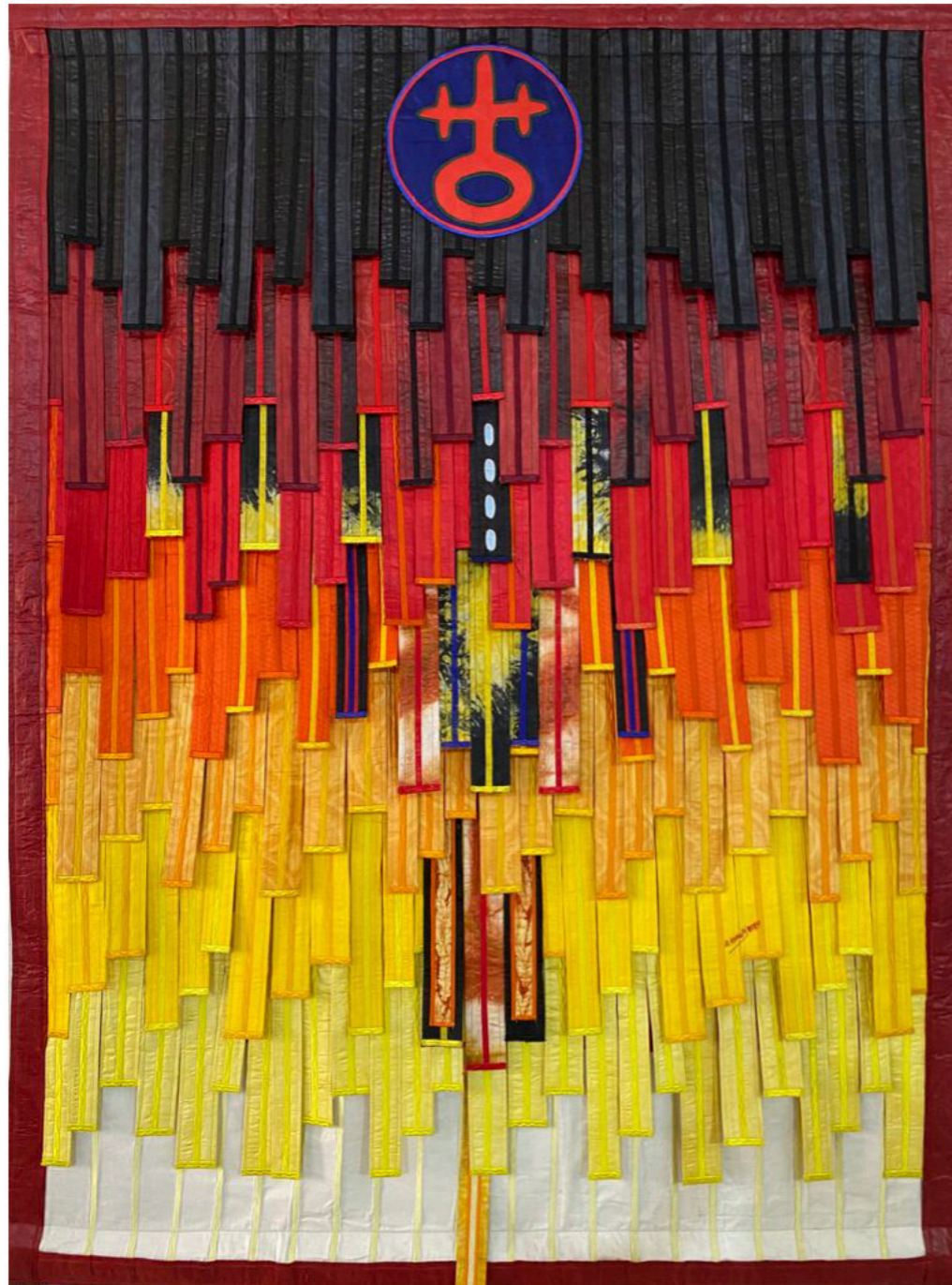
As for the approach that guides his work, two key elements cross the work of Abdoulaye Konaté: an aesthetic one and a socio-political one. On the one hand, aesthetics results from working the material. The artist's dexterity is based on his ability to play with textile, giving it reliefs and shapes, with a shade gradation that suggests the movement just through different nuances. His compositions show a subtle chromatism in the organisation of the textile pieces and of the significant reliefs, given by some incorporated objects. The minimalist regularity of the fragmented strips gives volume and creates some optical illusions that are sometimes declined in a series of abstractions. He incorporates esoteric symbols in the form of geometric figures and seeks a new interpretation in the combination of colours. If we really pay attention to it, this continuous research deeply interacts with nature, which remains the matrix of the compositional boldness. From the observation of nature (insects and plants), Abdoulaye Konaté focuses his attention on the shades of butterfly wings, of chameleons or greenery. He detects colours that – while seeming contradictory – go well together and are combined in a natural balance.

In this system of chromatic meeting, the cosmos is incredibly surprising and for good reason, Abdoulaye Konaté studies the sky at night lengthily. And where many of us think everything is dark, its visual acuity detects a subtle shade of colour and predicts the effect that will reflect on the surfaces. He analyses the elements of nature as though he examined them under the microscope.

The attention towards nature is at the service of different artistic techniques (painting, sculpture, installation) which make this unique work a real association of artistic traditions.



*Composition en jaune, 2020*  
Textile  
174 × 113 cm



*Composition signe Fondation, 2020*  
Textile  
160 × 118 cm

His work establishes correspondences with popular traditions and mainly with the Bamanan culture, whose signs are used as an alphabet, just like the Nko, a Manding writing system developed by Souleymane Kanté in the mid-1940s.

By associating a great amount of objects composed of cauris, cords, horns, amulets, with esoteric signs and symbols, his work is a glimpse of the work of the materials. In addition, the research for new textile aesthetics leads Abdoulaye Konaté to revisit the field of cultural diversity. That's how the Kenté fabric from Ghana is integrated in the form of subtle strips in some of his recent works and a profitable collaboration with the Moroccan weavers has started recently. Moreover, Abdoulaye Konaté explores the design of large-scale works, as testified by the 6000 sqm piece of art deployed at the Stade du 26 Mars during the African Cup of Nations opening ceremony in 2002.

From a socio-political point of view, the work of Abdoulaye Konaté is marked by a deep humanism, which can be found in his ability to name the cultural, social and political relations. The power of evocation of the titles he gives to his works gives a singularity to his work, which becomes an introspection of History and Memory. The works of Abdoulaye Konaté are parts of human drama and collective unconsciousness, that evoke the evil of men and their difficulty in building a common destiny together. They invite us to reflect on our human condition and warn us against ourselves.



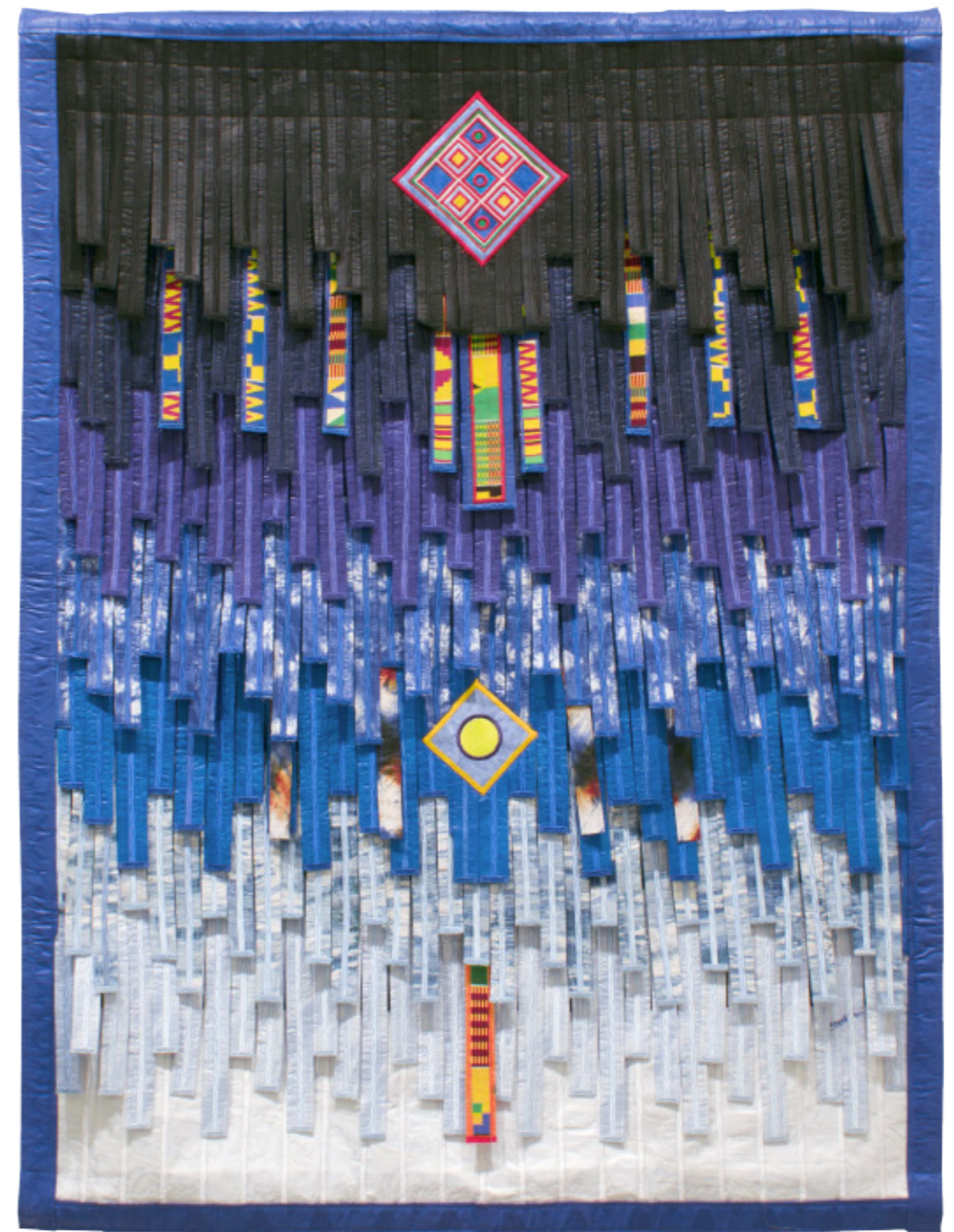
*Ocre orangé aux 3 trapèzes, 2022*  
Textile  
155 × 114 cm



*Reptile Dogon-Songo, 2022*  
Textile  
155,5 × 114 cm



*Bleu et rouge touareg (losange et kente), 2022*  
Textile  
160 × 118 cm



*Bleu touareg- losange et kente, 2022*  
Textile  
159 × 119 cm

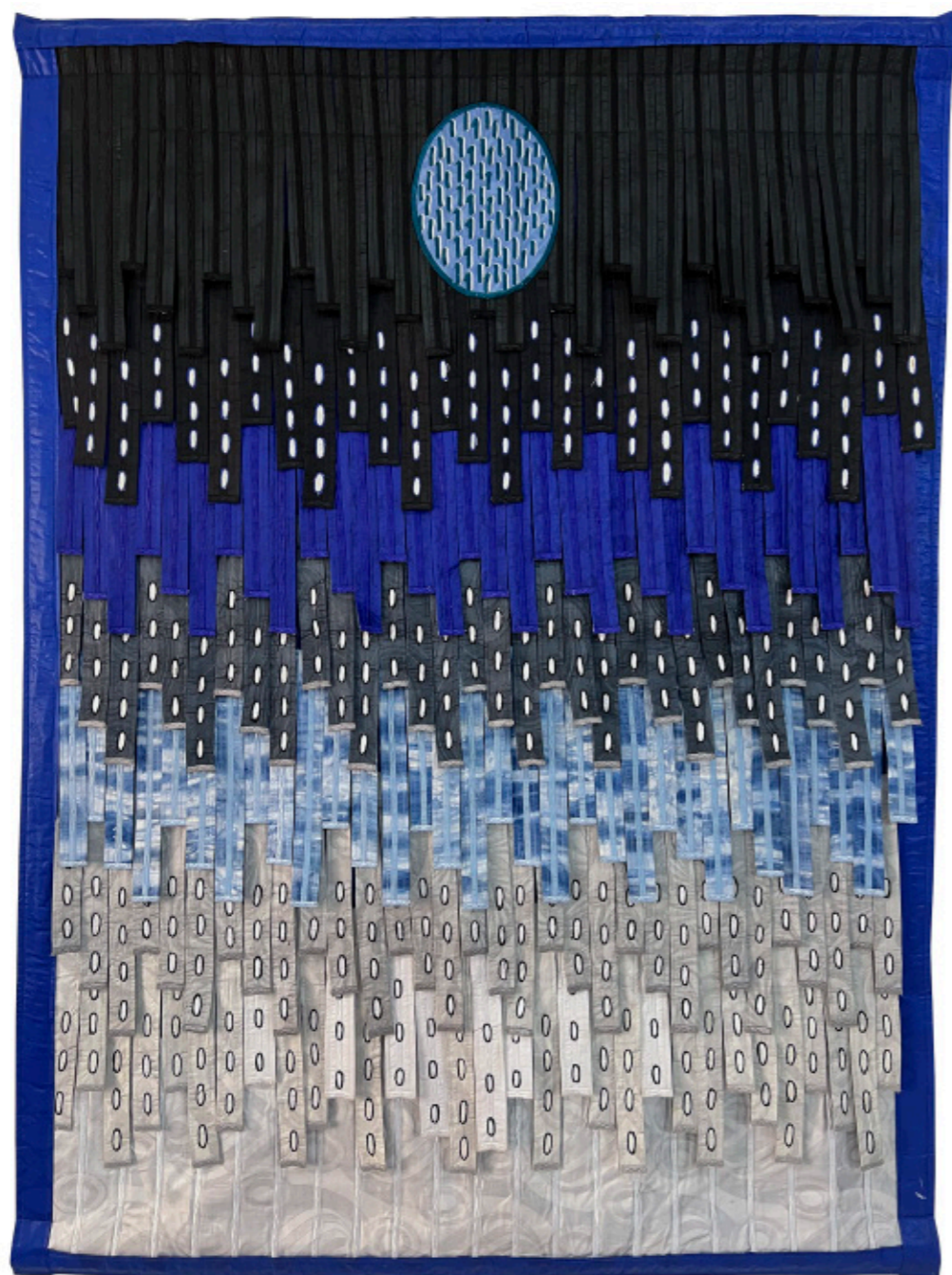




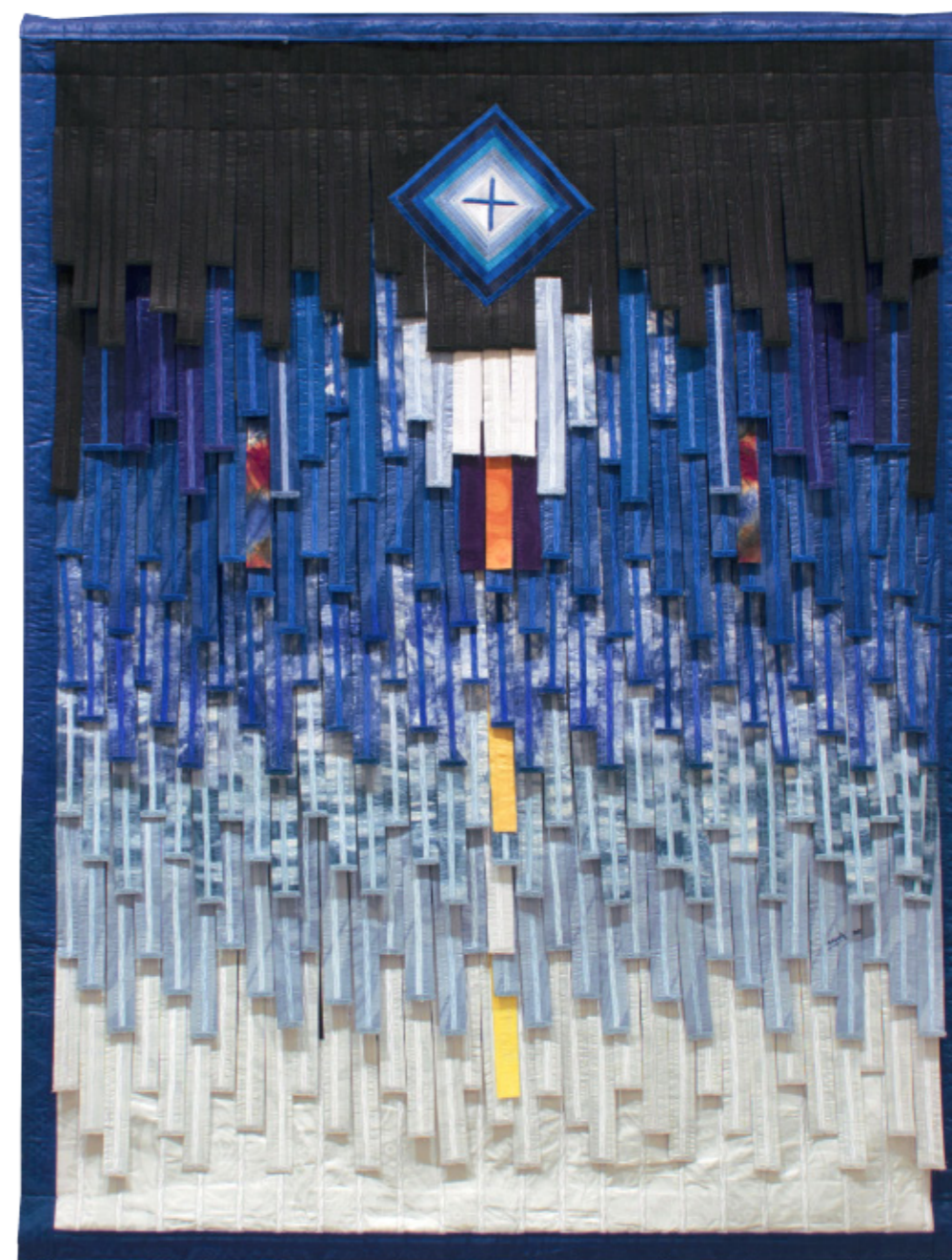
*Losange rouge touareg (noir, rouge, bleu, et orange), 2022*  
Textile  
160 × 118 cm



*Losange avec source de lumière No 2 (kente), 2022*  
Textile  
155 × 111 cm



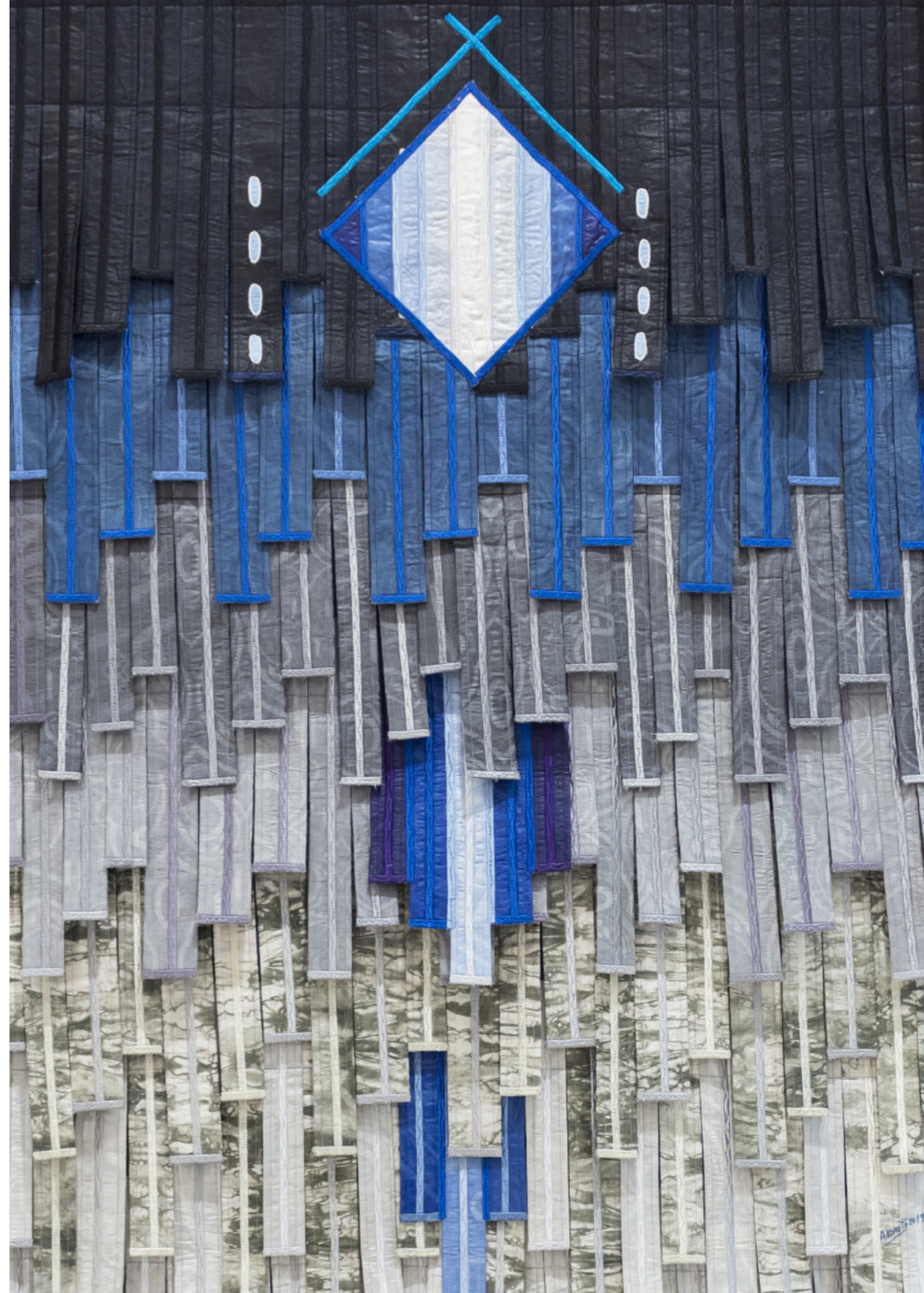
*Bleu et gris plumage de pintade, 2022*  
Textile  
160 × 118 cm

