

LO STUDIO NADJA ROMAIN

Intrecciata Venezia

Curated by Mehdi Dakhli

Lo Studio – Nadja Romain was founded on the belief in the transformative power of creativity—rooted in its founder’s passion for Venice and its Lagoon. The platform serves as a gathering place where creatives, art enthusiasts, and collectors come together to foster dialogue and collaborations. It functions as a living community, engaging with Venice as a dynamic cultural environment. By challenging perceptions of high-end craft, site-specific practices, and the interplay between the local and the international, Lo Studio reclaims the city’s historic role as a crossroads of ideas and influences. It cultivates meaningful exchanges that connect local traditions with global perspectives.

On the occasion of the 2025 Venice Architecture Biennale, Lo Studio - Nadja Romain presents *Intrecciata Venezia*. Conceived and curated by the designer Mehdi Dakhli and Nadja Romain, the exhibition offers a contemplative lens on Venice as a centuries-old nexus of cultural exchange, where architecture, history, and contemporary creation intertwine.

Within *Intrecciata Venezia*, Dakhli’s new functional sculptures enter into conversation with works by Joël Andrianomearisoa, Clément Gloaguen, Alexandre Philippe Franck, Abdoulaye Konaté, and Ibrahim Mahama. This polyphony of voices reflects Venice’s enduring position between East and West, a bridge of ideas and forms shaped by its location on the Adriatic Sea.

In his own practice, Dakhli, French of Tunisian heritage, filters Venetian traditions through a North African lens. Collaborating with Murano glassblowers, he creates sconces inspired by horseshoe arches, a hallmark of Islamic architecture that found its way into Venetian buildings after the first Crusades. Other works incorporate carved pearwood, a material rooted in Venetian craft, alongside patinated bronze. A timber cabinet recalls Tunisia’s Brutalist Hotel du Lac, a North African building designed by an Italian architect, while the bronze legs of a daybed draw on Byzantine and Egyptian archetypes.

Dakhli turns to Venice’s more troubling legacies, reimagining Murano glass beads historically traded in Africa for goods and slaves. His piece, 76 cobalt-blue spheres, question the role of religion in legitimizing the slave trade and points to the global circulation of cobalt, once mined in Persia and disseminated through Venice, that profoundly influenced the history of art and craft.

These cobalt hues echo in Abdoulaye Konaté's *Motifs Tombouctou et Tunisie*, made from layered textiles, and resonate further in Ibrahim Mahama's works with African wax fabrics, both reflecting the colonial narratives embedded in cloth, another Venetian commodity. Alexandre Gourçon contributes a fabric work dyed in mango leaf and turmeric by Beninese artisans, a nod to Venice's spice trade that brought pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and ginger to European tables. Joël Andrianomearisoa's spectral forms evoke the city's ghosts, its fragility and grandeur and Clément Gloaguen's abstract canvases capture the city's fantasy and precarity, suspended between water and wood.

Through *Intrecciata Venezia*, Lo Studio amplifies this vision, reaffirming Venice as a crucible of exchange while expanding its relevance for the present. By instigating collaborations, Romain demonstrates how regional traditions and international networks can converge into new forms of mutuality. In this way, Lo Studio positions Venice not only as a muse of the past but as a stage for future cultural dialogues.

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