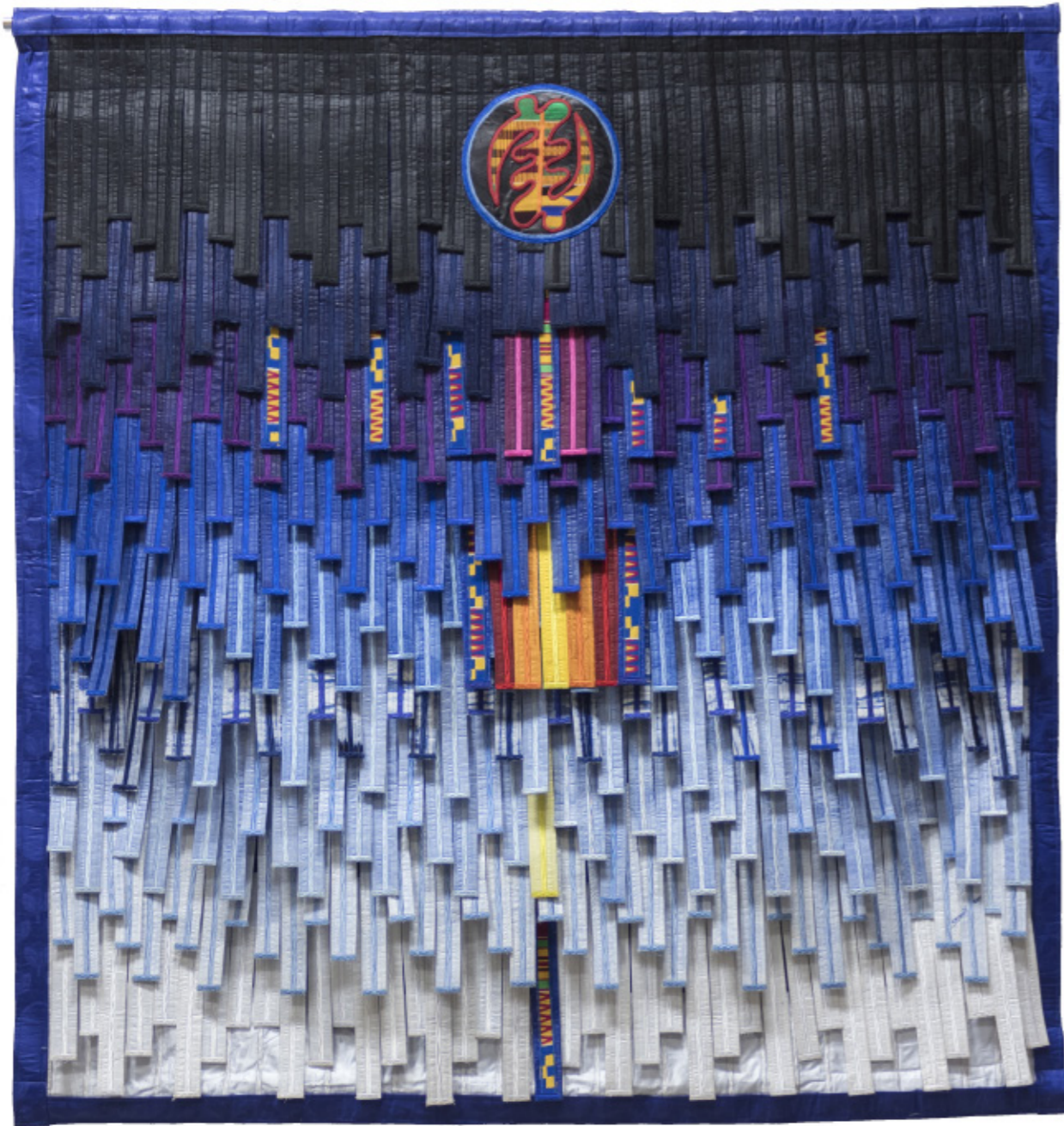


*Souvenir d'enfance sur fond bleu, 2022*  
Textile  
157 × 119 cm

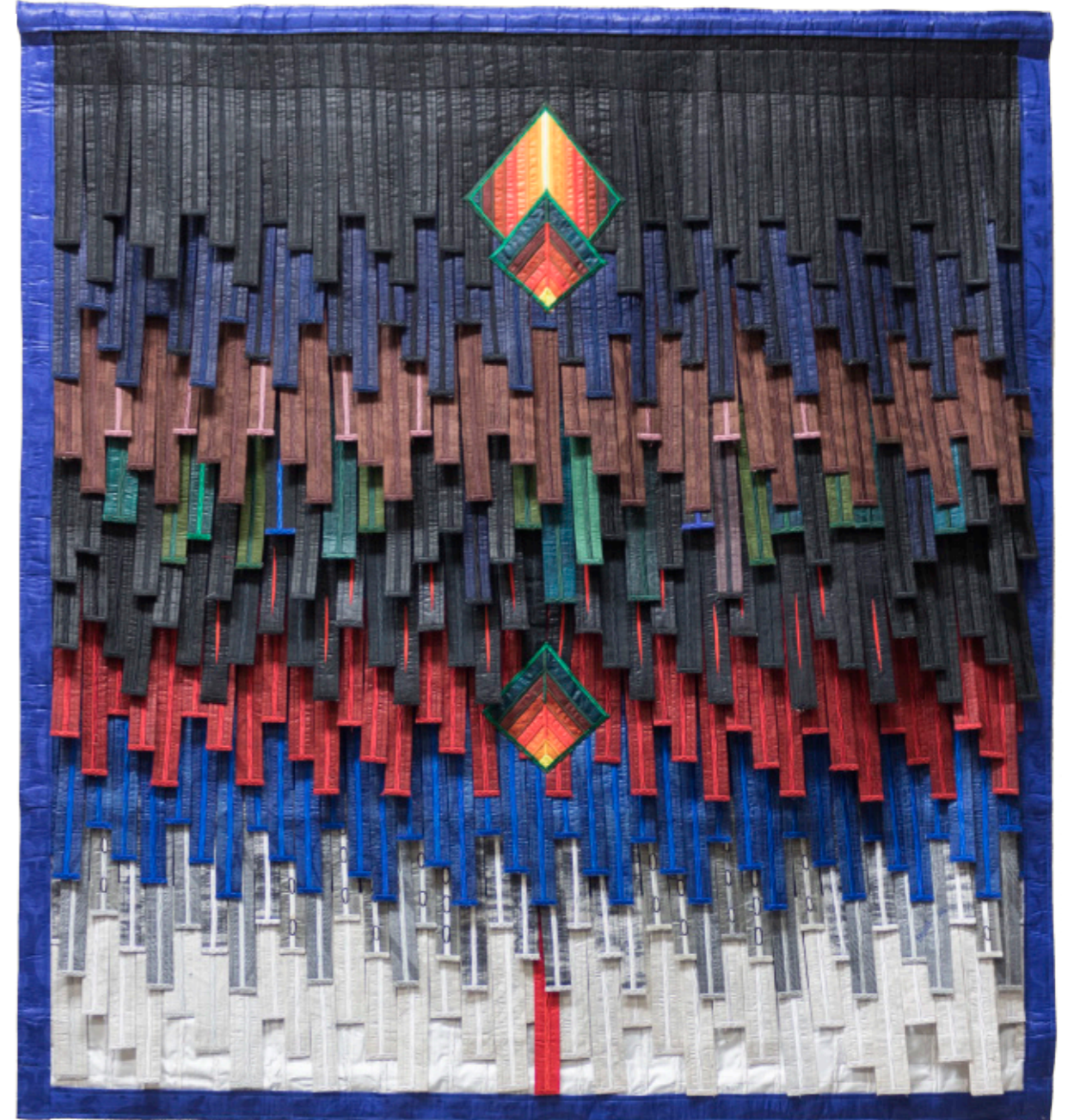


*Composition en bleu au losange, 2019*  
Textile  
164 × 115 cm





*Suprématie Ashanti*, 2021  
Textile  
166 × 156 cm



*Composition aux 3 losanges (décembre)*, 2021  
Textile  
167 × 157 cm

# Abdoulaye Konaté Interview

This text is an extract from an interview between Abdoulaye Konaté & Elaine Sullivan (Mellon Curatorial Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Department of Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas) held on July 20, 2022.

We thank all participants in this interview and all the Metropolitan Museum staff for the opportunity to publish the transcript/translation of this incredible conversation.

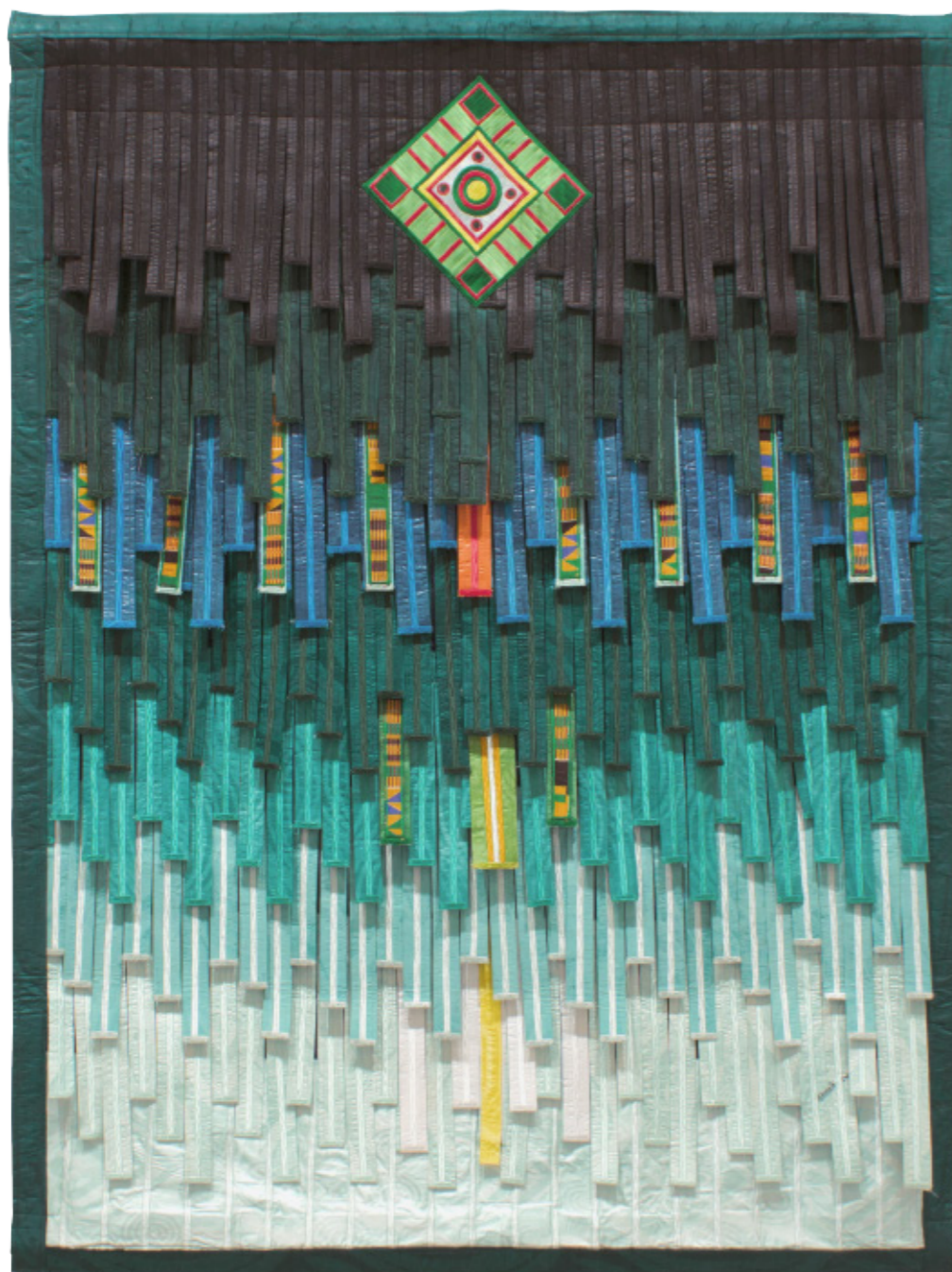
[...]

**Elaine Sullivan:** You've spoken and written previously about the layered clothing of Senufo musicians as a key source of inspiration for your practice. In what contexts did you encounter Senufo music, dance, and performance, and what aspects of this are reflected in your own creative approach?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** Yes, it's not just the Senufo group. Before that, I worked a lot on the outfit of the hunters, the Mandé hunters, and which was essentially an outfit that they wear with 'gris-gris' (charms) and all kinds of elements. And after that, I worked on the "Koredouba outfits". These Koredouba of course, we find them in Senufo circles but also a lot in Mali, in the region of Segou. These outfits served as a source of inspiration for me, given the technique in which they were made from, and because it is an outfit that almost looks like a jester. People ripped off pieces of fabric that they snagged, but they picked up all kinds of objects that they snagged on that outfit. So in this, you can find old phones hanging on the outfit, bottles, glasses, and any kind of thing, that they think is garbage. They're almost, if you could say this, society's trash. Everything that society can throw away, they can absorb it. And they serve as an intermediary to solve many problems of the society: in the city, in the village and they are not even afraid of a village chief, or a rich person, or a peasant. They only tell the truth according to the way they see it, so that people can understand, unite and forgive each other.

**Elaine Sullivan:** What other regional traditions have influenced your practice?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** There are many. I am inspired by proverbs, sayings, literature, and by everything related to clothing, tonality, colors, of Malian people and other African populations. We can find in the Sahara region, with the Tuareg people, Moor people and Arabs, ranges of the blue color. It's in the North where we can find the Tuareg blue, and all its ranges, from white to dark blue. Among the Fula shepherds (bergers peuls), or among the Mandinka Bambara people, we can find all about the range of ochre, from the ochre, yellow, dark, etc. So I decided to do a visual aesthetic study of the form of clothing in the range of colors found in our peoples. For example, you go to the Dogon people, you will find a lot of indigo blue, which can also be found among the Soninke people, the Wolof people in Senegal, Guinea and Gambia. But when you spread it out, on the different continents, you will see that in Europe gray is used a



Vert touareg- motif touareg et kente, 2022  
Textile  
158 × 118 cm

lot for clothing. You find ranges of gray, dark blue, and tinted gray. I try to see outside the African continent, how people dress up, I'm not even talking about the shape, but the color of the textile. For me the environment is a source of inspiration. That's about the outfits, but there are also insects, animals, and flowers in nature and during the night in the sky, the different ranges of color that can be found there.

**Elaine Sullivan:** What examples of proverbs have inspired you?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** For example, I did a series on "Plumage de la pintade". All this series of gray work with small embroidered stitches. I worked on the theme "religion" that I called "Pouvoir et religion". It is essentially inspired from the "Plumage de la pintade". It is also often said here that the group of guinea fowl follows the one in front. But that has connotations, saying that for example if we want to bring it to the aspect of politics or elections, we can say that there is a large mass of people that will follow someone who does not even have political content for the society, but because he is in front, the group follows him. Basically, that's to criticize, but even if I am saying it in this way, it's much more subtle, and this is the same type of proverb you will find in Ivory Coast and everywhere in Africa. This is an example. And I have works titled "Le rouge et le noir" (The red and the black), in order to make a slight reference to the title of a book or a novel.

**Elaine Sullivan:** So, we have just talked about different African traditions, do you consider yourself a participant in this Malian African tradition, etc.?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** Yes. I am from the continent, and the country, so, necessarily I am imbued with a content from my environment. But that means that, I am also from the world. I listen to the news, I live the problems of the world, whether they are political, economic, or social and I go through them at the same time as others. So my look is not only on Mali or on the Continent but on the whole world.

[...]

**Elaine Sullivan:** How did you become interested in working with textiles and what are the varieties of textiles that you have most admired?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** I started the textile work in the 90s. And during those years, I worked a lot with installations and acrylic. In these series, when I did installations, I used textiles often as background or subject. After that, I gradually became deeply interested in this material, and I said to myself that it can be a means of expression in the same way as acrylic, painting in oil, or watercolor.

**Elaine Sullivan:** You make work that does not fit neatly into given art categories: your textile works evoke paintings, and you use two dimensional surfaces to create three-dimensional immersive installations. Can you say a little bit more, please, about your desire to experiment with materials in original – that is, new – ways, that haven't been tried before?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** I don't know how you can quantify or limit artistic codes today, because they become extremely broad and almost elusive in terms of material and technique. I feel like the artistic codes today are like a kind of tunnel. And when you enter that tunnel, it's almost crystal, you have to break it to get out. So I don't limit myself at all, of using the material, telling myself that this type can be artistic or not, that's not my objective, my real objective is to express myself as I feel, with what I can afford to use today. So the concept of entering into artistic codes is not my main subject.

**Elaine Sullivan:** What is your main subject?

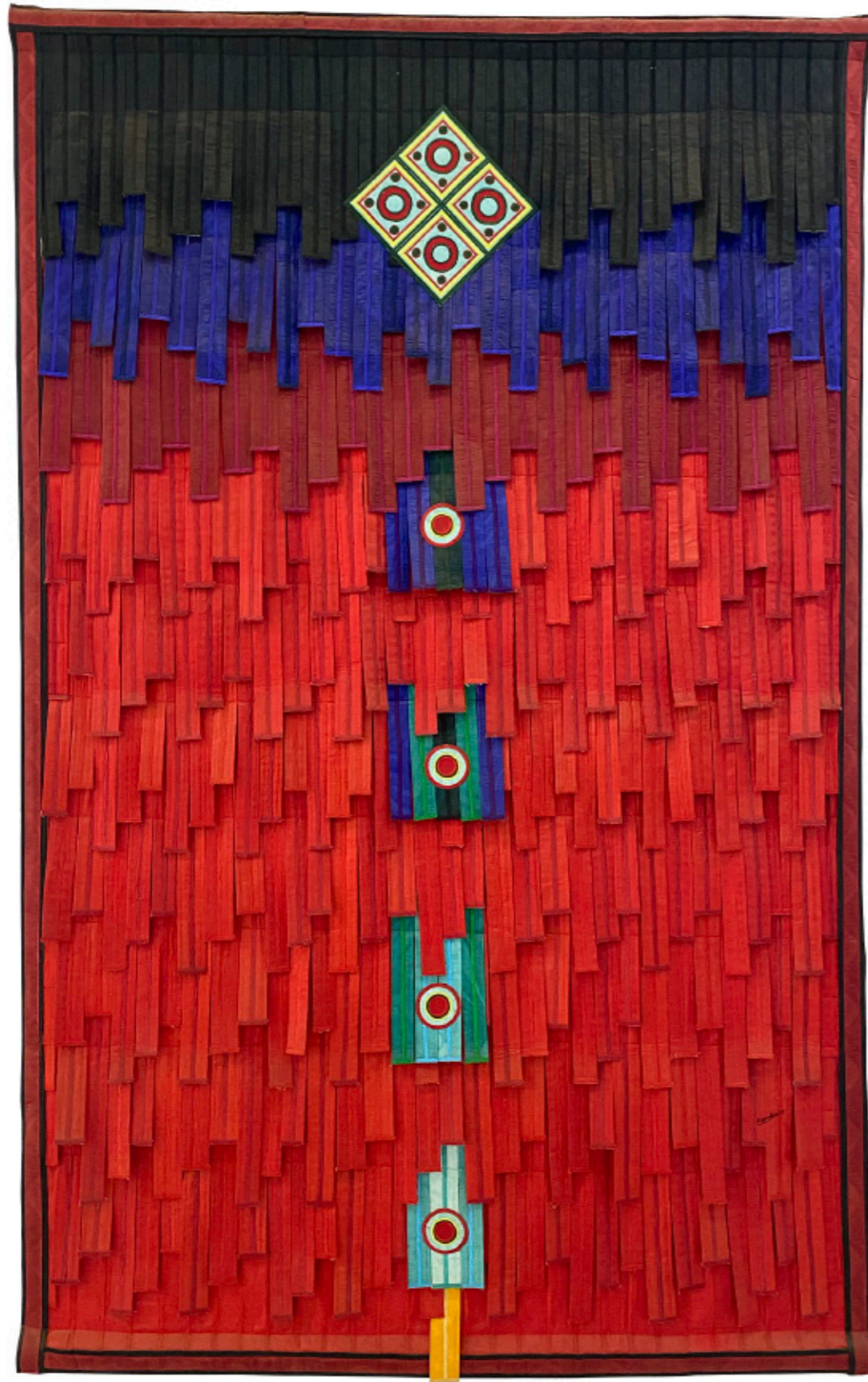
**Abdoulaye Konaté:** First of all, today I'm working on two main lines. The first which is on the aesthetic level, the research of color, new compositions, and new forms of balance. And the second line, above all, I'm working on social themes, which sometimes people call political themes, but for me it's really social themes such as problems of religion, war, and health but also those of justice, quite simply at the level of society. These are the two main lines that I use as a form of work.

**Elaine Sullivan:** Have you ever experimented with methods or materials that you felt were unsuccessful, or tedious, or otherwise unsuitable? And if so, what lessons did you learn from those experiences?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** Yes, when we work, we are above all concerned about being understood. And that takes a lot of time. So that what you are saying or doing is understood and not transformed. I don't want to say that there is only one



*"Vert Touareg-1 A", 2017*  
Textile  
219,5 × 181,5 cm



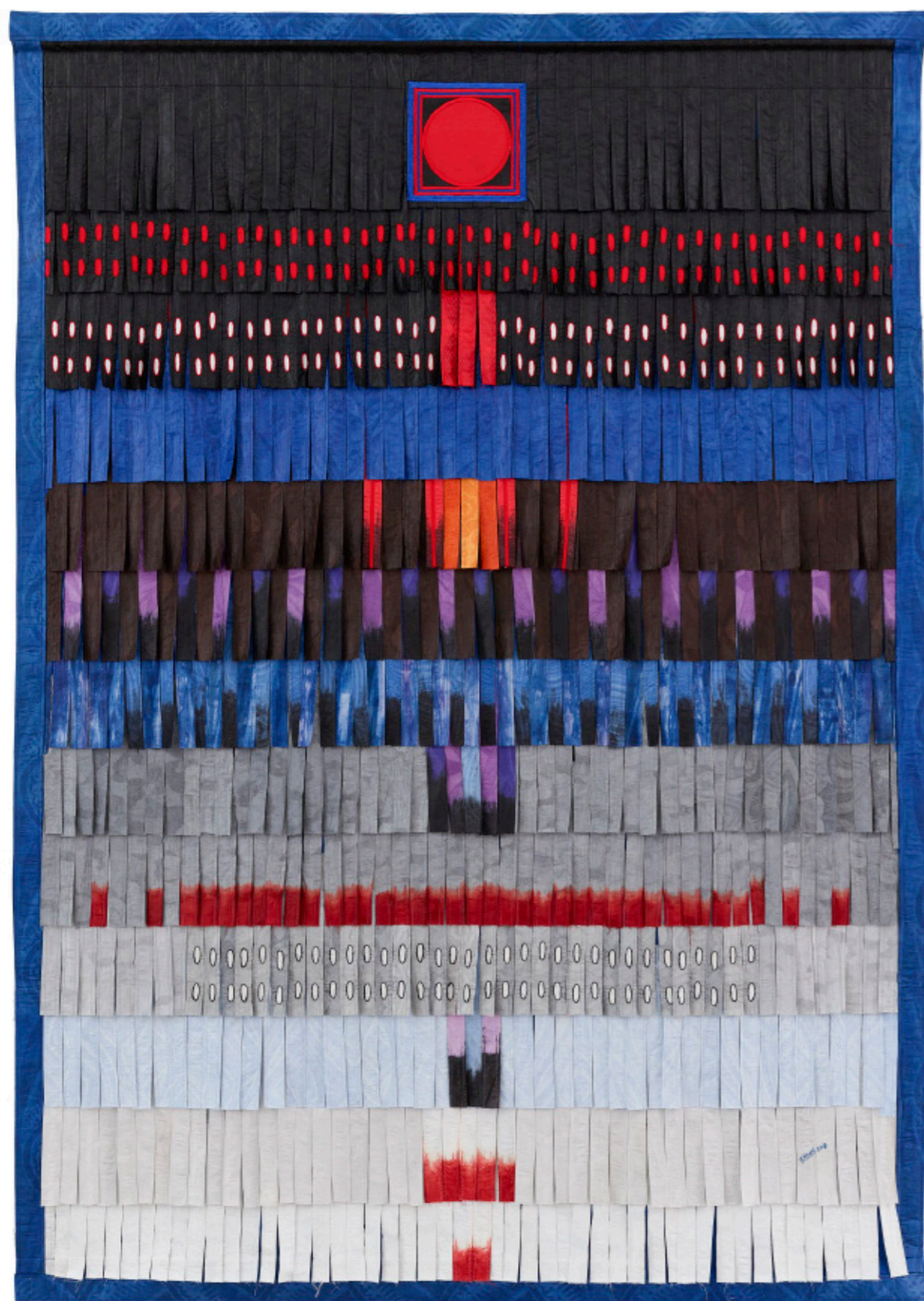
*Rouge touareg (noir, bleu, et vert), 2019*  
Textile  
234 × 147 cm

point of view (one way of interpreting). No, because what you're going to do is going to have multiple interpretations. But you don't want that interpretation to be the opposite of what you're seeking. That's really one of the concerns. And the second concern is that when I work, I try to get to the heart of my subject. It should be very concise, not a lot of speech, but very sharp. I often refer to the blade of a knife: when you want a knife to cut well, it has to be sharp. And all my work is based on this search. From the very simple, it has to be very understood, but also clear in expression. Confusion is very hard to see in my work. We can have different visions, but most often when I work on social issues, we can see directly what it is about. We can interpret it in different ways but we can see what it is all about.

**Elaine Sullivan:** So, is there an example where a work has been misunderstood?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** As I said, I avoid that a lot. But there are two that I often remember. There is this "gris-gris Blanc" work for Israel and Palestine. I hoped for a solution to the problem between Palestine and Israel. And for us, in Mali, when we say "gris-gris" it's to protect and generally to eliminate bad effects. And in this work, there were 4 Israeli flags, and 4 Arafat keffiyehs. What has sometimes not been understood is that, once we talk about Israel and Palestine with images, people immediately lean towards one side, as if you were doing a job to support Palestine. So, that is a very skewed thing, and very difficult on the international level to discuss today. Really my purpose was not to support one country or another, my purpose is to be able to find a solution. Because often the problems that emerge on land issues, whether they are between countries, individuals or families, these are problems that last a lot over time. Everything that is an issue of land, by adding problems of religion, things get much more complicated. I say that the earth is shared by/belongs to everyone. Everyone is going to have their time and leave the earth, unless we find crazy people who are going to destroy the earth. But for me it is important that peoples and individuals understand each other, to live this little time together. My point was above all that, so that this problem which has lasted enormously over time and which is a current problem, can find on both sides, people with a certain humanism who accepts coalitions. Each of these countries must agree to give something up, so that they can get along and live together. That was my objective regarding this piece. And the second piece, I exhibited an old work that I called "l'initiation", where there were 7 panels with flags and symbols. We have for example the American flag, the symbol of the flag of Japan, something about African





*Le cercle et le carré*, 2018  
Textile  
217 × 153 cm

traditions which are practices in the Bambara culture, and then we also have the flag of Russia when it was the Soviet Union. It is an old work that an exhibition curator had wished to pass the work in an exhibition in China. And after the press conference, the next day, I was surprised when the director of the event called me saying that there was a delegation that had passed and asked about the 7 panels. The delegation said that we should remove 2, and the 2 were the one that had the American flag and the other that had the Soviet Union flag. So I think it was misunderstood. They asked me to remove and I said that I will not remove it, unless they do it themselves. I had already exhibited and the press had passed, and "now if there is a delegation from a party passing by and saying that these two must be removed, because it is misinterpreted, this is not my point." So for me it was a theme on initiation, where I compared African initiation with the social organization of certain countries.

[...]

**Elaine Sullivan:** One is very tempted to reach out and touch the layered softness of a piece like *Bleu no.1*. What role, if any, do senses like touch, sound, or even taste play when you are thinking up a work, and while you are making it?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** Textiles for me...For me, there's no fear of people touching it. But it's true that when you already exhibit it and everyone comes to touch it, people will leave a lot of marks. For me, textiles are something that you wear, that you wear at home. We live with textiles. So for me, I said to myself that, this is an element that is within everyone's reach. Whatever the society, today the type of textile you want to have, if it is not the great luxury, we can have it, because it is essential today for man in our societies. So you see, as it is an element that is within the reach of society. I do not have limits, restrictions. But when someone has to own it as a work or simply as an object, and you think that there is content that is different from the wearing on the body, necessarily we have to put systems of mechanisms of protection. That's necessary. But it's something you can feel. Because, for example, when one goes to buy a textile, you want to touch it, to see the quality, the density of the weave, and the quality of the yarn and the material. All these are temptations that attract you. But the textile that I use is basin, it is also weavings of great masters, for example, I used the weaving of great masters in Morocco. In Ghana I used weavings of *Kenté*, in Senegal I used weavings from *Elshaduan* [?], but also a lot of Malian weavings. So apart from my research on the quality of the textile, I insist a lot

on this quality. Because for me I use it as a language and I want the support to be of quality, and all the elements that are used, whether it's the work of the tailors or the fabric itself, I want all the elements to be able to pass this stage of resistance and of desire, in relation to quality.

**Elaine Sullivan:** So for “blue no 1”, do you remember the specific materials and dyes you used for this work?

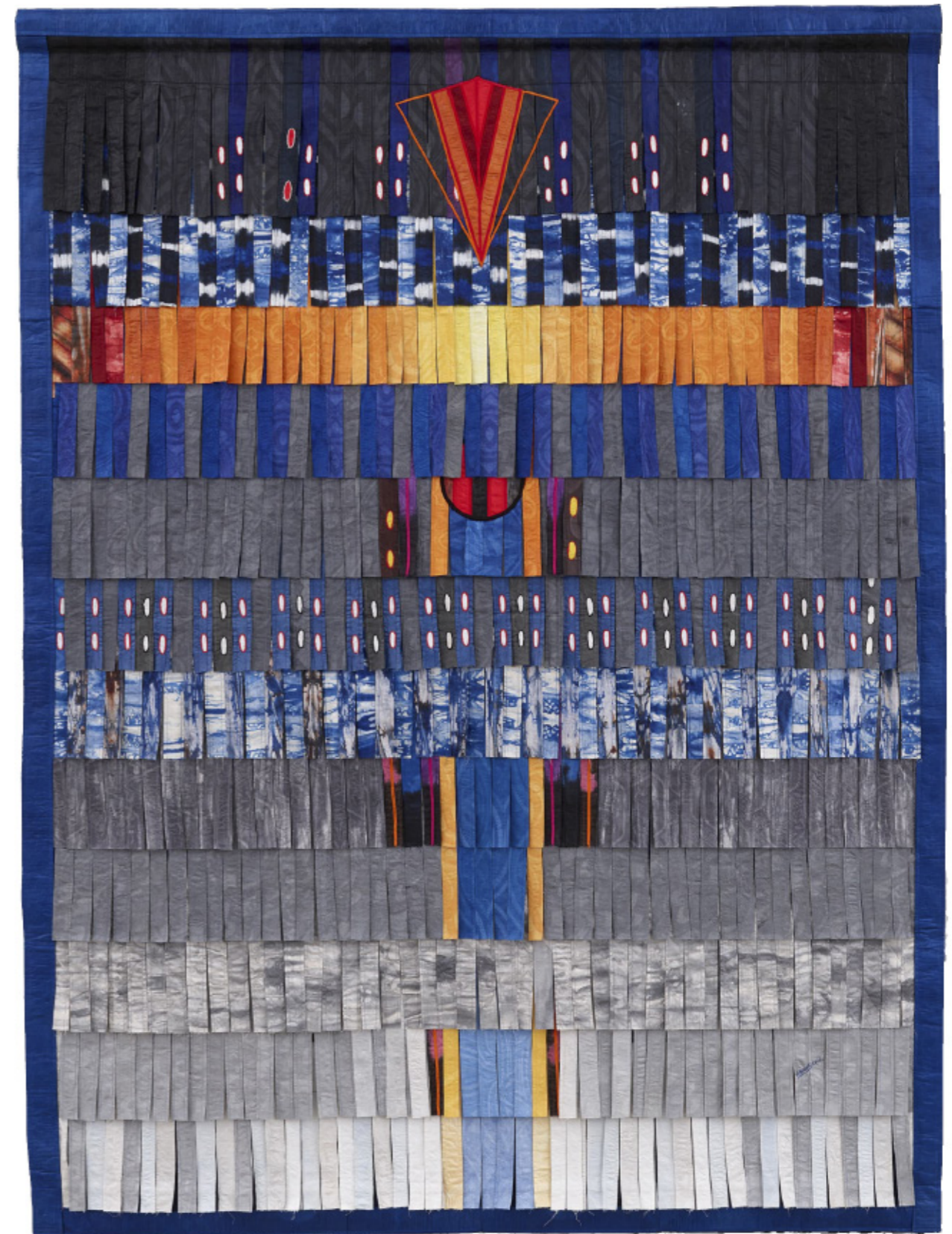
**Abdoulaye Konaté:** “Blue No. 1” is a range of blues which are mainly inspired by the Tuareg colors of northern Mali and the Sahara. All this range of blue to white that can be found in the Sahel zone, are inspired by that. And there is dye but there is also industrial dye that I use in the ranges because there are colors that you can't find. So, I have no limit on the use of coloring. But I insist that, it be of high quality and that we can appreciate it over time, in duration and in content.

[...]

**Elaine Sullivan:** In 2015 the Met acquired your piece Bleu no. 1, On a more personal level, what does it mean for you to have your work represented in this collection, and how did it feel to first see your artwork on display in this setting?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** The Museum, as I said, is a huge and impressive space. And coming in and seeing one of your pieces in such a space, it's like a kind of shock where you are totally separated from the object, and you say to yourself “Is this one of my pieces? » You often ask yourself the question when you see people turning, watching and passing. It's a great pleasure, and it's a unique opportunity for an artist that millions of people pass— even if it's two seconds— in front of one of your works. It's incredible. And knowing the number of people who pass through this Museum, it can only increase one's satisfaction. Whatever the environment, when you have a piece, the Museum always gives you the opportunity to see your piece. Maybe, people don't even look at your name, it's not that important, if the work is there. They pick up few seconds, that's enough, to be marked in a small corner. I think this is important.

[...]



*Gris orange*, 2017  
Textile  
203 × 153 cm

**Elaine Sullivan:** Why did you decide to focus on the color blue?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** It is simply a problem of self and time orientation. When you look at the blue, it floods. When you look at the sky, or the oceans. The amount of blue you have, consciously or unconsciously, is immense and it is a color that is difficult to push back. So when you start working on it, it feels like it's eating away at you, sucking you in, and you always want to go much deeper, and much more in the search for that color. So even if I start working on ranges of ochre, orange, purple and green, more often, I still come back to the blue, because I tell myself that there is something I think I can still do that is different from others. Then I say to myself that the blue is absorbing me little by little. It's like that, and when you do it, you don't even realize that you've exaggerated, if you've done a lot more blue, you always think of discovering other shades and other bits of blue that you hadn't seen. That's it, it's just the relationship we have with the color, and I'm in a stage of blue that gnaws at me a little.

**Elaine Sullivan:** What I like a lot with this piece are the small pieces of colors, red and orange, they are very small as if they were accents, and maybe it's an artist's secret but why add these?

**Abdoulaye Konaté:** You know, we studied the whole theory of color. We studied its complementary ranges, the colors that can go together, and when you look at nature you realize that nature creates elements where you were told in school that they cannot go together. And other colors they tell you that it harmonizes with that, but for me all this training and theory is a conception of great artists and great researchers in the past. But we can reconsider it now, with the visual experience, and the weight of certain colors. This is why you have small dimensions which sometimes have such ranges of colors, which to me is like weighing an object and trying to balance it with a color, by a range and a dimension. For me, that's the research in this work, for the visual balance and the circuit that I'm looking for, so that the eye can turn for someone who observes for a long time, and say, but why is this little color there, and that one there. But it is this research of questioning, which is not in many works, in relation with the theory and the harmony, that we are trying to include in this part.

[...]



*Etude de valeur (lumière 1), 2017*  
Textile  
233 × 222 cm

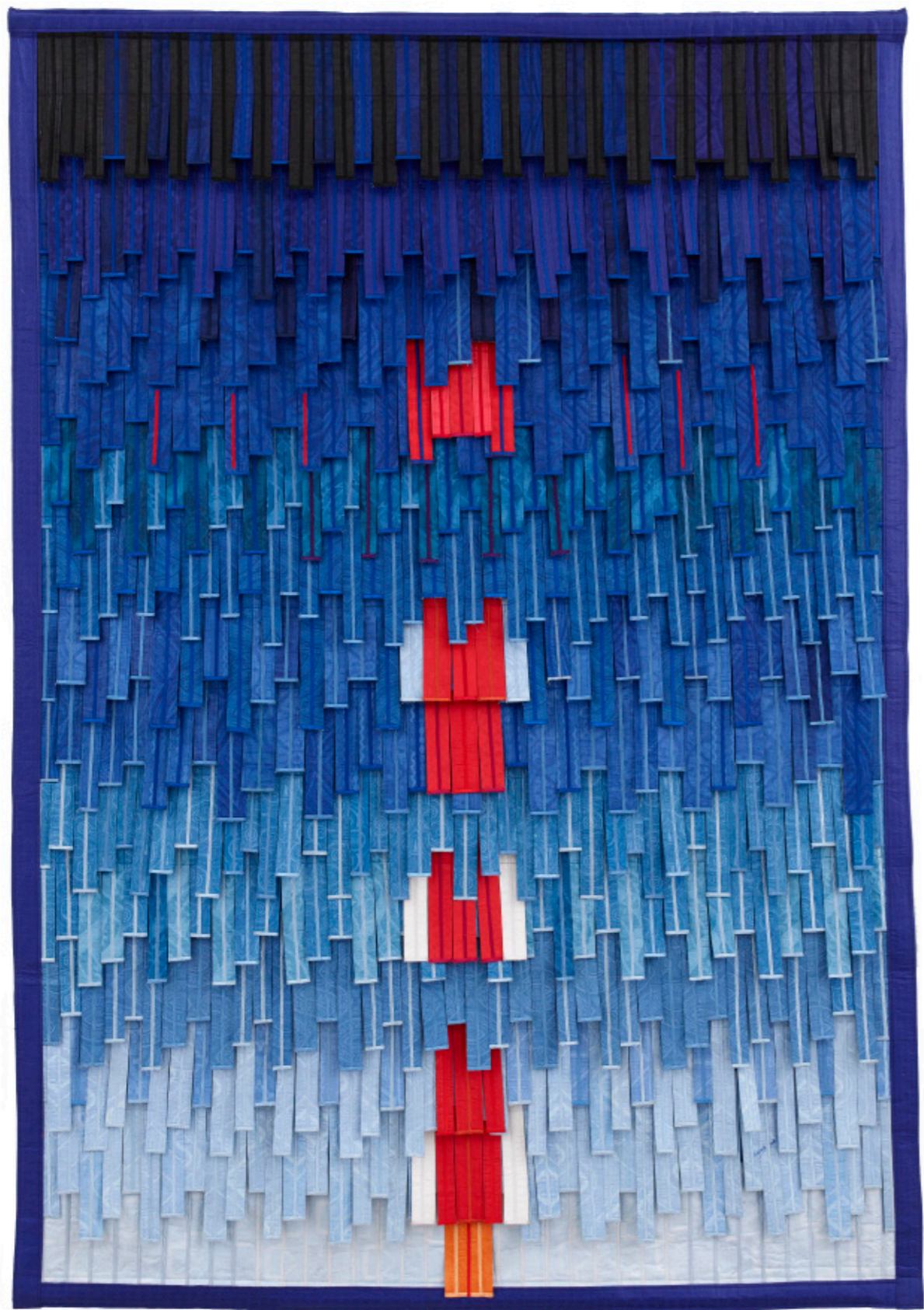


*Hibou A1, 2018*  
Textile  
233 × 228 cm

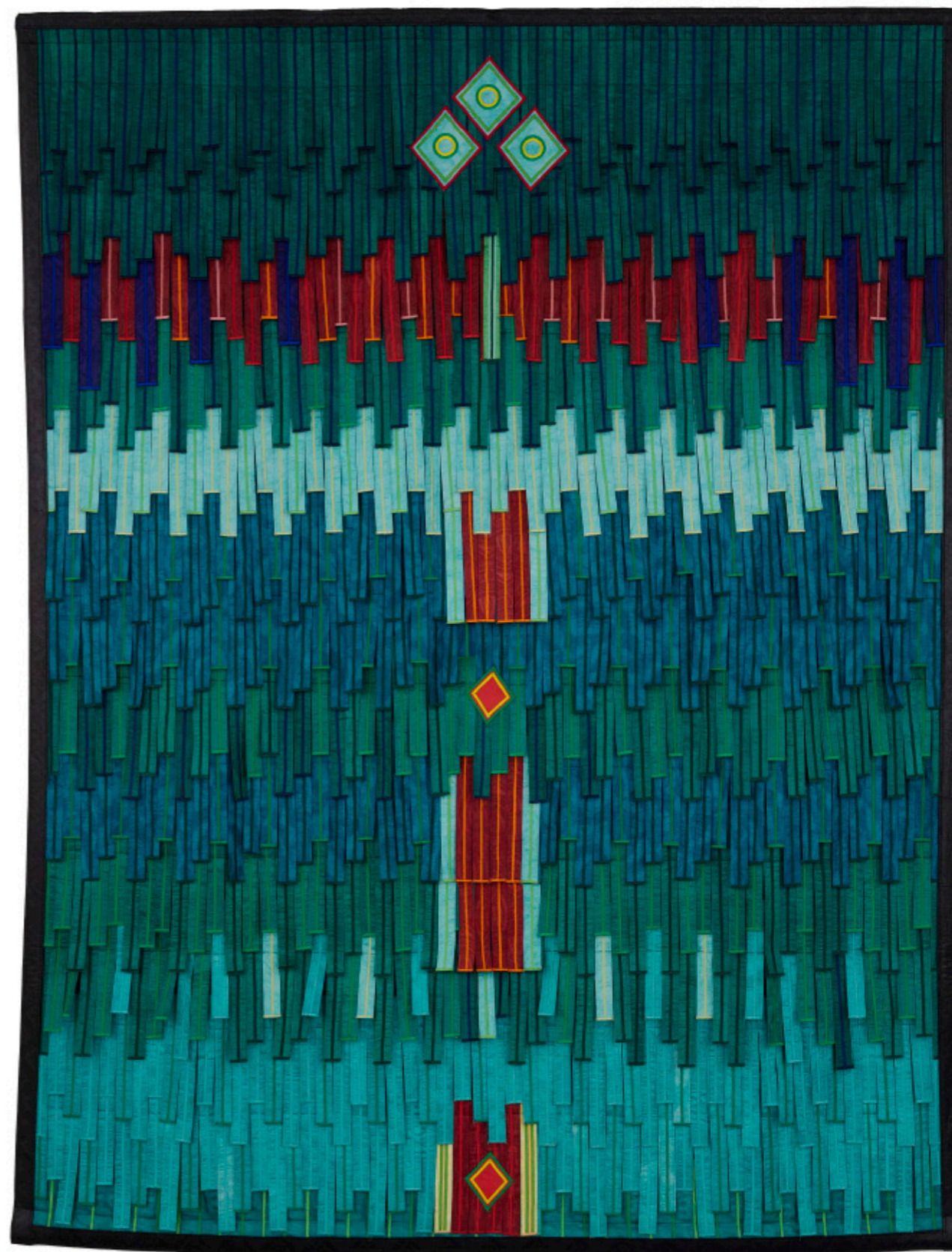




*Ocre au jaune-regard*, 2018  
Textile  
231 × 184,5 cm



*Bleu, rouge, orangé et blanc, 2019*  
Textile  
274 x 190 cm

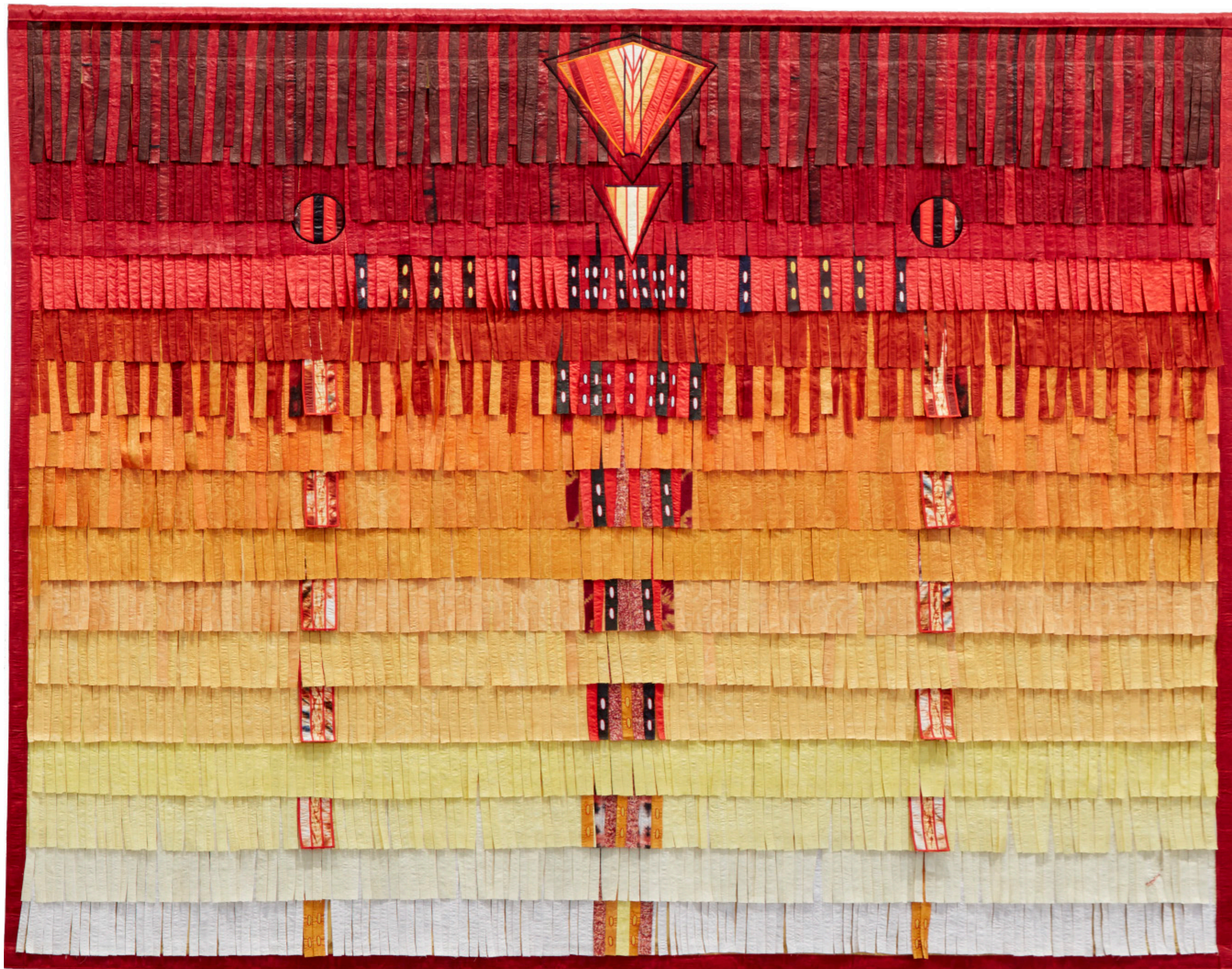


*Etude de Vert Touareg n.4, 2018*  
Textile  
288 x 218 cm

Danse au CAMM/BFK (2008) is part of a series in which the depicted figures mix gestural aspects of contemporary dance with motifs from traditional ritual dances. Similar figures by the artist can also be found on the facade of the Foyer du Murier in Paris.

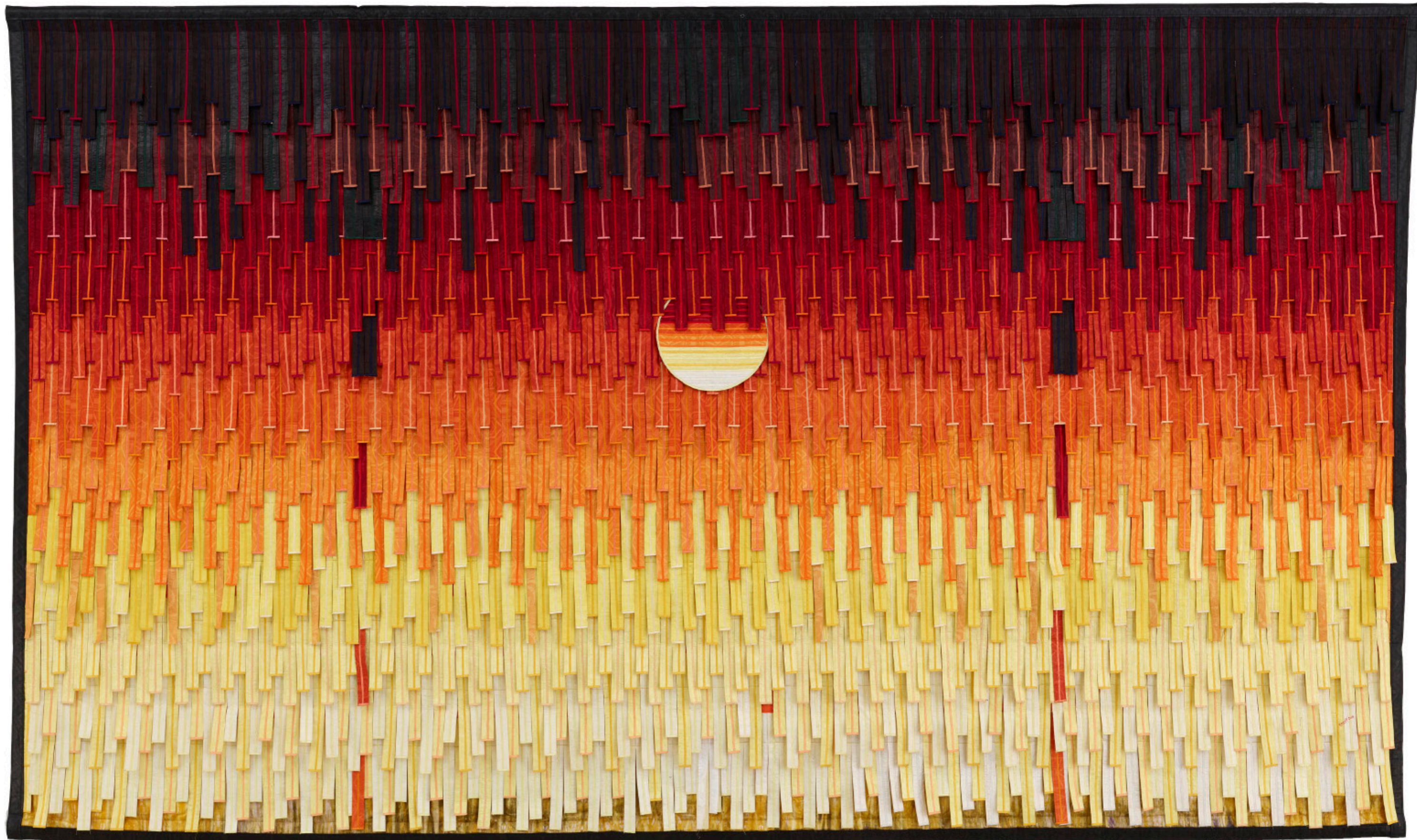
*Danse au CAMM/BFK (série no.15), 2008*  
Textile  
233 × 167 cm





*Composition en jaune, 2018*  
Textile  
267 × 329 cm





*Coucher de soleil*, 2018  
Textile  
266 × 450 cm

## LUNE BLEUE 2PM, 2019

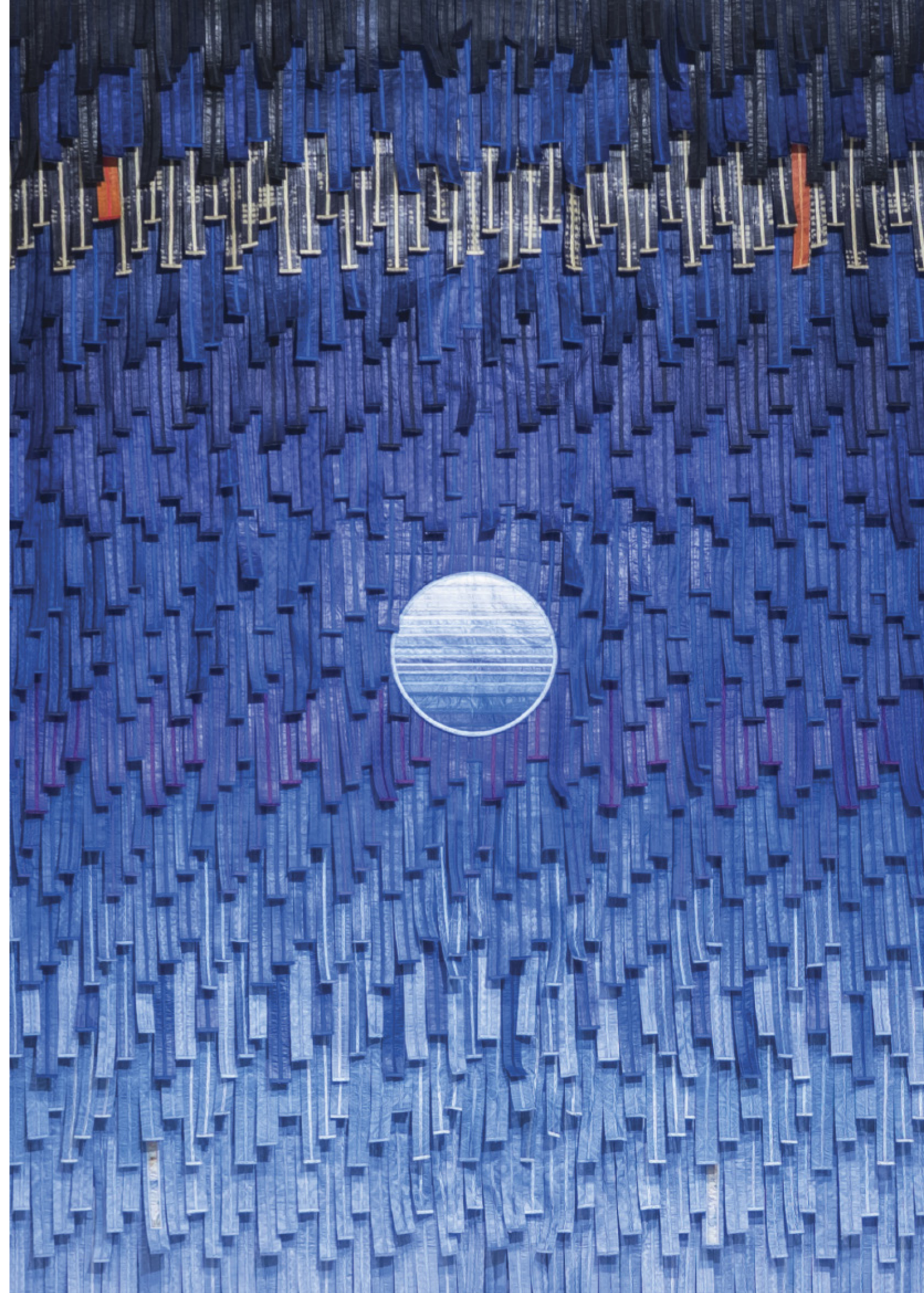
Exceptional, ephemeral, inexpressible, fragile, tangible, surprising, precise: it's hard to find the right term to label «*Lune Bleue*» («*Blue Moon*»), piece of art whose symbolic ambiguity reflects the work of Abdoulaye Konaté, master of contrasts in search of constant balance. Combining architectural rigour with textile fluidity, Abdoulaye Konaté, alias Master Konaté, through the use of dyed fabric strips takes the cue from the communication technique of the initiatory society of *kôrêdugaw* from Mali, whose belief is teaching wisdom through a controlled subversion. Expressing everything with a perceptible face impressing for its strong colours, and with an imperceptible one weaved in the mesh, which speaks to everybody's intimacy.

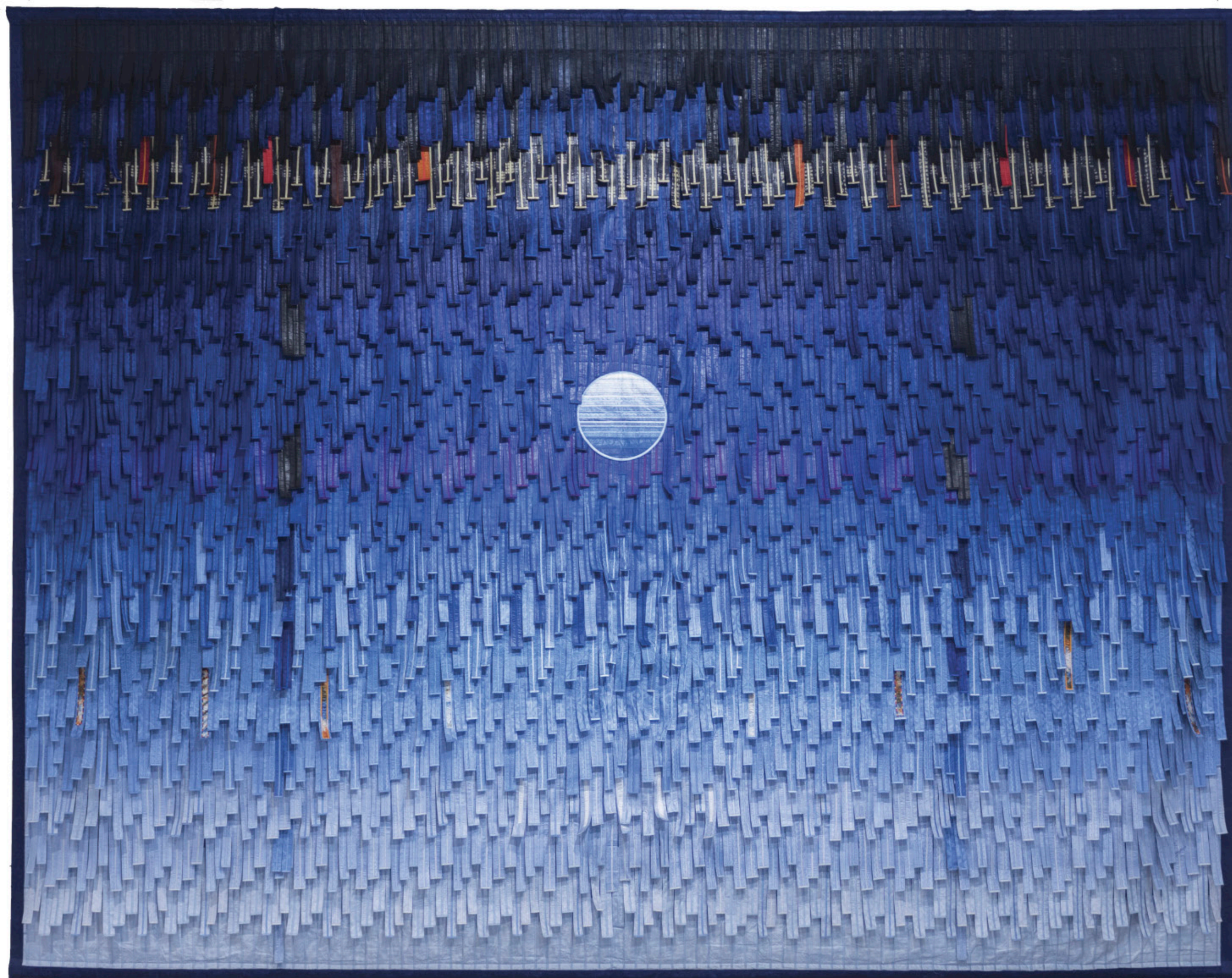
Abdoulaye Konaté abandons the brush, leading to a more solitary creative mechanism in aid of this geometric assemblage of the textile perfectly mastered, whose nuances colour palette is realised by a community of women dyers from Mali.

He also uses what is usually called the «small craft», the famous tailors from African cities, in charge of cutting, sewing, embroidering the pieces of puzzle, which will represent the final piece of art. There is no space for mistakes: Abdoulaye Konaté leaves nothing to chance. Every square centimetre of this huge installations does have a basic thought and it is designed in the style of the Japanese masters' miniaturisation. With this accuracy he transforms the word into textile and enjoins us to contemplate the mischief, the mess and the aspirations of our contemporary world. «*Vert Touareg*» («*Touareg Green*»), the symbol of hope, pastures, prosperity, the symbol of that desired peacefulness in the middle of a golden sand desert adjoins «*Gouttes rouges*» («*Red drops*»), from which flows the blood of innocents as well as the energy, the fire, the rebirth. Spilled blood gives death. Spilled blood gives life, the promise of a flourishing, unexpected future that shows the «*Lune Bleue*» («*Blue Moon*») at the end of the way.

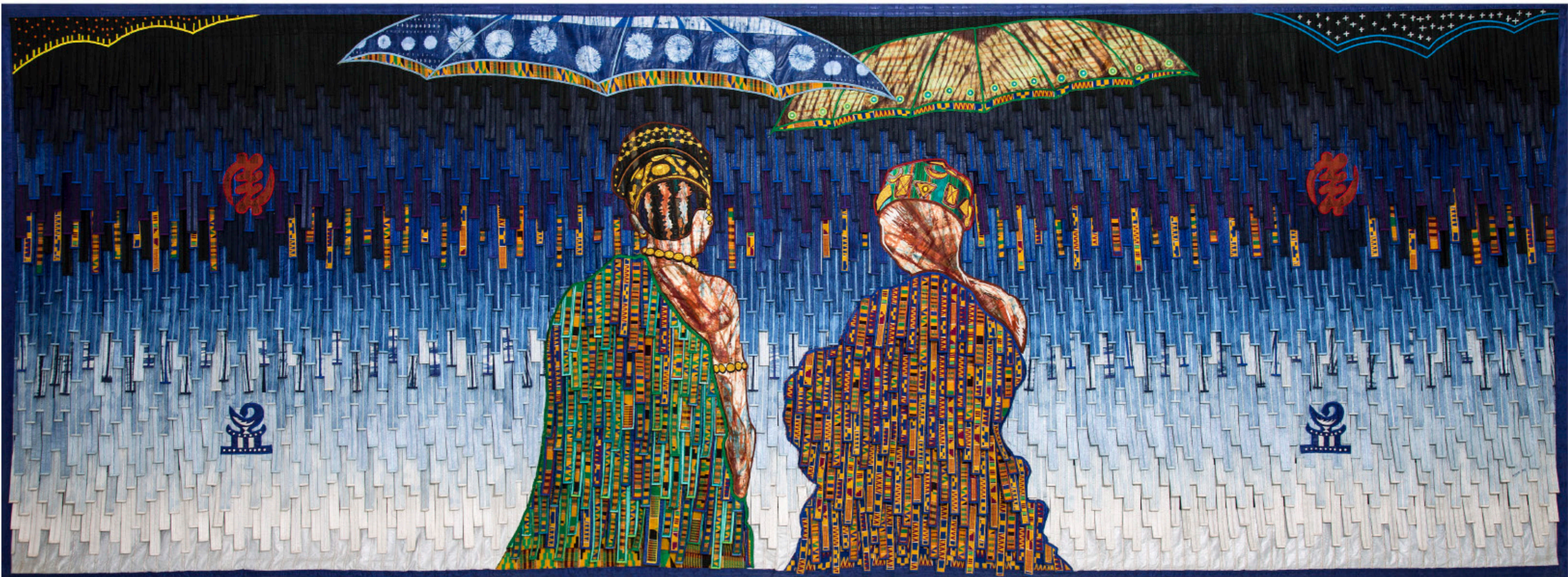
The blue moon is a rare astronomical phenomenon, as well as the events that affected humanity recently. A humanity that is plunged into an unprecedented inertia, ascetic despite itself, a humanity that is invited to meditation, to intergenerational and cross-cultural reflection, to an inner journey on the meaning of its presence, its action, its future. «*Lune Bleue*» («*Blue Moon*») seems to immortalize this space-time where borders don't make boundaries. The moon is sweet and feminine, and melancholic too. This might be the outline of a rebirth, a message of hope and resilience struggling against violence in a face-to-face, hosted in the white setting of the Espace Dominique Bagouet. The work of Abdoulaye Konaté lives and is to be read in the present with a timeless and intimate meaning. Relentlessly trying to witness the evil and the wonders of this world, bluntly and uncompromising, A. Konaté does not forget to insert in his works some "framed" notes of humour, as in the canvas «*De Gauthier à Picasso*» («*From Gauthier to Picasso*»), which resumes the famous sailor in an abstract way. As a skilled juggler of artistic codes, A. Konaté keeps exploring what the old brings to the new, what the contemporary owes to tradition.

*Nakhana Kadiatou Diakite-Prats*

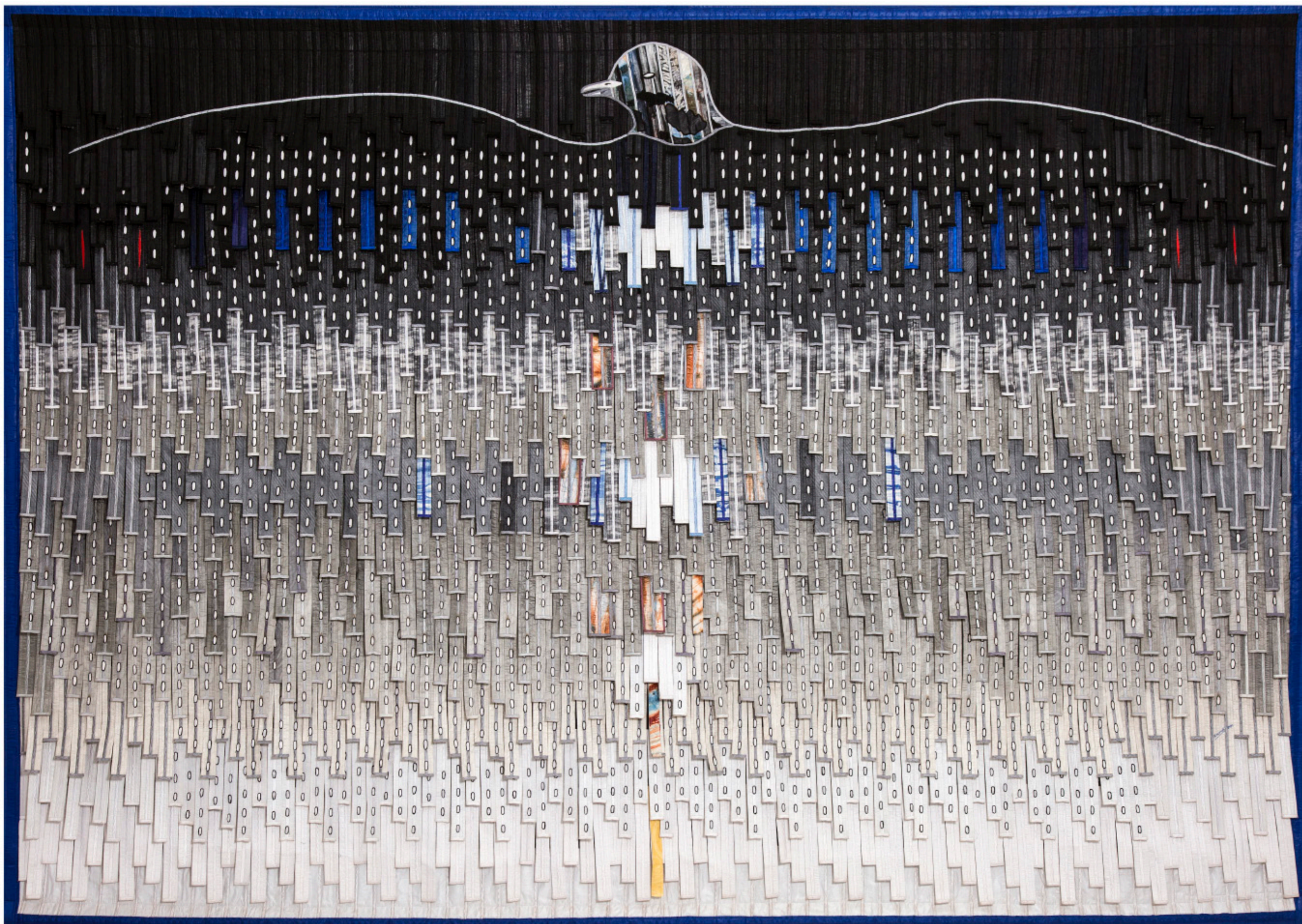




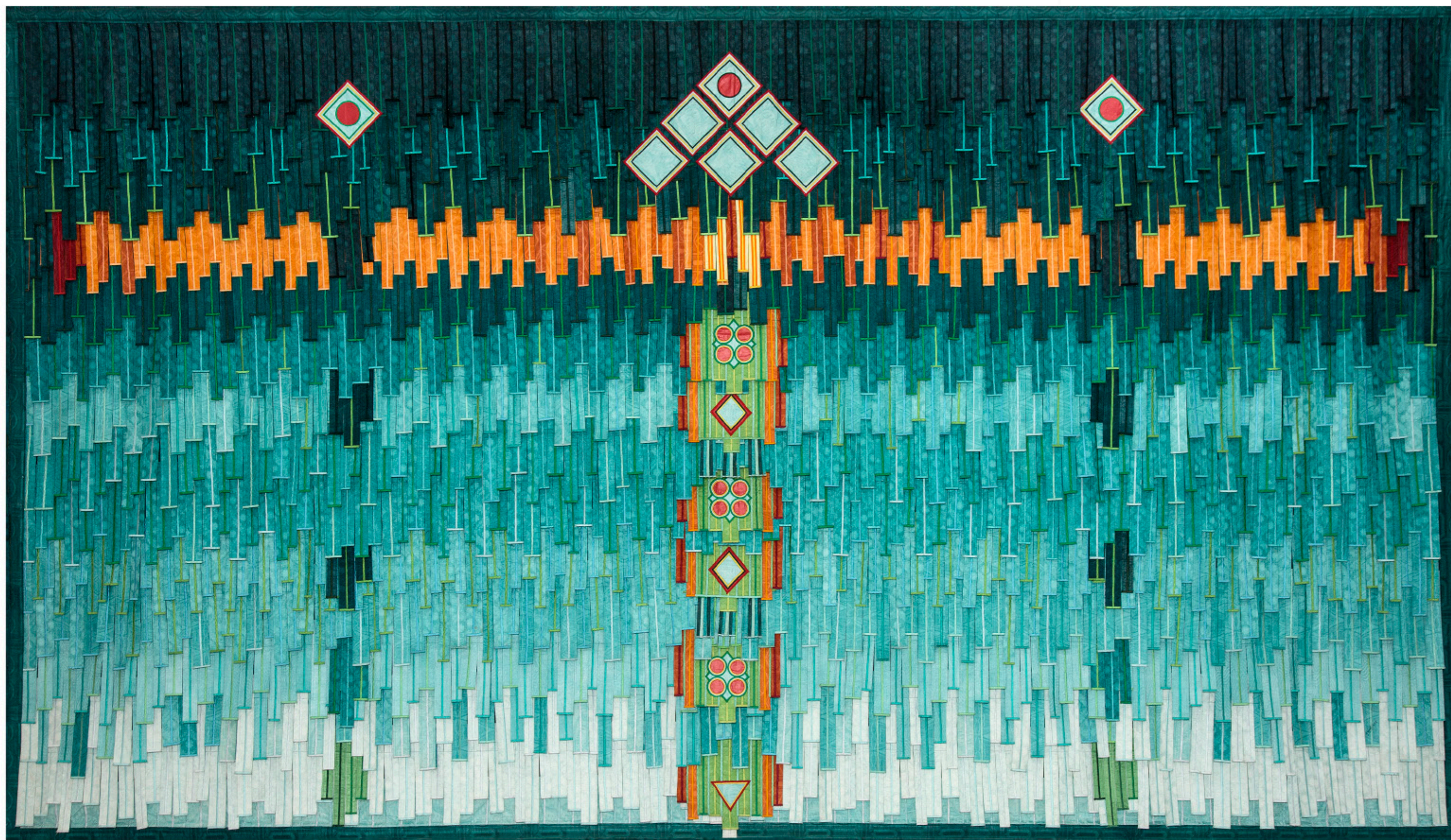
*Lune bleue*, 2019  
Textile  
400 × 518 cm



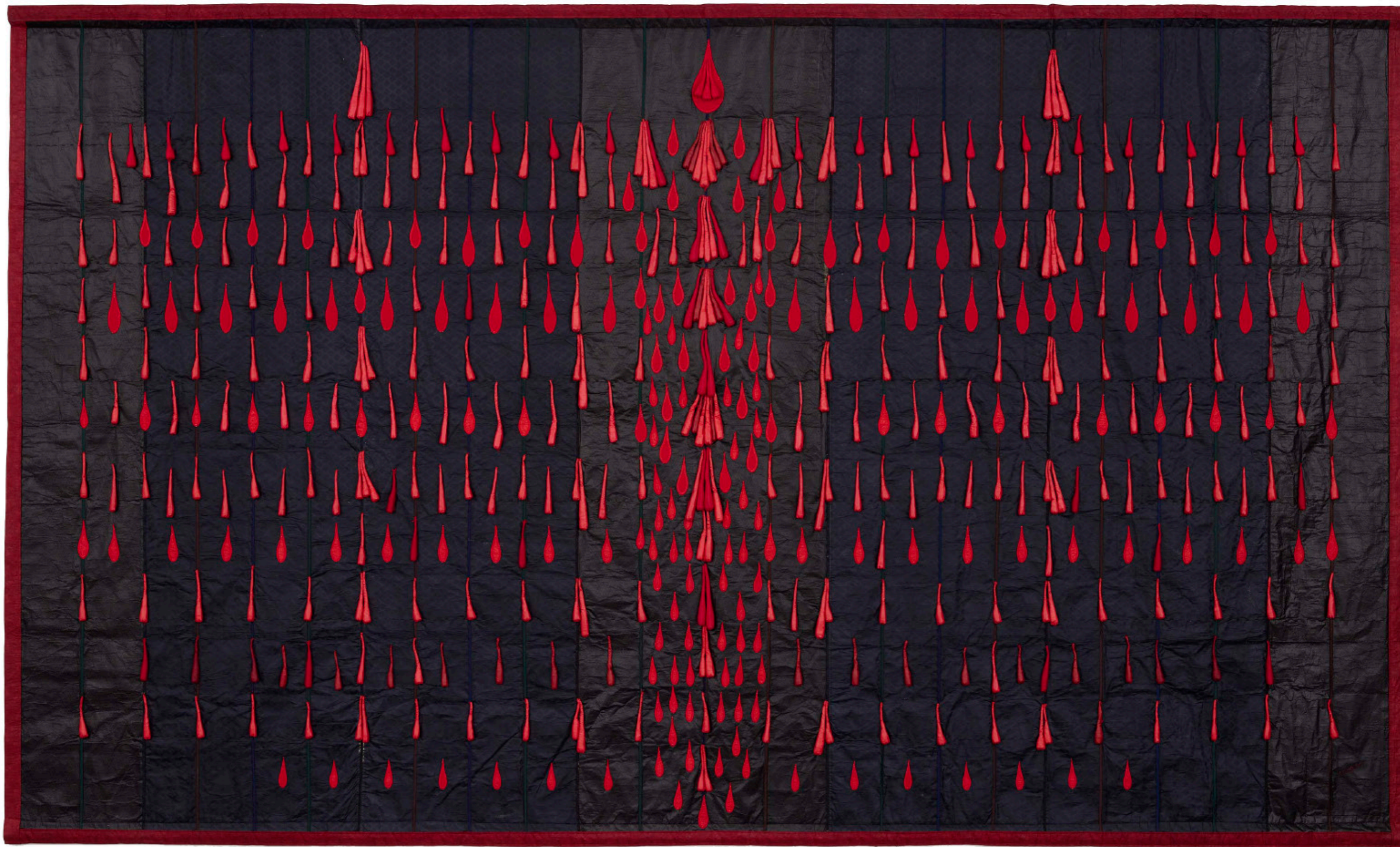
*Reine et Roi Ashanti*, 2021  
Textile  
230 × 628 cm



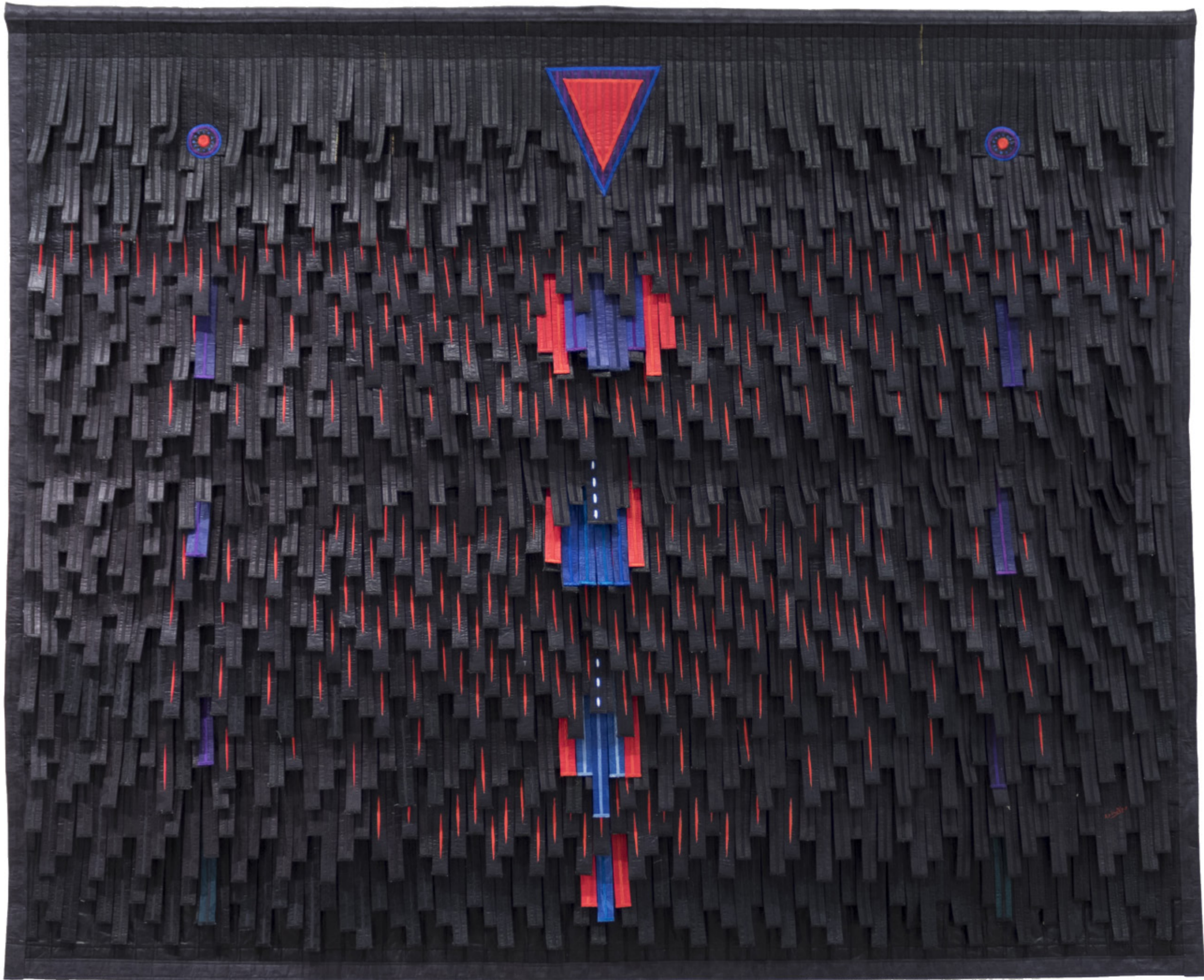
*Oiseau gris à queue jaune*, 2021  
Textile  
254 × 359 cm



*Vert Touareg aux 3 cercles*, 2018  
Textile  
297 × 520 cm



*Gouttes rouges (sang du Sahel)*, 2018  
Textile  
255 × 425 cm



*Noir d'ébène et cicatrices*, 2021  
Textile  
237 × 294 cm





*Le Rouge et le Noir et Les Signes*, 2018  
Textile  
310 × 370 cm

**EXHIBITIONS  
&  
COLLECTIONS**

**STILL ALIVE**  
**AICHI TRIENNALE**

2022 - Aichi Triennale - Aichi - Japan



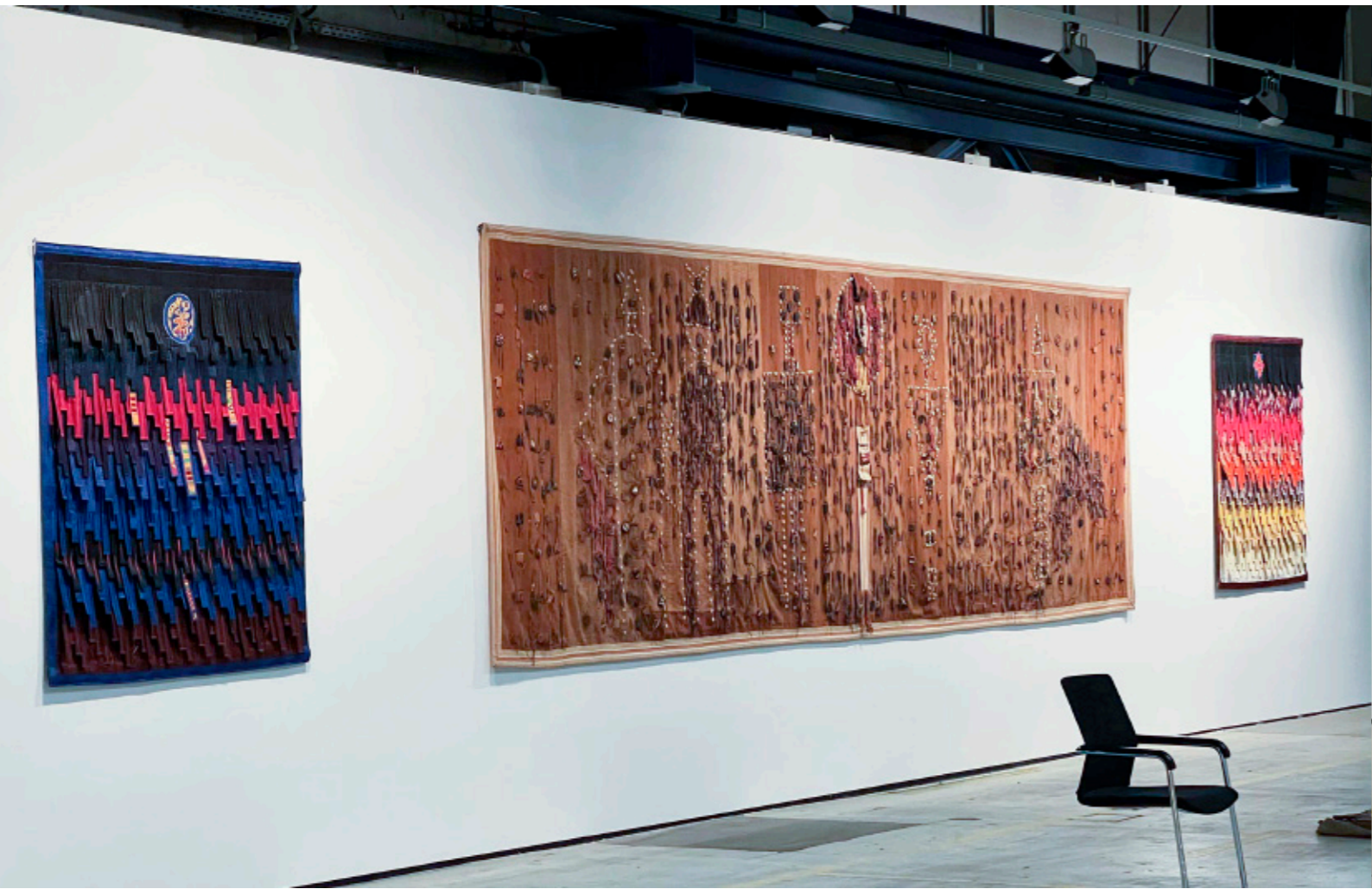
Still Alive, Aichi Triennale, 2022  
Aichi Triennale, Aichi, Japan  
Installation View



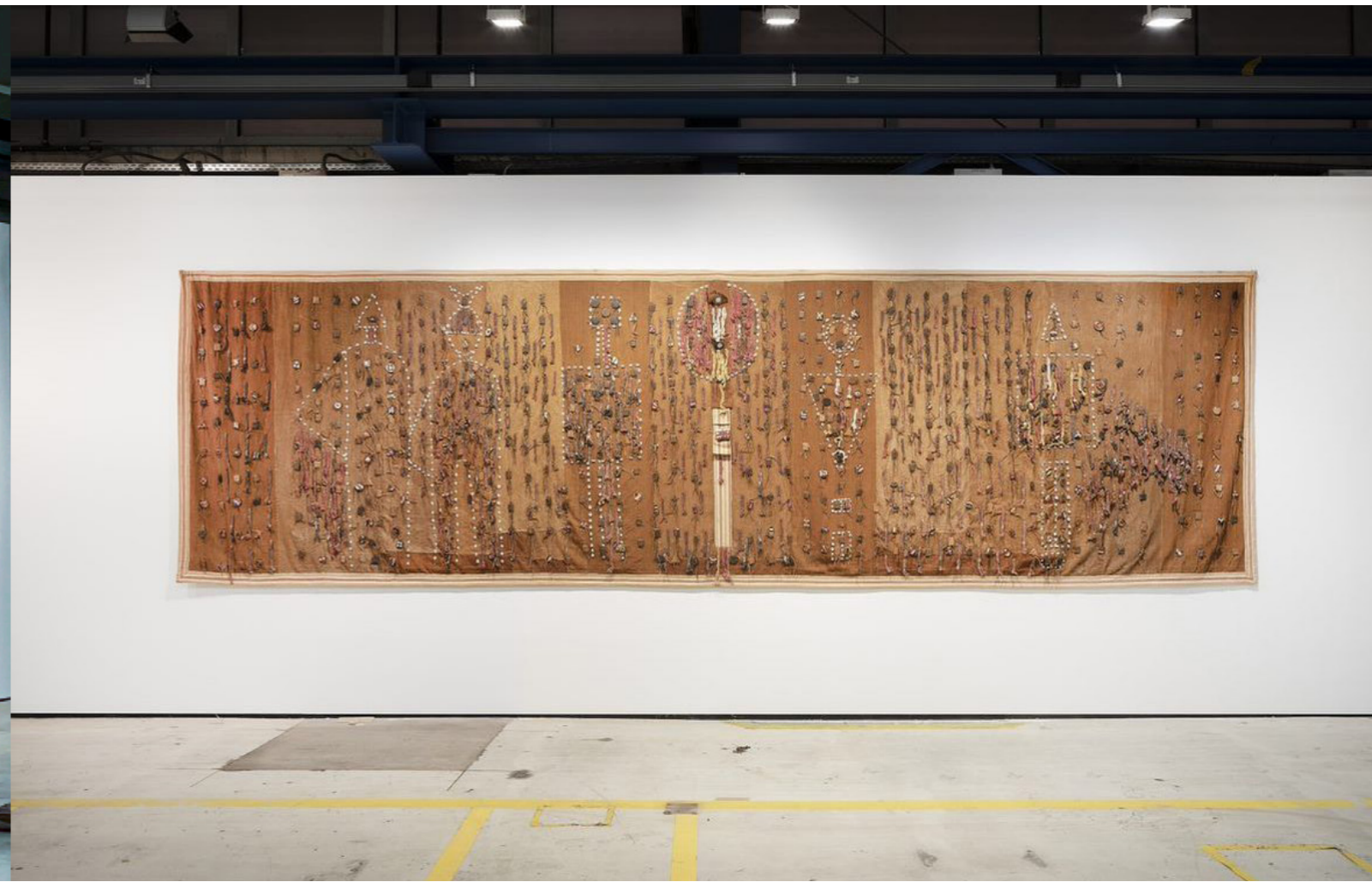
Still Alive, Aichi Triennale, 2022  
Aichi Triennale, Aichi, Japan  
Installation View

**DOCUMENTA 15**

2022 - Documenta - Kassel - Germany



Documenta 15, 2022  
Kassel, Germany  
Installation View



## **HOMMAGE À ABDOULAYE KONATÉ, L'ÉTOFFE D'UN MAÎTRE**

2022 - Biennale de Dakar - Dakar - Senegal

A master. The Malian visual artist is without a doubt. The 14th edition of the Dakar Biennale will pay tribute to Abdoulaye Konaté, winner of the 1996 Grand Prix.

With a look that makes sense, the critic and art historian El Hadji Malick Ndiaye analyzes the work of Abdoulaye Konaté, which is distinguished by the use of fabric as a material of choice enhanced by a reinvented pictoriality.

As for the approach that guides his work, observes Ndiaye, two lines of force cross Konaté's work: aesthetics and sociopolitics. "On the one hand, aesthetics results from working with materials. The dexterity of the artist lies in his ability to play with textiles, giving them reliefs and shapes, with a graduation of colors that suggests movement just on the basis of the nuance of the hues", notes the Museum Curator. Theodore Monod of Dakar. He pushes his reflection: "His compositions testify to a subtle chromaticism in the arrangement of the pieces of fabric and the presence of important reliefs thanks to integrated objects. The minimalist regularity of the discontinuous bands introduces the formation of volumes and creates optical effects that sometimes come in a series of abstractions".

From a sociopolitical point of view, observes E. Malick Ndiaye, the work of Abdoulaye Konaté is marked by a profound humanism which resides in his ability to name cultural, social and political relations. At this level, notes the art historian, the evocative power of the titles he gives to his works imprints a singularity on his work, it becomes an introspection of History and Memory.

For El Hadji Malick Ndiaye, the works of Abdoulaye Konaté are scores of human drama and collective unconsciousness that evoke the ills of men and their difficulty in forging together a common destiny.

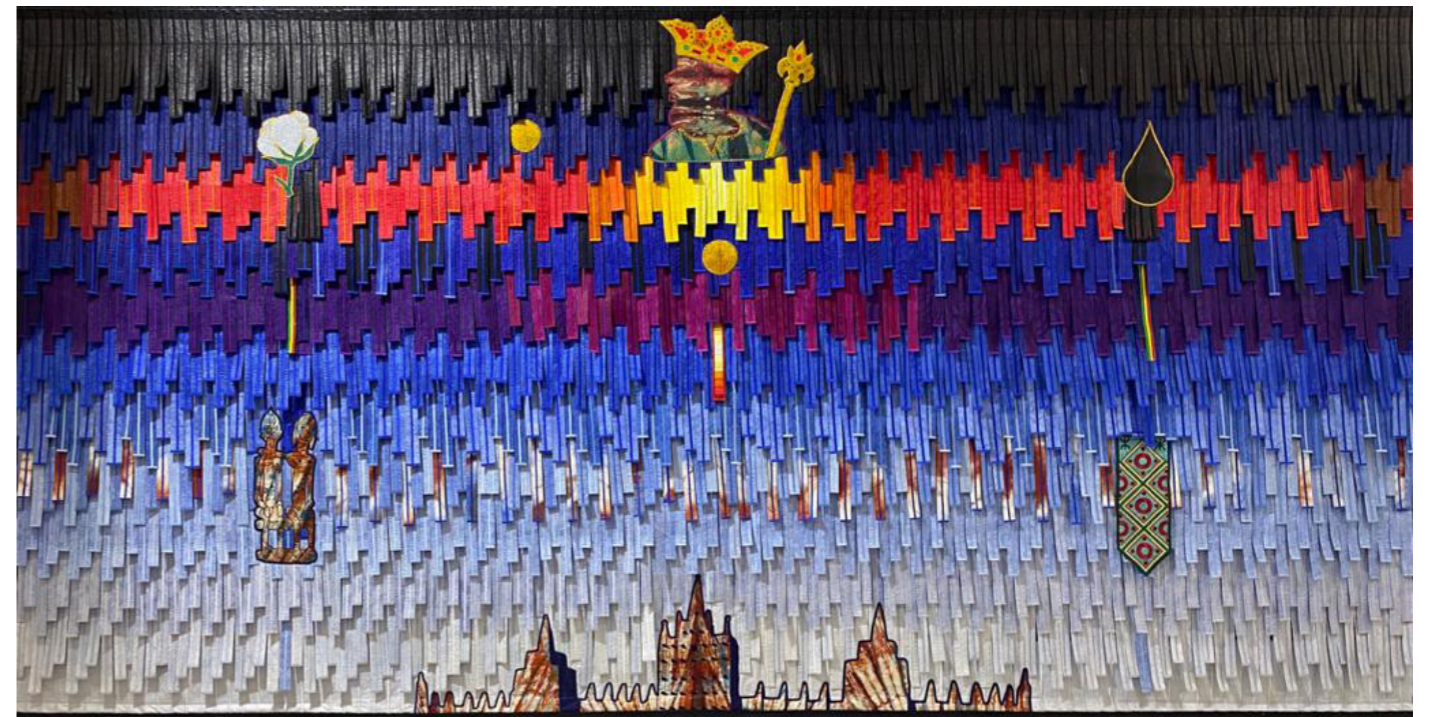




Hommage à Abdoulaye Konaté, L'étoffe d'un maître, 2022  
 Biennale de Dakar, Dakar, Senegal  
 Installation View

**MALI PAVILION EXPO2020**

2022 - Mali Pavilion EXPO2020 - Dubai - UAE



*Le Mali - Un trésor, 2020*  
Textile, 502 x 256 cm  
Mali Pavilion EXPO 2020, Dubai, UAE  
Installation View

## **THE BLACK ERA**

2021 - Primo Marella Gallery - Milan - Italy

The Black Era focus its attention on this historical moment, comparing the two realities mentioned above, realities that at first glance appear quite similar and cohesive, but actually have a public and a market still quite different, with strong inequalities between the economic values of the exponents of these two groups, but not the artistic ones.

The Black Era exhibition aims to see these two realities united, compared and for the first time shown together.

We have chosen the works of some of the most representative African American artists close to those of some important African artists, making them in dialogue through a common theme: the frequent use of the color "black" in their works, often mitigated by gray or in opposition to white.

This exhibition wants to celebrate this opposition by highlighting how color is also a further element of analysis of their both practice.

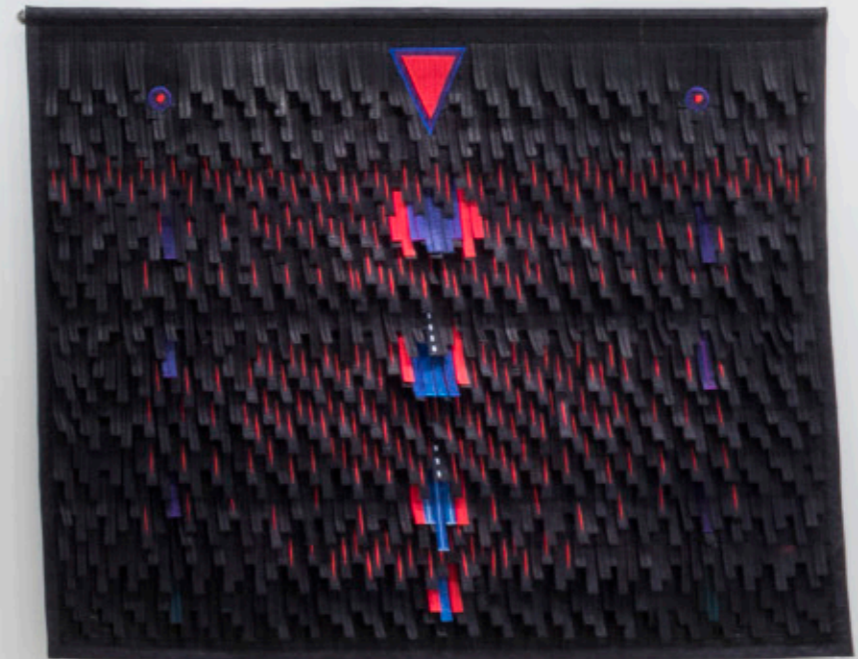
Black is the skin, black is the color of the works, black is our age, or perhaps dark. But black is elegance, black is taste, black is beauty.

These authors bewitch us through their choice of extreme and fascinating research and through their inevitable dissimilarities. The viewing experience is unique and the emotion is contagious. We perceive the idea that the Black Era is a New Era. As if the foundations of the future were being laid, a future from which there is no escape and it is impossible to go back.

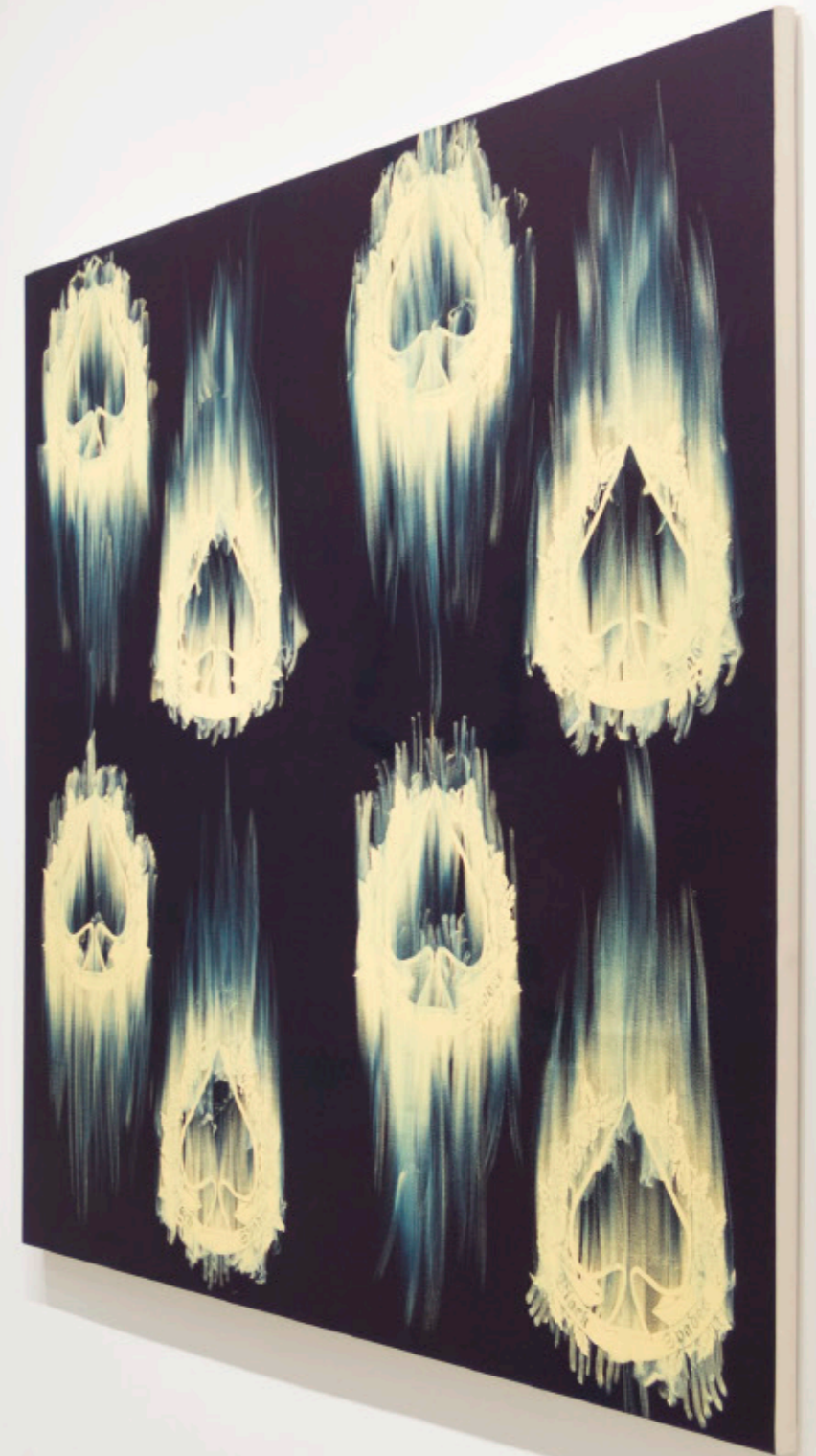
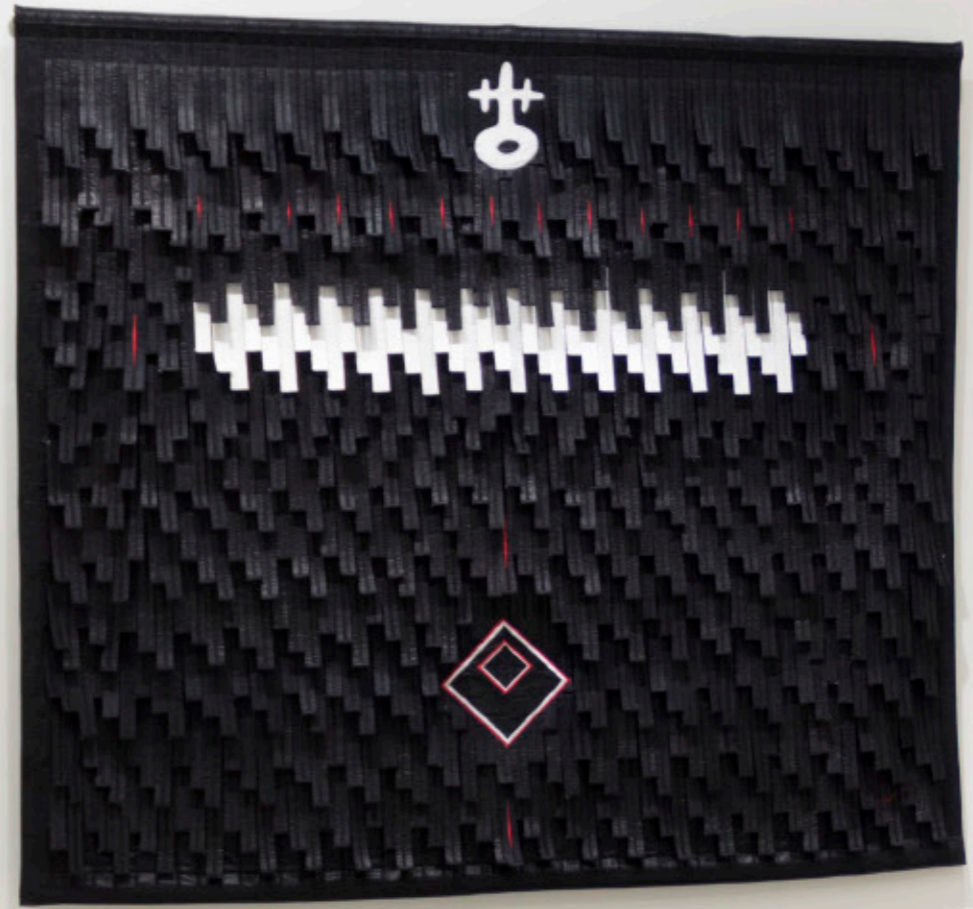
The strength and the vigor of these artists, combined with the stylistic elegance and the radicality of the artistic language of each of them, leave us disoriented and immerse us in a new dimension. They are certainly some of the most extraordinary witnesses of this historical process.



RANOMASO  
SISA  
TEARS ARE MADE  
FOR US  
TOUT  
COMMENCE PAR  
UNE LARME  
TSIARO  
MEMORIES OF  
OUR ETERNAL  
AFFECTION  
FA MBOLA HO AVY  
ILAY ANDRO  
THIS  
DAY



THE BLACK ERA, 2021  
Primo Marella Gallery Milan, Italy  
Installation View



THE BLACK ERA, 2021  
Primo Marella Gallery Milan, Italy  
Installation View

## **ABDOULAYE KONATÉ - LES PETITS TABLEAUX**

2021 - Primae Noctis Art Gallery - Lugano - Switzerland

*Les petits tableaux* is entirely dedicated to very special brand-new artworks by the Malian artist, produced especially for this show. These are part of Konaté's latest production, which includes small textiles, never made in this size before, a little gem within the artist's extraordinary career.

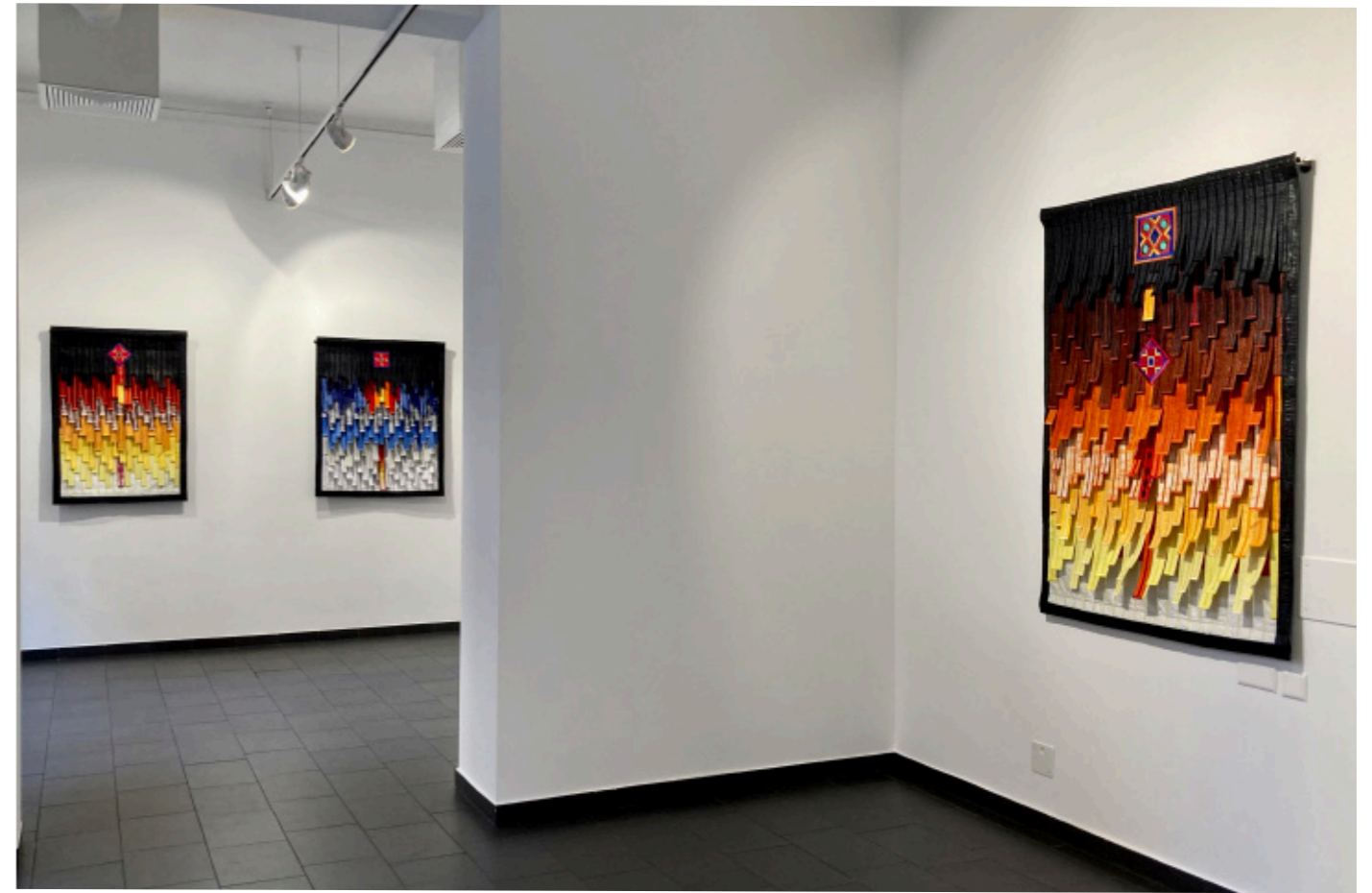
They are all made with the same technique the artist uses for the larger works, with colored fabric bands, sewn to create a harmonious composition, based on Konaté's aesthetic vision and inspired by the cultural traditions of Mali.

*"I can say that in my art there are two well-defined lines of thought.*

*On the one hand there is the purely aesthetic side, influenced by the nature and cultural traditions of Mali, my country, and that determines the colours and the materials of my work.*

*On the other hand there is a more spiritual side, which stems from the desire to investigate and describe through my work the human suffering, which reflects itself on the relations between states, politics, the environment, society and the family. Addressing very urgent issues such as AIDS, fanaticism and environmental threats, my works draw attention to the problems that plague the modern man and that are caused by a fundamental lack of tolerance in Africa as elsewhere in the world."*

- Abdoulaye Konaté



Abdoulaye Konaté - Les petits tableaux, 2021  
Prima Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, Switzerland  
Installation View

**AFRICA UNIVERSE - PART 2**  
2021 - Primo Marella Gallery - Milan - Italy

Africa Universe 2 is the prosecution of a monumental project started two years ago: Africa Universe.

At that time we wrote:

*"We have recently recognized and became conscious of the 'Africa Universe' – a kaleidoscopic universe able to speak to the whole world, even if built from complex visual and cultural codes. Once on the margins of the mainstream narratives, today, the work of African artists is featured in the evolving discourse of contemporary art. From publications to biennales and exhibitions in the most prestigious museums, from academic research to new curatorial methodologies and programs, from auction houses to commercial art galleries, the world's attention has been focused on Contemporary African Art."*

Now, more than ever it exemplify the reality.  
Africa is gaining more and more recognition in the art world.

Our experience on this research path started more than a decade ago with our first exhibition on Africa contemporary art: Africa assume art position! In 2010.

At that time the Global attention was completely focused elsewhere, and the artistic scene of the African continent was not this prolific.

We are proud to see that many of the emerging artist we selected and presented at that time, such as Joël Andrianomearisoa for example, are now artists well known internationally.

The exhibition Africa Universe 2 is another milestones on the same path. We wanted to focus on the most interesting African contemporary artists, balancing the selection between established and emerging artists.

To show how the "old guard" is now backed by a fertile group of young energetic fellows. Among historical pieces, has been exhibited brand new artworks created by the artists during this complicated period, the 2020, a year that will be part of the Global History. These works are translated in personal, but at the same time universal experiences.





Africa Universe - Part 2, 2021  
Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy  
Installation View

**ABDOULAYE KONATÉ - LUNE BLEUE**

2021 - Espace Dominique Bagouet - Montpellier - France



Abdoulaye Konaté · Lune Bleue, 2021  
Espace Dominique Bagouet, Montpellier, France  
Installation View



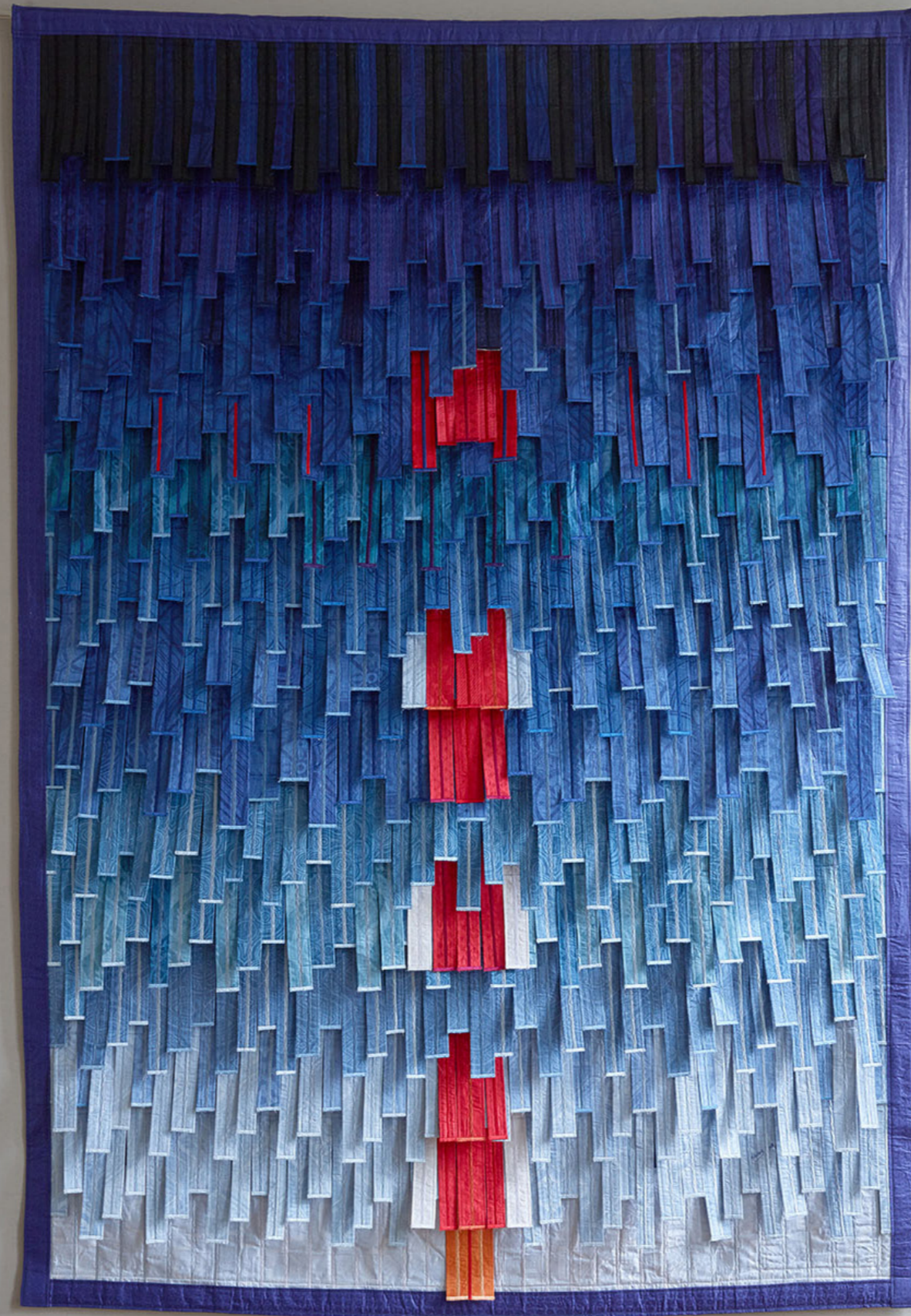
Abdoulaye Konaté · Lune Bleue, 2021  
Espace Dominique Bagouet, Montpellier, France  
Installation View

## **THREADS**

2021 - Zwartzusters Monastery - Antwerp - Belgium

For its inaugural exhibition THREADS, Duende Art Projects presents an empowering juxtaposition of both classical and contemporary art from the African continent. Rarely exhibited together, and generally considered to be different collecting categories, Duende Art Projects brings both old and new works from the African continent together in a unique setting: a 14th century monastery in the historic city centre of Antwerp that has never been open to the public before.

THREADS will include works by Abdoulaye Konaté, El Anatsui, Kimathi Mafafo, Tuli Mekondjo, Sizwe Sibisi and Saidou Dicko, as well as a museum-quality group of Fante asofo flags, a stunning ensemble of egungun dance costumes and an exceptional 16th century Kongo trumpet.



Threads, 2021  
Zwartzusters Monastery, Antwerp, Belgium  
Installation View

## **NEXT WORLD**

2021 · Taguchi Art Collection · Iwaki City Art Museum · Fukushima

Abdoulaye Konaté's work "Brésil (Guarani)" (2015) has been exhibited in a group exhibition "Next World – Taguchi Art Collection x Iwaki City Art Museum" at Iwaki City Art Museum in Fukushima.

This exhibition introduces a wide range of contemporary art in collaboration with one of Japan's leading contemporary art collections, the Taguchi Art Collection. Taking up a global perspective, their collection features works that transcend national boundaries, with works originating from Japan, Europe, America and Asia.

The exhibition features 95 unique works, including paintings, sculptures, and video works.



Next World, 2021  
Taguchi Art Collection x Iwaki City Art Museum, Iwaki City Art Museum, Fukushima, Japan  
Installation View



**IDÉOGRAMMES, SIGNES,  
SYMBOLES ET LOGOS**  
2020 - Zeitz MOCAA - Cape Town



Abdoulaye Konaté's textile, monumental and site-specific installation titled, *Idéogrammes, signes, symboles et logos (Hommage à Youssouf Tata Cissé et Germaine Dieterlen)* was on show in Zeitz MOCAA's BMW Atrium for one year (February 2020 - January 2021).

Koyo Kouoh, Executive Director and Chief Curator at Zeitz MOCAA, states:

*"It is an honour to have one of our continent's foremost artists represented in our museum and to introduce our audiences to the vitality of practices which are now part of global art history. The myriad of individually hemmed appliqued fabric fragments in *Idéogrammes, signes, symboles et logos (Hommage à Youssouf Tata Cissé et Germaine Dieterlen)*, not only add rich colour and texture to Zeitz MOCAA's concrete walls, but also contribute to an important dialogue around materiality in contemporary art from Africa."*

Tandazani Dhlakama, Assistant Curator at Zeitz MOCAA adds:

*"Konaté's work has engaged with many socio-political and environmental issues. These range from global epidemics such as HIV/AIDS to freedom of expression, Islamic fundamentalism and political satire, to migration, music, language and spirituality."*



*Idéogrammes, signes, symboles et logos*  
(Hommage à Youssouf Tata Cissé et Germaine Dieterlen), 2020  
Zeitz MOCAA's, Cape Town



Idéogrammes, signes, symboles et logos  
(Hommage à Youssouf Tata Cissé et Germaine Dieterlen), 2020  
Zeitz MOCAA's, Cape Town

The exhibition “Global(e) Resistance” features for the first time works from over sixty artists gathered by the Centre Pompidou in the last decade, the majority of whom comes from the South (Africa, Middle East, Asia, Latin America) and aims to examine strategies of resistance in the context of contemporary artist practices.

“Global(e) Resistance” also raises theoretical questions, ranging from the articulation of aesthetics and politics to the relationship of the museum with politics, within the world of art.

Abdoulaye Konaté is one of the artists invited to participate in the exhibition “Global(e) Resistance”, with one of his historical installations.

“Menace” (1995) is a conceptual work by Abdoulaye Konaté that transcribes the precariousness of democratic hopes for African governments, through the symbolism of a row of eggs threatening in an expected fall.

## GLOBAL(E) RESISTANCE

2020 - Centre Pompidou - Paris - France



Global(e) Resistance  
2020 - Centre Pompidou - Paris - France  
Installation View

## **AFRICA UNIVERSE**

2019 - Primo Marella Gallery - Milan - Italy

During the last two decades there has been a rise of interest in the work of contemporary African artists, who eventually became a solid part of the global artistic community. We have recently recognized and become conscious of the 'Africa Universe' – a kaleidoscopic universe able to speak to the whole world, even if built from complex visual and cultural codes. Once on the margins of the mainstream narratives, today, the work of African artists is featured in the evolving discourse of contemporary art. From publications to biennales and exhibitions in the most prestigious museums, from academic research to new curatorial methodologies and programs, from auction houses to commercial art galleries - the world's attention has been focused on Contemporary African Art.

In the current cultural, social and political context, we observe important shifts of power and knowledge, once exclusively reserved to the West. Over the centuries, we have been exercising the self-affirmation of Western identity through the intellectual discrimination of non-European societies. However, the theory of 'Otherness' discussed by Edward W. Said in the Orientalism from 1978, is gradually vanishing, as we are trying to stop patronizing the cultural representations based upon fictional, Western images of "the Others". This kind of discursive control applied also to the history of art, a discipline, which excluded many talented artists from the literature and which in consequence is finally being revisited. The dialectics about art, but not only, is steadily changing and we are fortunate enough to observe this epoch-making intellectual and cultural transition. A transition, which allowed the development of Contemporary African Art.

[...]

The artists from Africa and its diaspora finally stepped in, significantly contributing to the global artistic landscape and discourse. Their art became transnational and has been finally institutionally recognized and placed in the broader context of contemporary art. Abdoulaye Konaté, who primarily creates large-scale textile-based installations using woven and dyed clothes, materials native to his homeland Mali, explores both aesthetic language and diverse socio-political and environmental issues. Referring to the West-African tradition of using textiles as a means of communication, the artist balances the global issues with an intimate reference to his own life and country. Konaté's work has been recognized on the institutional level and it can be found in the public collections such as Centre Pompidou in Paris or Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Another artist, who recently gained international acclaim is Joël Andrianomearisoa, a malagasy artist working with diverse mediums such as installation, sculpture or photography.

- Primo Giovanni Marella



Africa Universe, 2019  
Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy  
Installation View

**ON THE SPIRITUAL MATTER OF ART**  
2019 - MAXXI Museo, Rome, Italy

What does it mean today to talk about spirituality? On the spiritual matter of art is a project that investigates the issue of the spiritual through the lens of contemporary art and, at the same time, that of the ancient history of Rome. In a layout offering diverse possible paths, the exhibition features the works of 19 artists, leading names on the international scene from very different backgrounds and cultures.

In a rigorously non-confessional vision, the exhibition, therefore, brings together works of contemporary art with a selection of archaeological relics from the capital's leading museums: the Vatican Museums, the National Roman Museum, the Capitoline Museums and the National Etruscan Museum at Villa Giulia.



On the spiritual matter of art, 2019  
MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome, Italy  
Installation View

**SECOND LIFE MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN  
AFRICAIN AL MAADEN (MACAAL)**  
2018 - MACAAL - Marrakech - Marocco



Abdoulaye Konaté and Primo Marella during the opening of  
"Second Life" at MACAAL, Marrakech, in front of the artwork  
*Composition en Bleu Abba 1A*, 2016, textile 235 x 300 cm



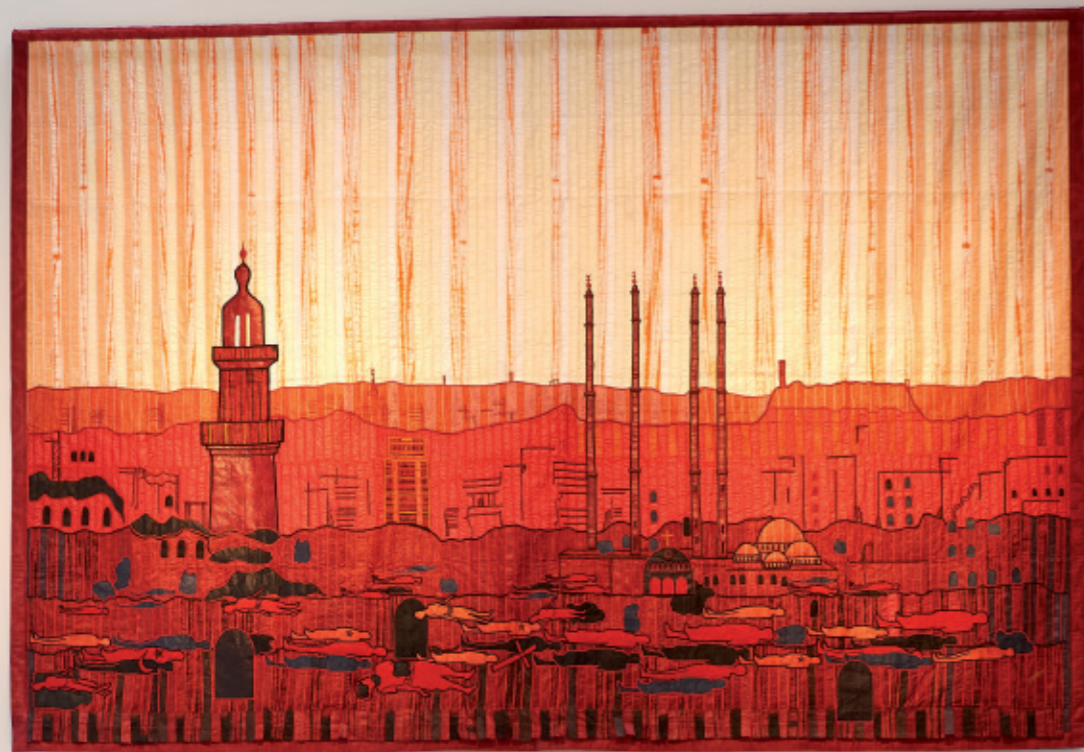


Installation view from the exhibition "Second Life" MACAAL  
*Composition en Bleu Abba 1A*, 2016, Textile 235 x 300 cm  
Courtesy: Saad Alami – Fondation Alliances

**AFRICAN METROPOLIS. UNA CITTÀ IMMAGINARIA/  
AN IMAGINARY CITY MAXXI | MUSEO NAZIONALE  
DELLE ARTI DEL XXI SECOLO**  
2018 - Maxi - Rome - Italy



Installation view from African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria/An Imaginary City  
curated by Simon Njami and co curated by Elena Motisi, MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo  
Courtesy Fondazione MAXXI



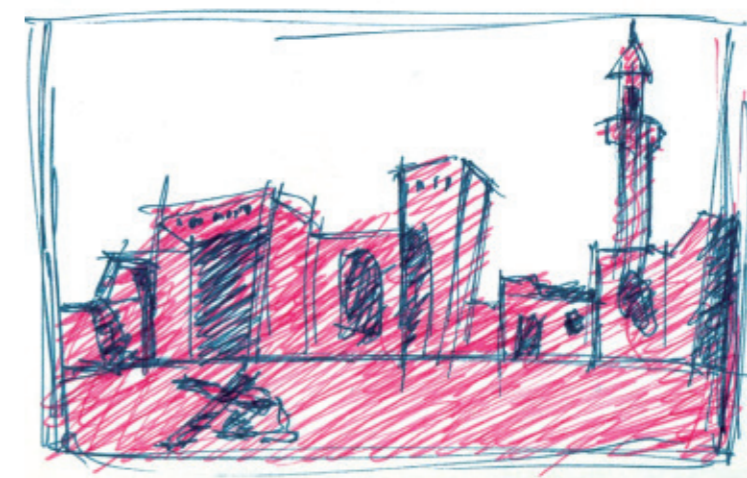
The Aleppo tragedy: the images from the besieged city have been shocking - even by the standards of Syria's horrific war. For the past several months, the internet has been filled with ghastly images of dust-laden corpses half-buried in the remains of bombed-out buildings, Syrian civilians killed in the latest round of bombardment by Russian and Syrian forces. Hospitals and medical aid workers have been the targets of Russian and Syrian government attacks.

With hospitals destroyed and healthcare workers killed during this latest offensive, many of the 850 wounded civilians - 261 of them children - are expected to die from untreated wounds. Injured and sick civilians are unable to leave the city to receive care elsewhere.

This latest siege underlines the tragedy that is Aleppo - and the urgent need for action.

Current conditions in Aleppo are the dramatic manifestations of the most recent, visible horrors we are seeing each day in the media. Being a committed artist Abdoulaye Konaté represents in his powerful the Aleppo Tragedy and he expresses also his moral imperative to act.

This piece shows an element Abdoulaye was adopting in his language previously: the bar code. Here bar code & identification data - like physical and biological marks - observed as the trace of an animal following hunters' footprints, in order to keep a person under constant surveillance with technological devices more or less visible.



The first sketch for the work *Alep*, 2017

Installation view from African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria/An Imaginary City  
curated by Simon Njami and co curated by Elena Motisi, MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo  
Courtesy Fondazione MAXXI

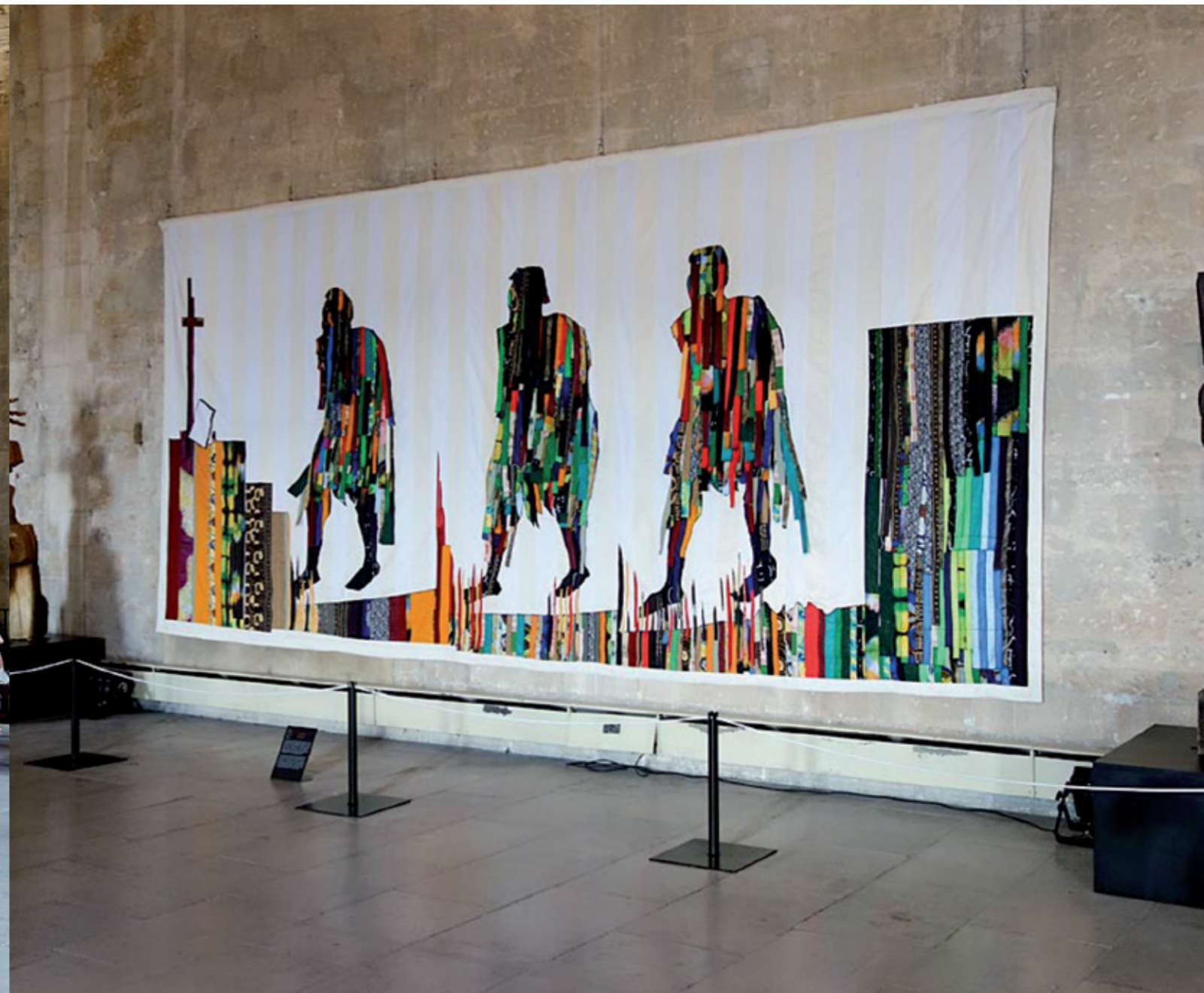


Installation view from African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria/An Imaginary City, curated by Simon Njami and co curated by Elena Motisi, MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo  
Courtesy Fondazione MAXXI

**«LES ÉCLAIREURS» UN PARCOURS DANS  
LA COLLECTION D'ART CONTEMPORAIN AFRICAIN  
DE JEAN-PAUL BLACHÈRE**  
2017 - 2018 - Avignon - France



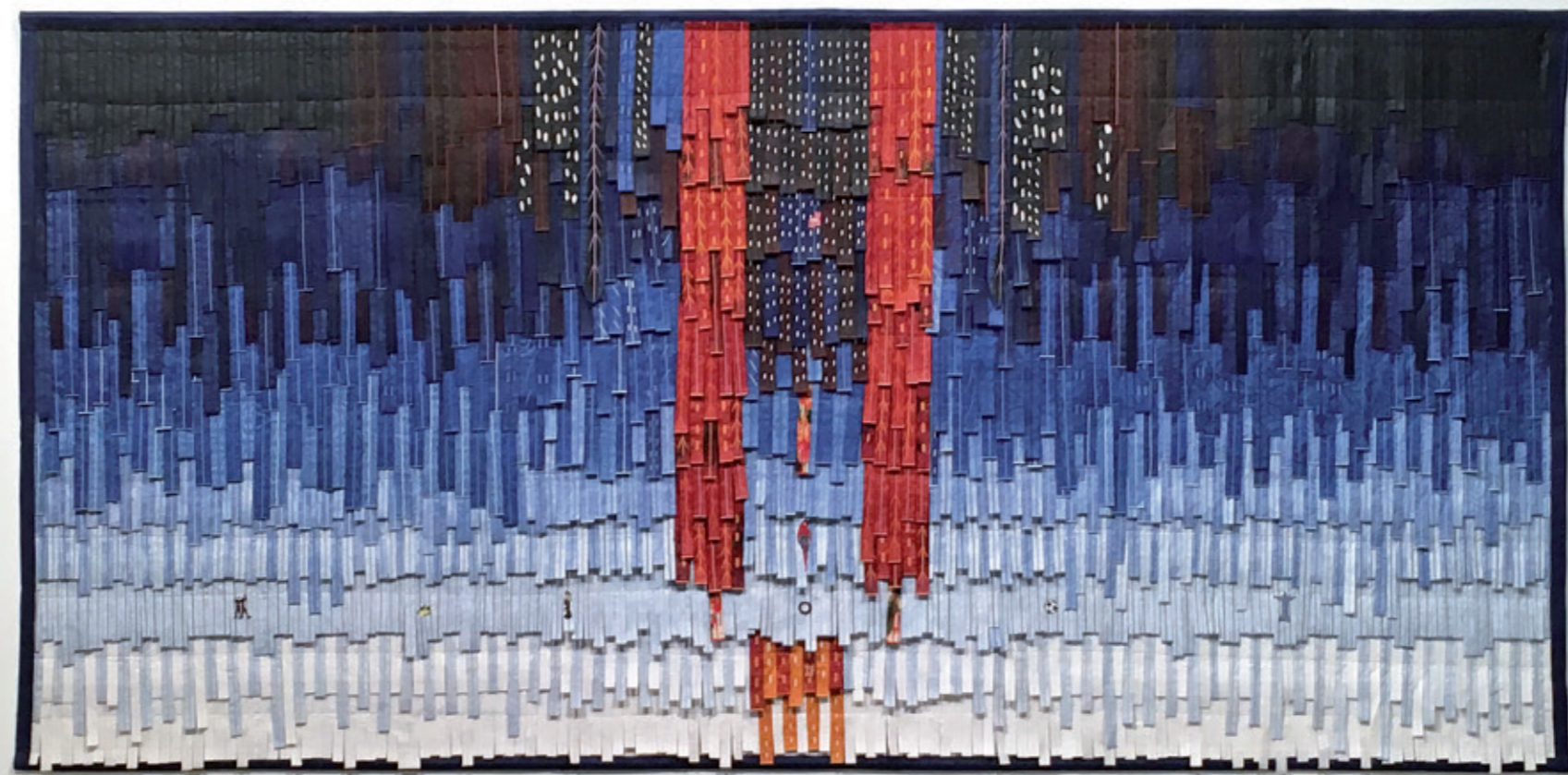
Abdoulaye Konaté, La zone des grands lacs, 2005, textile  
Installation view from Les Eclaireurs. Grand Tinel, Palais des Papes, Avignon  
Courtesy: Fondation Blachère



Abdoulaye Konaté, Les marcheurs, 2006, textile  
Installation view from Les Eclaireurs. Grand Tinel, Palais des Papes, Avignon  
Courtesy: Fondation Blachère

**VIVA ARTE VIVA**  
**57A BIENNALE DI VENEZIA**  
**ARSENALE**  
2017 - Biennale di Venezia - Venice - Italy





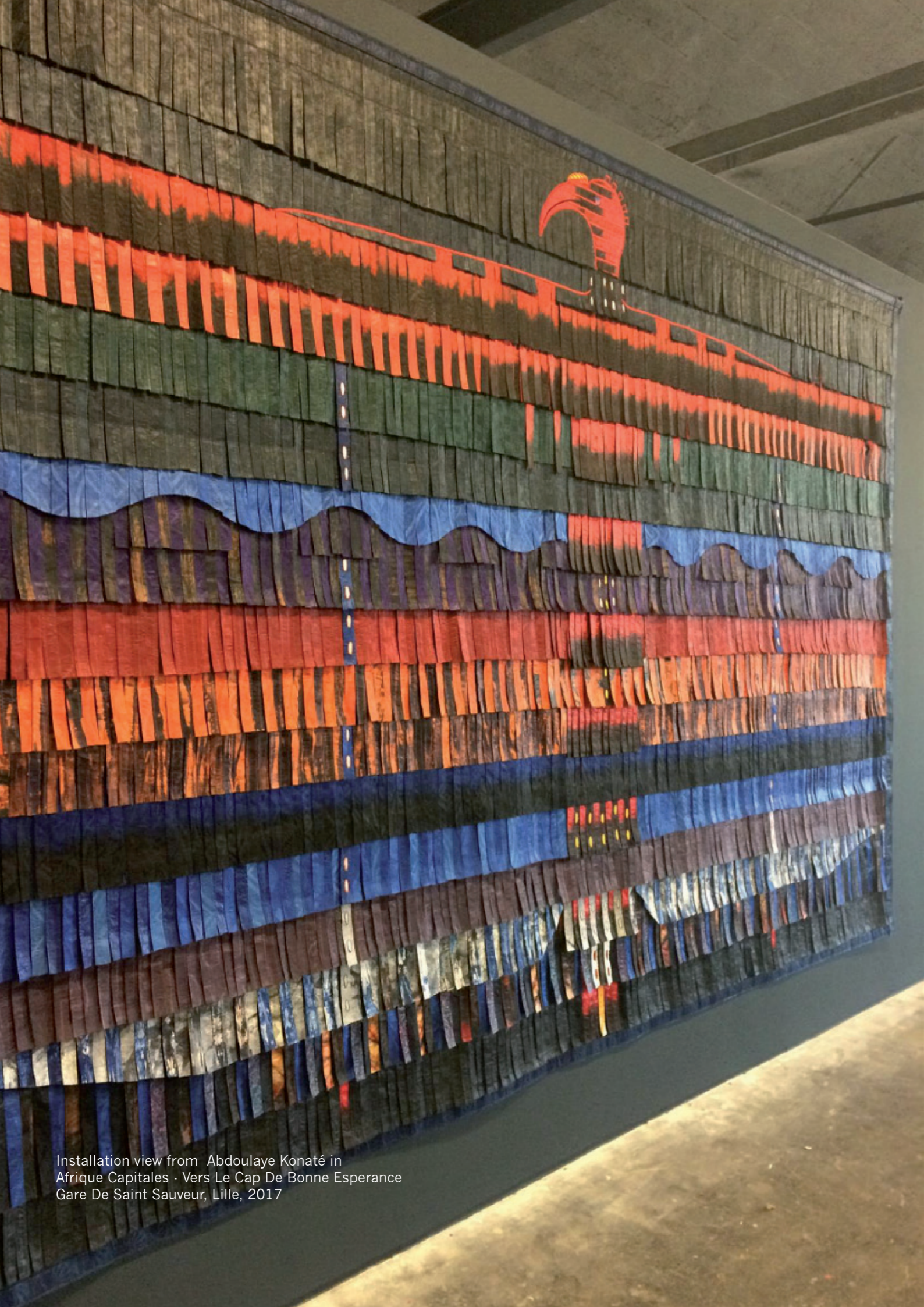
Abdoulaye Konaté, Brésil (Guarani), 2015, textile  
Installation view from Viva Arte Viva,  
Biennale di Venezia, Arsenale, Venezia, 2017

The seven-metre long piece displayed in the “Pavilion of Colors” section of the Arsenale (a space dedicated to colors as sources of emotions) is entitled “Brésil” (Guarani).

Indigo, a symbol of Mali and a heavily traded colour during colonial times, is the main shade of this work. The tapestry chronicles the artist’s trip to Amazonia where he recognized cultural similarities between the Guarani People and the Malian Tribes of his native country. The piece also incorporates Brazilian symbols such as the Corcovado Christ of Rio, a small football and a chair by Lina Bo Bardi. This piece is therefore conceived as a sparse diary of an artist’s trip, combining abstract and figurative elements on a large scale work, but it has also got a political value since it reconnects two post-colonial contexts together, hinting at the empowerment of two cultures.

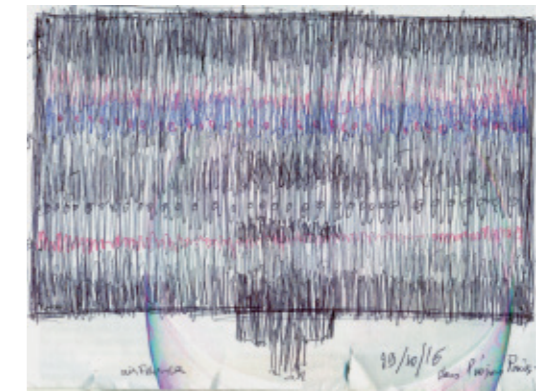


Quattara Watts, Abdoulaye Konaté, Jems Robert Koko Bi, Yakouba Konaté and Primo Giovanni Marella,  
in front of Abdoulaye Konaté’s artwork  
presented at the 57th Biennale di Venezia, *Viva Arte Viva*



**AFRIQUES CAPITALES**  
**VERS LE CAP DE BONNE ESPERANCE**  
**GARE DE SAINT SAUVEUR**  
2017 - Gare De Saint Saveur - Lille - France

Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté in  
Afrique Capitales - Vers Le Cap De Bonne Esperance  
Gare De Saint Sauveur, Lille, 2017



If we look at the piece titled “Calao” we can see several important references to Abdoulaye Konaté language, such as his interest in the local history and culture that he transforms into universal knowledge.

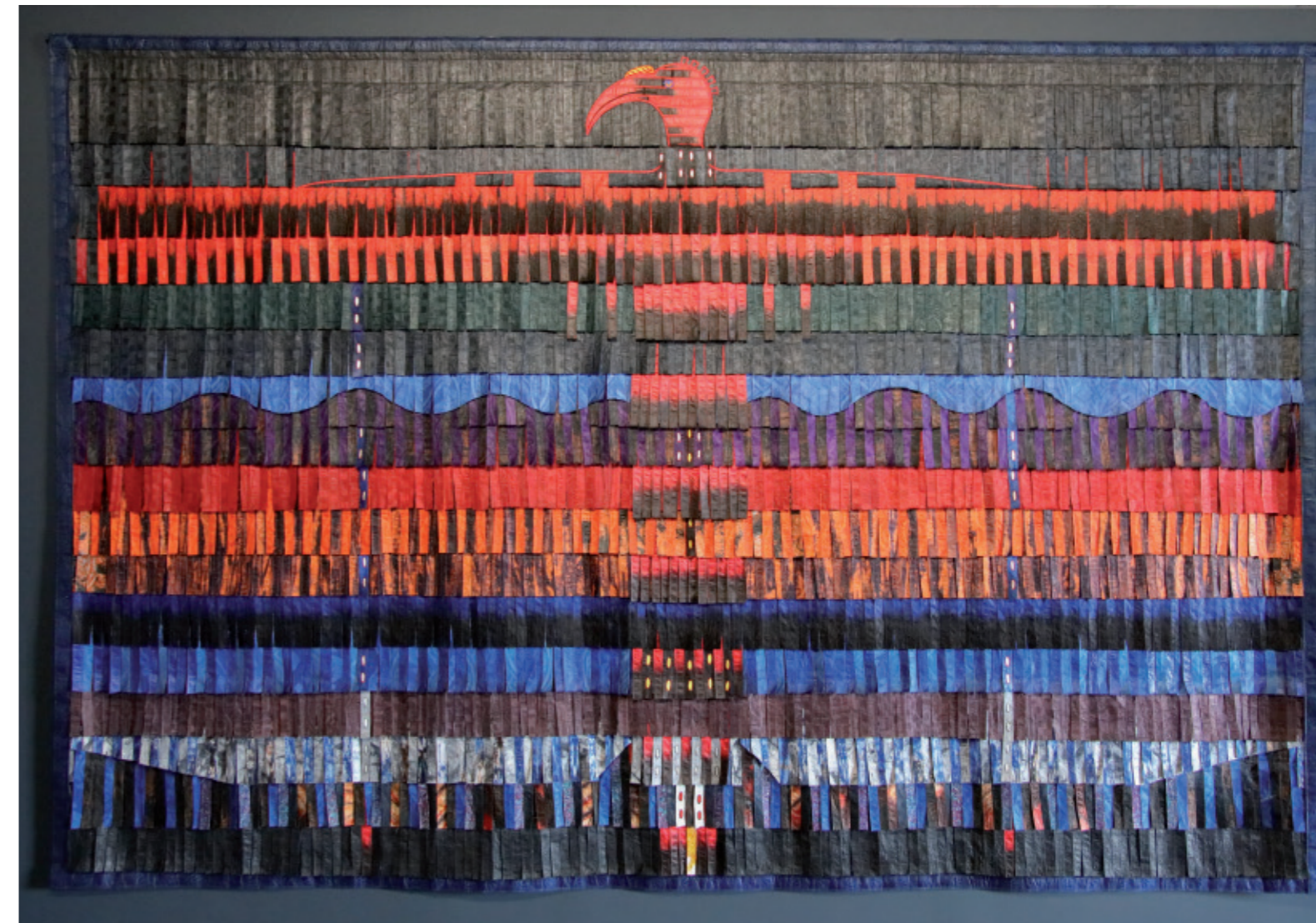
This piece offers a tribute to the Sénoufos, a population leaving in West Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali and in Ivory Coast. The Senoufos occupy a territory which, according to legend, was previously populated by the “Mandébélés”. The Mandébélés were a traveling people who lived on hunting (in particular, elephant hunting), while at the same time cultivating. The Mandébélés had a decisive influence on the Sénoufos in two aspects: agriculture and the education system, since, without giving up hunting activities, the Senoufos would have, like the Mandébélés, to cultivate millet and eventually settled in.

The Mandébélés had also a secret language, the “tiga” they taught to their children, but they did not have access their initiatory ceremonies until the adulthood. This secret language was then revealed to the Sénoufos, and from then on the Mandébélés did not feel safe any more as the Senufo had better hunting equipment because they had iron weapons. And thus they took all the game. Then, the Mandébélés sought refuge in the bush and disappeared.

Since then they are said to live on the trees and have the ability to make themselves invisible. They became the “genii of the forest.” The Senufo then took advantage of this vacuum to take over the virgin lands, and their migrations spread over three centuries, in view of the long distances they had to travel.

Calao (The Hornbill) is the primordial bird of the Senufos: it is the protector par excellence, its bulging belly makes it a symbol of fertility, it represents and evokes the prosperity. It carries the souls of the dead into the other world and is generally used in the initiatory rites of the Poro.

Beyond fertility, the hornbill contains three great notions characterizing the Senufos: its broad back means that it protects posterity, its big belly is the symbol of the one who knows a lot but who does not say a word. The long, pointed beak represents the one who speaks little but it is also the expression of one who speaks only to commit himself and this commitment is a symbol of determination.



Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté in  
Afrique Capitales · Vers Le Cap De Bonne Esperance  
Gare De Saint Sauveur, Lille, 2017

*Calao* 2016, textile, 394 x 263 cm

First sketch for the work *Calao*, 2016

**ABDOULAYE KONATÉL'ÉTOFFE DES SONGES  
FONDATION CDG, RABAT**

2017 - Fondation CDG - Rabat - Marocco



**ARKEN MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**  
2016 - Arken Museum - Copenhagen - Danimarca



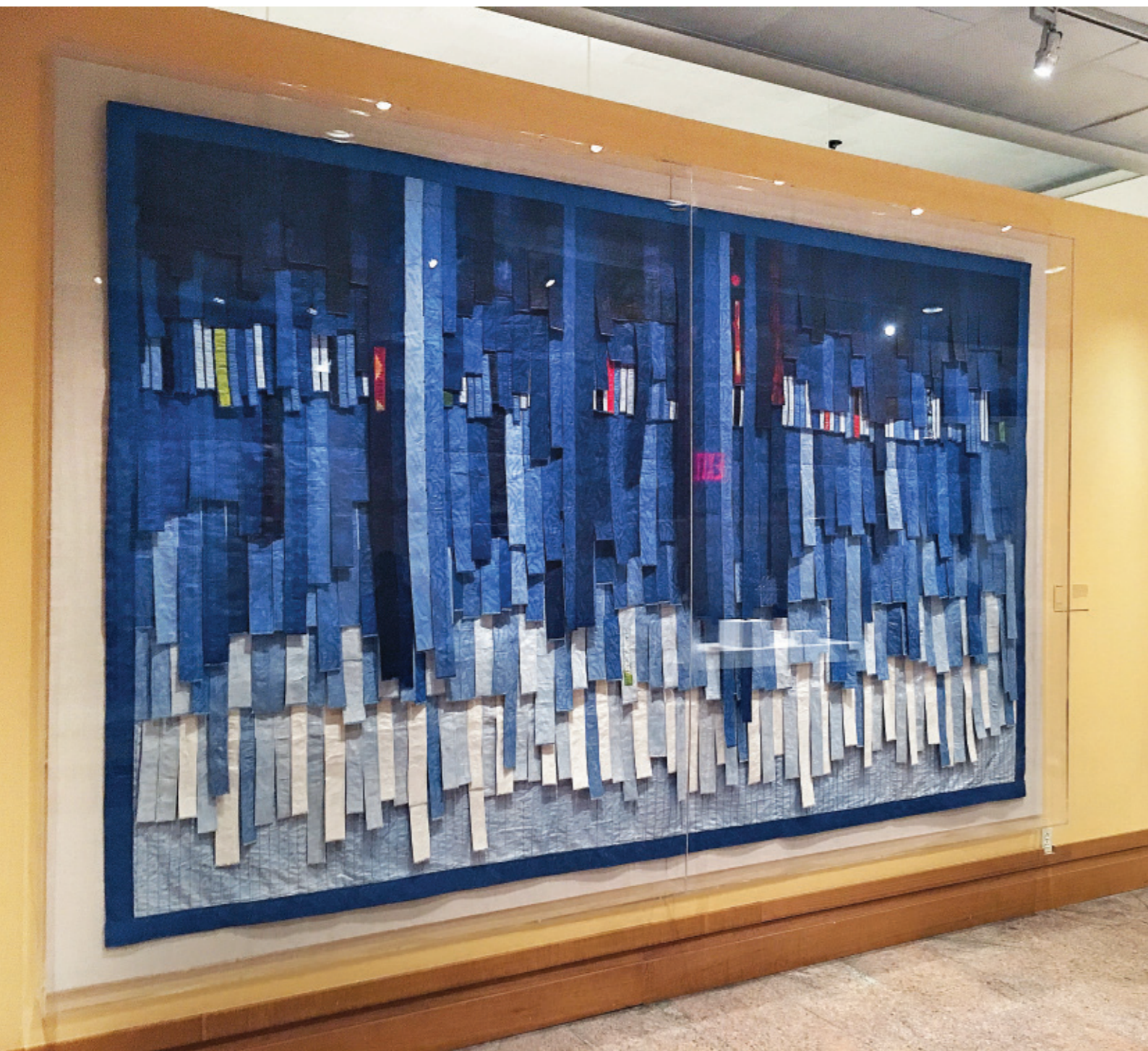
**ABDOULAYE  
KONATÉ**

Installation view from ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, 2016  
Arken Museum, Copenhagen, Danimarca





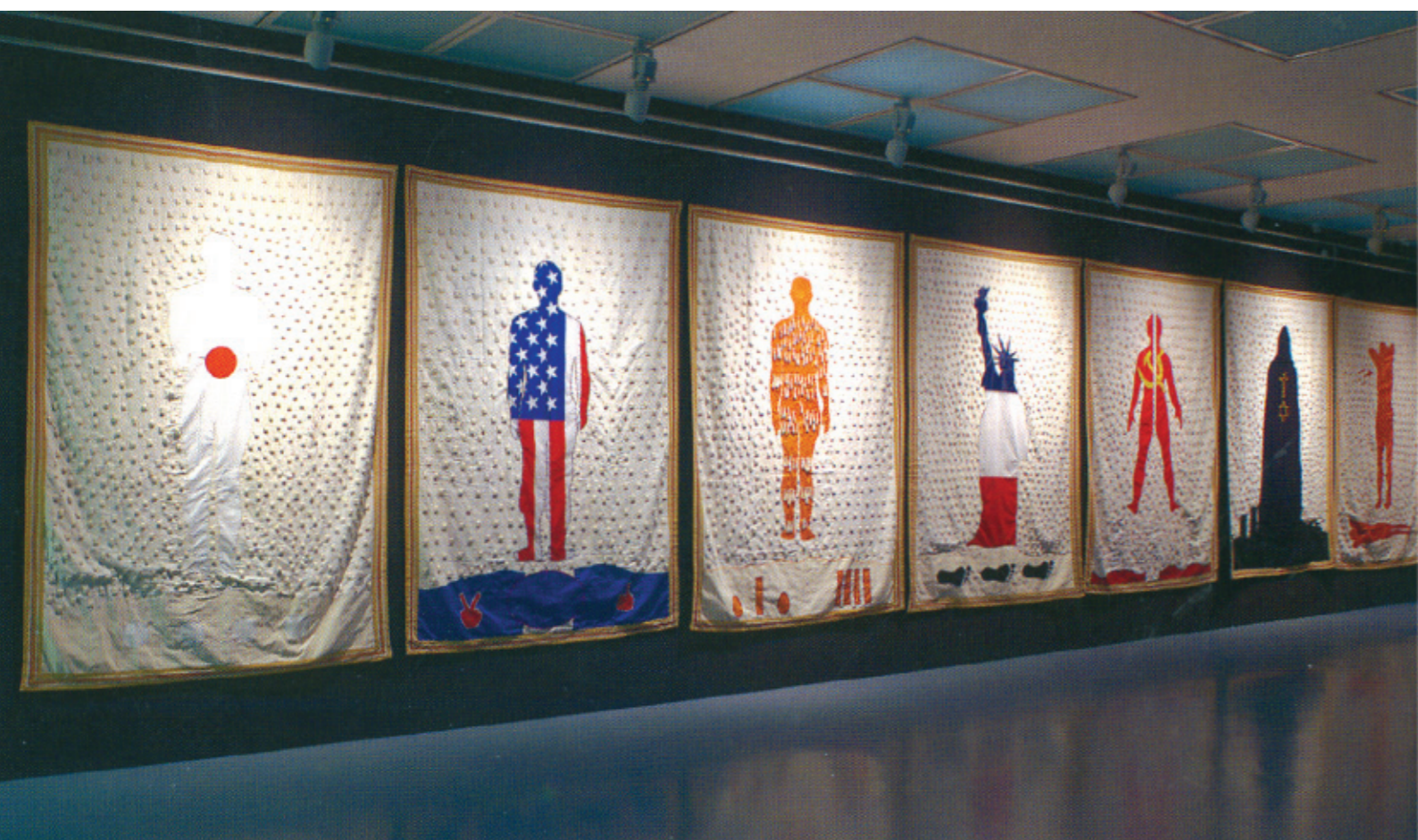
Installation view from ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, 2016  
Arken Museum, Copenhagen, Danimarca



*Bleu no.1*, 2014, textile, 234 x 368,9 cm  
Installation view from the Permanent Collection of Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2017  
Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA

**PERMANENT EXHIBITION**  
**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**  
2015 · New York · USA





**FONDATION SINDIKA DOKOLO  
PALACIO DE FERRO**  
2015 - Palacio de Ferro - Luanda - Angola

*L'initiation, 2004*  
7 elements. mixed media on fabric  
Installation view from Fondation Sindika Dokolo, Palacio de Ferro, Luanda, 2015  
Courtesy Fondation Sindika Dokolo

**“YOU LOVE ME YOU LOVE ME NOT”:  
THE SINDIKA DOKOLO FOUNDATION EXHIBITION  
MUNICIPAL GALLERY ALMEIDA GARRETT**  
2015 - Oporto - Portugal



Installation view from: "You love me You love me not"  
The Sindika Dokolo Foundation exhibition  
Municipal Gallery Almeida Garrett, Oporto, 2015



**DAK'ART BIENNALE**

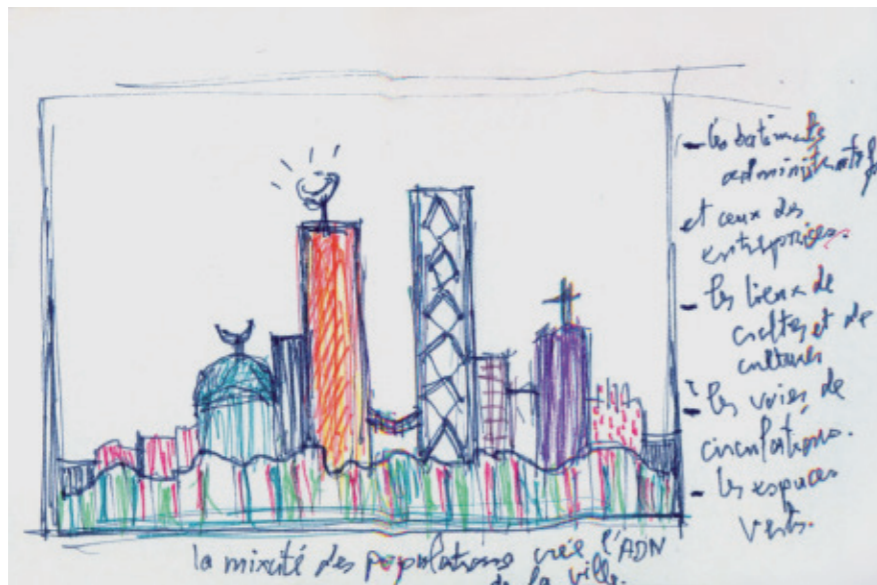
2016 - Dakar Biennale - Dakar - Senegal



The whole work of Konaté is a cohesive thought, global, with internal connections. The artist's interest is condensed in a very personal writing: great allegories related by materials, by the density of color, by the rhythm and the vital impulse, that never staged the physical brutality.



Installation view from  
Abdoulaye Konaté, Manège, Dakar Biennale, 2014



"This work has two lives.  
I considered the first one as completed after the Dakar Biennial in May 2014.  
After that I asked the gallery to send it back, to work again on it.  
I felt the urgency to improve it.  
During the re-elaboration I made few addition of colours such as red, green and yellow.  
But I especially added gold. Gold, a colour that the Arabic World cannot use anymore."

Abdoulaye Konate in conversation with Riccarda Mandrini



Konaté's studies on peculiar themes of his practice



*Nécrologie annoncée d'un fanatisme religieux*  
2014, Textile, 382 x 240 cm  
Private Collection





«The ultimate message for me is the call for tolerance.  
To encourage men to understand and accept each other.  
This is the only possible solution to the problems of our  
society».

Abdoulaye Konaté

*Tibet (triptych)*  
2013, textile, 237 x 480 cm

Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition,  
Primo Marella Gallery, 2013  
Courtesy Sigg Collection



*Offrandes de Couleurs (série n°12) Blanc Rouge Noir*  
2007, textile, 285 x 400 cm

Installation view from  
Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition Primo Marella Gallery, 2013  
Courtesy Afrika Museum Collection, Berg en Dal

*Offrandes de Couleurs* is not only the title of one of his works, it is a running theme throughout Konaté's oeuvre. He devoted a series of textile works to this theme that are very different from *Offrandes de Couleurs*. All they have in common with *Offrandes de Couleurs* are the colours red, black and white, as well as, in part, the use of a relief structure that alludes to gris gris. The depictions are abstract and rhythmic.

Extract from Tessa Jackson Essay for Norrköping, 2014

In *Gris Gris Blanc (avec Personage)* (2015), a two element work, Abdoulaye Konaté uses material in a different way. The wall hanging reflects a hunter's tunic laid flat and the second part, another tunic, is presented on a figure dummy. The white fabric of both is decorated with gris-gris, reminiscent of the small amulets sewn onto the Bamana hunter's tunic in order to ward off evil and danger. These gris-gris or pouches often contain soil or medicinal plants to provide protection, here they are left empty and are symbolic of the relationship between the physical and the spiritual world. As they give the hunter power, they confer power onto the work.

This new work, presented in two parts, with its absence of colour and use of symbolic amulets becomes metaphorical; its stylised quality alludes to rather than expresses its cultural heritage. The wall piece, like a figure with outstretched arms, has an abstract aesthetic; the figure makes closer reference to the hunter with his coat and hat. The artist's use of abstraction is reminiscent to that of a painter. For Konaté aesthetics are always considered, he uses them to blend the symbols and material of his Malian heritage with a more intellectual and associative approach. Is the artist reminding us, in our fast moving technologically orientated world, that art is a vital site for necessary spiritual reflection and enquiry? In mocking up a figure as part of *Gris Gris Blanc (avec Personage)*, he seems to suggest that we must keep alive our spiritual heritage as well as our physical heritage.

Extract from Tessa Jackson Essay for Norrköping, 2014



*Gris Gris Blancs (avec personnage)*  
2013, textile, 294 x 506 cm  
Installation view from

Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition, Primo Marella Gallery, 2015  
Courtesy Private Collection



*Koré Dougaw (Mali)*  
2013, textile, 250 x 600 cm  
Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition  
Primo Marella Gallery, 2013  
Courtesy Golinelli Collection

**“HOLLANDAISE”  
STEDELIJK MUSEUM**

2012-2013 - Stedelijk Museum - Amsterdam - Olanda

(...) Especially for this exhibition, Konaté made a several-metres-wide work entitled *Fête Africaine, les hommes et les marionettes*, which – practically at the same time the Afrika Museum acquired *Offrandes de Couleurs* – was acquired by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. It is a highly exuberant work, filled with people and mask dancers, made largely of Hollandaise fabric. This work is reminiscent of négritude, an attitude and style that thrived in Senegal in particular when the country gained independence.

Poet Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906 - 2001), Senegal's first president (1960 - 1980), propagated the African singularity he wanted to see expressed in the works of contemporary artists. Modern, indeed, but still clearly African in terms of the subject matter and visual language. It was a philosophy that a good friend of his, Iba Ndiaye, had doubts about. He warned that artists could easily end up finding themselves locked up in an exotic garden. When considering that Western artists let themselves be inspired by African art, why should African artists be forced to assume a contrived identity? “Why can't an African artist be inspired by Rembrandt or Van Gogh in the same way?”. Konaté is, as we have seen, an artist with an international outlook. *Fête Africaine* is, for him, an exceptional return to a typically African depiction of a typically African scene. The fact that his creation was made using Dutch textile that is considered typically African adds an ironic touch. Does the exotic garden actually exist? Everyone can, after all, 'shop' in any culture at will. Doesn't the Hollandaise fabric smack of 'typically African?' Well then, Konaté fulfils the Dutch expectation in the same way as the Dutch textile manufacturer fulfils the African expectation.

Its acquisition by the Stedelijk Museum marks the definitive breakthrough of transcultural art. Until fairly recently, it would have been unthinkable for a West African artist to be included in the collection of a prominent art museum with a work like this one, which these institutes used to label 'non-Western' and consign to the periphery. This centre/periphery dichotomy is a thing of past. The West is no longer the sole benchmark. Little by little, the art world has come to realise that there are multiple (art) histories, and that these are directly or indirectly interlinked. The works of Konaté fit in that new global perspective. He enters the Stedelijk with a knowing wink. In this context, his playful treatment of cliché is not as innocent as it may initially seem.

Extract from Wouter Welling essay: “*The World in Textile: Abdoulaye Konaté's global perspective*”, published in the catalogue “*Abdoulaye Konaté: The World in Textile*”, November 2013, Afrika Museum of Berg en Dal in collaboration with Primo Marella Gallery Milan



*Fête Africaine (les hommes et les marionettes)*  
2012, dyed textile, 215 x 700 cm  
as exhibited at 'Hollandaise' Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, 2012  
Courtesy Stedelijk Museum Collection, Amsterdam

**EL ANATSUI, BARTHÉLÉMY TOGUO  
& ABDOULAYE KONATÉ**  
MANCHESTER ART GALLERY  
2012 - Manchester - United Kingdom



Installation view from Manchester Art Gallery

**GALERIE NATIONALE DE DAKAR**  
2011 - Dakar - Senegal



Installation view from Galerie Nationale de Dakar, 2011





*LTR. Génération Biométrique série 1*  
2008, textile, 296 x 640 cm  
Installation view from Galerie Nationale de Dakar, 2011

*L'intolerance*  
1998, textile, 232,5 x 403,5 cm  
Installation view from Galerie Nationale de Dakar, 2011



*L'intolerance*  
1998. textile. 232.5 × 403.5 cm



*Génération Biométrique*  
2008-2012, textile, 298 x 625 cm  
Courtesy Sigg Collection

**INIVA 5TH WINDOW COMMISSION**  
**RIVINGTON PLACE**  
2011 - London - United Kingdom

*Pouvoir et Religion* was commissioned by Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) for the large window of Rivington Place, London. As an organisation Iniva explores the politics of race and encourages greater engagement with modern and contemporary art that lies outside the Western canon. Konaté's work and approach to universal subjects meant he was a natural choice for being invited to speak literally to the street, and offer comment on society.

This spectacular work in its subject and references are characteristic of his oeuvre, where it is customary for him to explore and debate universal issues by combining political comment with traditional craftsmanship.

"I am interested in social problems, in human suffering" which he feels is reflected in so much around him - in the relations between states, society and the family. Over time he has spoken about environmental concerns as well as human rights issues, de-forestation and living under dictatorship. He has referred to the politics and tensions between Israel and Palestine, the genocide in Bosnia, Rwanda and Angola. He feels compelled to speak of the human condition in all its frailties: "The ultimate message for me is the call for tolerance. To encourage men to understand and accept each other. This is the only possible solution to the problems of our society."

Extract from Tessa Jackson essay for Norrköping Museum, 2014



*Pouvoir et Religion (Power and Religion)*  
2011, textile, 296 x 693 cm  
Installation view from INIVA 5th Window Commission, Rivington Place, London, 2011

RIVINGTON  
PLACE



*"It represents the ambiguity between religion and power. There is still great uncertainty about how to break religious fanaticism. This work reflects the whole threat of jihadism. In Mali we have seen the consequences of religious fundamentalism. Mine was a country full of creativity. Then, when the jihadists occupied the North, we witnessed the atrocities they can commit. And the TV does not show enough with the images it transmits. They have abolished music, football, art and do not want to hear about culture. We are back to the Middle Ages. Whatever you say, you are manipulated by Western culture for them. There is no way to convince them and they do not accept comparisons. And even the moderates, their brothers who profess the same religion, are enemies. it is a great danger for the whole world. The final message inherent in my works is the appeal to tolerance, the only possible solution for the problems of our society."*

Abdoulaye Konaté, Extract from CLASS n.356, February, 2016



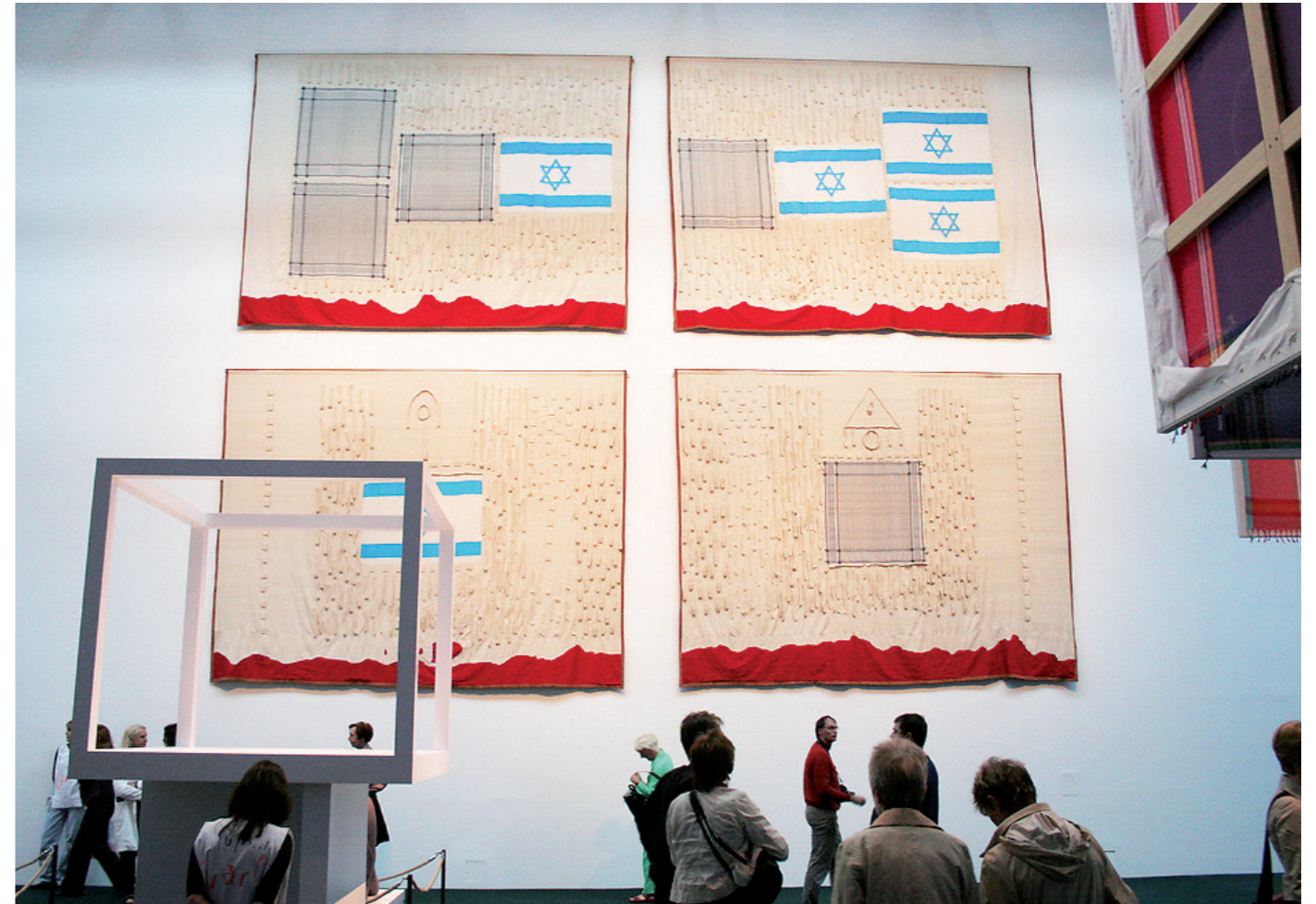
Installation view from  
Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition, Primo Marella Gallery, 2015

**DOCUMENTA 12**  
**AUE-PAVILLON (A-C-K)**  
2007 · Documenta 12 · Kassel · Germany





*Bosnie Angola Rwanda*  
1996, textile  
Installation view from Documenta12, Kassel 2007



*Gris Gris pour Israel et la Palestine,*  
2005, textile, 360 x 1840 cm  
Installation view from Documenta12, Kassel 2007

**BIOGRAPHY**



## ABDOULAYE KONATÉ

Born in 1953 in Diré, Mali, Abdoulaye Konaté studied painting at the Institut National des Arts in Bamako and then at the Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana, Cuba. He is the founder and currently General Director of the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers Multimédia Balla Fasseké Kouyaté in Bamako, Mali. He currently lives and works in Bamako.

### SOLO SHOWS (SELECTION)

2022

Hommage à Abdoulaye Konaté, l'étoffe d'un maître - Biennale de Dakar, SN  
Des Petits Formats à Dakar - Grand Théâtre National, Dakar, SN

2021

Abdoulaye Konaté - Les Petits Tableaux, Primae Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, CH  
Abdoulaye Konaté - Lune Bleue, Espace Dominique Bagouet, Montpellier, FR  
Abdoulaye Konaté, The Diffusion of Infinite Things, Standing Pine, Nagoya, JP

2020

Idéogrammes, signes, symboles et logos, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, ZA  
Couleurs d'âme, Blain|Southern New York, US

2018

Textile in Art, The Red Door Gallery, Lagos, NG

2017

Etoffe des songes, Galerie 38, Casablanca, MA;  
Espace Expressions CDG, Rabat, MA

2016

Abdoulaye Konaté, Primae Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, CH  
Abdoulaye Konaté: Symphonie en couleur, Blain|Southern London, UK  
Abdoulaye Konaté, Arken Museum for Moderne Kunst, Copenhagen, DK

2015

Abdoulaye Konaté, Useful Dreams, Blain|Southern Berlin, DE  
Abdoulaye Konaté, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, IT

2013

Abdoulaye Konaté, The World in Textile, Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, NL  
Abdoulaye Konaté, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, IT

2012

Abdoulaye Konaté, ESADHar - L'Ecole Supérieure d'Art & Design, Le Havre, FR  
Abdoulaye Konaté, Fondation Festival sur le Niger Ségou, ML

Abdoulaye Konaté, Tentures Teintures, Maison Revue Noire, Paris, FR  
Abdoulaye Konaté, Project Window, InIVA, Rivington Place, London, UK

2011

La toile de Abdoulaye Konaté, Galerie Nationale de Dakar, SN

2010

Abdoulaye Konaté – Exposition rétrospective, Biennale de Dakar, SN

2009

Abdoulaye Konaté, Le temps de la danse, Galerie Saro Leon, Las Palmas, ES  
Abdoulaye Konaté: Textile, Forum für Kunst, Heidelberg, DE

1992 Abdoulaye Konaté, Musée National du Mali, Bamako, ML  
Abdoulaye Konaté, Musée de l'IFAN, Dakar, SN

1983

Abdoulaye Konaté, Le Petit Salon National, Havana, CU

1976

Abdoulaye Konaté, Maison du Peuple, Diré, ML

## GROUP SHOWS (SELECTION)

2023

14th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju Metropolitan City, KR

2022

Documenta 15, Kassel, GR  
Still Alive, Aichi Triennale, JP  
Expo Dubai 2020, Mali Pavillon, Dubai, UAE

2021

The black era, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, IT  
Threads, Zwartusters monastery, Antwerp, Duende Art Projects, BE

2020

“Global(e) Resistance” at Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR

2019

Africa Universe, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, IT  
Africa Universe, Primo Marella Gallery, Lugano CH  
Hier est la mémoire d'aujourd'hui at L'Espace Commines, Paris, FR  
Boundless Encounters: The 3rd Hangzhou Triennial of Fiber Art, Hangzhou, CN  
On the Spiritual Matter of Art, MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome, IT

KUBATANA: An Exhibition with Contemporary African artists, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, Oslo, NO

Lend Me Your Dream / Prête-moi Ton Rêve, Le Studio des Arts Vivants, L'Artorium, Casablanca, MA

Museum of Black Civilizations, Dakar, SN;

The Contemporary Arts Rotonde, Abidjan, CI; Lagos, NG; Cape Town, ZA; African Union Headquarters, Addis-Abeba, ET; Rabat, MA

La construcción de lo posible, 13th Havana Biennial, CU

2018

African Civilizations: Continuous Creation of Humanity, Museum of Black Civilizations, Dakar, SN

New Materialism, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, SE

African Metropolis. An imaginary city, MAXXI, Rome, IT

Ravelled Threads, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, US

Talisman in the Age of Difference, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, UK

Pulling at Threads, Norval Foundation, SA

Mobile Worlds or The Museum of our Transcultural Present, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, DE

The Liar's Cloth, Grimm Gallery, Amsterdam, NL

2017

Viva Arte Viva, Venice Biennale, IT

Afriques Capitales, La Villette, Paris, FR

Vers le Cap de Bonne Espérance, Gare Saint Sauveur, Lille, FR

BACK TO BLACK: No On and Off Ramps (curated by Babacar Mbow), Art Africa Miami Fair, US

The Summer Show 2017, Royal Academy of Arts (RA), London, UK

Afterwork, ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, MY

L'Afrique en capitale, Musée Mohammed VI d'Art moderne et contemporain, Rabat, MA

2016

Still (the) Barbarians, EVA International, Ireland's Biennial, Limerick, IE

Group Show, 12 Solos, Blain|Southern Berlin, DE

Afterwork, Para Site Hong Kong, HK; tours to ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, MY

2015

Katrine Helmersson and Abdoulaye Konaté, Norrköping- sKonstmuseum, SE

ART\_TEXTILES, The Whitworth, The University of Manchester, UK

19th Contemporary Art Festival Sesc\_Videobrasil | Southern Panoramas, São Paulo, BR

Streamlines: Metaphorical and Geopolitical Interpretations of the Oceans,

Deichtorhallen International Kunst und Fotografie, Hamburg, DE

Obsession, Maison Particulière, Brussels, BE

2013

The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory revisited by Contemporary African Artists, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, DE; National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, US  
Decorum, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, FR  
International Sculpture Route Amsterdam: Art Zuid 2013, Amsterdam, NL  
Marker 2013, Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, AE  
Métamorphoses, Musée Bargoin, Clermont Ferrand, FR

2012

Hollandaise, SMBA, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, NL; RAW Material Company, Centre Pour l'Art, Dakar, SN  
We face forward: Art from West Africa today, Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester, UK

2011

Mixités, Les chantiers de la Lune, La Seyne-sur-Mer, FR  
Dégagements... La Tunisie un an après, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, FR

2010

Art Actuel d'Afrique, Collégiale Saint-André, Chartres, FR  
Textile ou fragment de l'histoire d'une collection, Fondation Blachère, Apt, FR

2009

Africa? Una Nuova Storia, Complesso del Vittoriano, Rome, IT  
Bienal de la Habana, Havana, CU

2008

Travesía, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno CAAM, las Palmas de Gran Canaria, ES  
Artes Mundi, National Museum, Cardiff, UK

2007

Africa Remix, Museum Kunstpalast, Dusseldorf, DE; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, FR; Hayward Gallery, London, UK;  
Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, JP; Documenta 12, Kassel, DE

2006

The Unhomely, Phantom Scenes in Global Society, International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville, Seville, ES  
Dak'Art 7ème Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain, Dakar, SN

2003

Musée de design et d'arts appliqués contemporains de Lausanne, CH  
Le Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, BE

2002

Musée de Picardie, Amiens, FR

1998

Routes of Passage, Johannesburg Biennale, Johannesburg, ZA  
24th Bienale de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, BR  
7th Triennale der Kleinplastik, Stuttgart, DE

1997

Die Anderen Modernen, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, DE

1996

The Other Journey, Kunsthalle Krems, AT

1995

Rencontres africaines, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, FR

## COLLECTIONS

Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, NL  
Arken Museum for Moderne Kunst, Ishøj, DK  
Banque des Etats de l'Afrique Occidentale, Dakar, SN  
Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR  
Dak'Art, Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain, SN  
Department of Culture & Tourism, Abu Dhabi, UAE  
Fondation Blachère, Apt, FR  
Fondation Guy & Myriam Ullens, Geneva, CH  
Fondation H - Paris & Antananarivo  
Fundação Sindika Dokolo, AO  
Gare do Oriente, Lisbon, PO  
Golinelli Collection, Bologna, IT  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US  
Musée National du Mali, Bamako, ML  
Musée Bargoin de la Ville de Clermont-Ferrand, FR  
Palais Présidentiel du Mali, Bamako, ML  
Smithsonian Museum, Washington, US  
Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, NL  
Tiroche DeLeon Collection, Jaffa, IL  
Tate Modern, London, UK  
The Tang Teaching Museum, Saratoga Springs, US  
Uli Sigg Collection, Schloss, CH  
Vehbi Koc Foundation, Istanbul, TR

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