

Fondation H, first foundation of contemporary art in Madagascar announces the opening of a new exhibition space in Antananarivo on April 28th, 2023



Fondation H new venue, Antananarivo, Madagascar © Fondation H and Architecture Otmar Dodel

The first private contemporary art foundation in Madagascar and the first cultural institution of this scale in the country, Fondation H will inaugurate its new 1,500-square-metre space in the heart of the Malagasy capital, on 28th April 2023.

Exhibition curators **Alya Sebti** (Director, ifa-Galerie, Berlin), **Bérénice Saliou** (Director, Documents d'Artistes La Réunion) and **Prof. Dr. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung** (Founder, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, and from January 2023 on, Director, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin) have been invited to **delve into the work of Zoarinivo Razakaratrio, known as Madame Zo, an icon of the Malagasy art scene and virtuoso weaver**, who died in 2020. Artist residencies and conferences with international speakers will accompany the exhibition.

Fondation H was **created in Antananarivo in 2017 by entrepreneur and patron Hassanein Hiridjee**, who believes that art and culture have a strong societal impact and foster a critical openness to the world. For the past six years, Fondation H has been running programmes to support artists from Africa and its diasporas in their careers, facilitating public access to art on an international scale, and as it grew to become a key regional institution, has been playing an active part in developing and structuring the Indian ocean art scene.

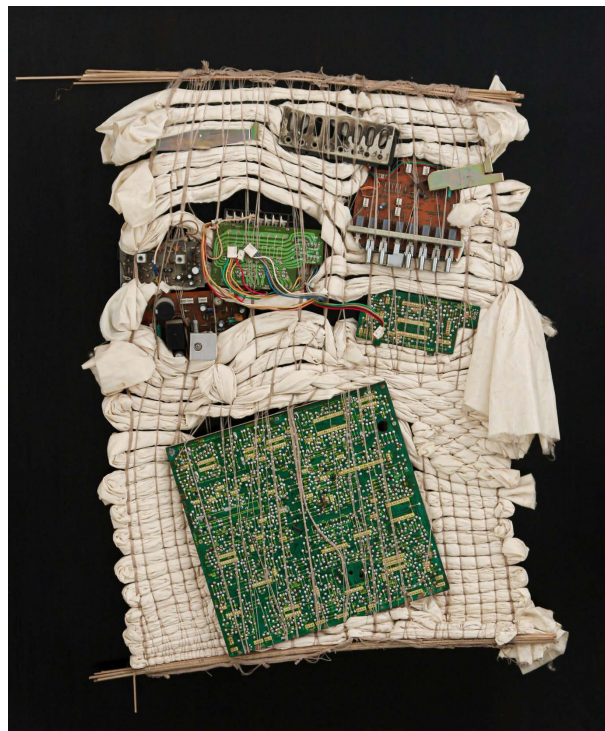
Set in downtown Antananarivo in a century-old historic building that has been completely renovated and extended by Madagascar-based studio **Architecture Otmar Dodel**, through the revived use of local materials and traditional skills, Fondation H's new space aims to be a vibrant, creative place for dialogue.

Over a total of **1,500 square metres**, Fondation H will host a variety of events and programmes—**international exhibitions; artist residencies supported by grants; conferences, workshops, forums, studio tours, etc., mediation projects for its various audiences; the city's first library dedicated to contemporary art**; beyond-the-wall projects in the public space; a restaurant; and a garden showcasing endemic botanical species of Madagascar.

All of Fondation H's **exhibitions and programmes are free**, to promote access to the greatest number and to provide long-term support to the local artistic scene. The building is also **energy self-sufficient**, thanks to a solar panel array.

Hassanein Hiridjee, President of Fondation H, said: *"I firmly believe that art plays a role in creating an ambitious, innovative and open-minded society, and since 2017, through our programmes and in our spaces, we have seen incredibly receptive local and international audiences. This is why I have decided to open a new space for Fondation H in the heart of Antananarivo, which will allow us to broaden the scope of our action. Within this historic building is embedded the very DNA of our mission: close human support of artists and audiences in an environment—Madagascar—that is still lacking exhibition structures, both physically and mentally. It is with great emotion that I am opening this new space with a tribute exhibition dedicated to the great Malagasy artist Zoarinivo Razakaratrio, aka. Madame Zo, whose work I immensely admire. Meeting her many years ago sparked my curiosity and growing interest in the artistic scene of my country and more broadly, that of the African continent."*

INAUGURAL EXHIBITION



Madame Zo, *Tais toi et dors*, 2006, Electronic components and coton rag, 49 x 69 cm, Courtesy Fondation H

For its inaugural exhibition, **Alya Sebti** (Director, ifa-Galerie, Berlin), **Bérénice Saliou** (Director, Documents d'Artistes La Réunion) and **Prof. Dr. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung** (Founder, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, and from January 2023 on, Director, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin) have been invited by Fondation H to **delve into the work of Zoarinivo Razakaratrio, known as Madame Zo, an icon of the Malagasy art scene and virtuoso weaver, who died in 2020.**

The inaugural exhibition will focus on the work of Madame Zo, a weaver, who sought throughout her life to renew and question her medium and the materials she explored with endless freedom. Constantly researching the very material as the weaving object, achieving extreme complexity, she transcended rules and codes in order to develop her own, non-conventional, language. Her work incorporated unusual materials such as newsprint, magnetic tapes, electronic components, copper, bones, medicinal plants, industrial foam, rubber, wood savings, etc. A relentless inventory work, at the crossroads between an environmental reflection and the poetics of materials, devoid of opulence or embellishment.

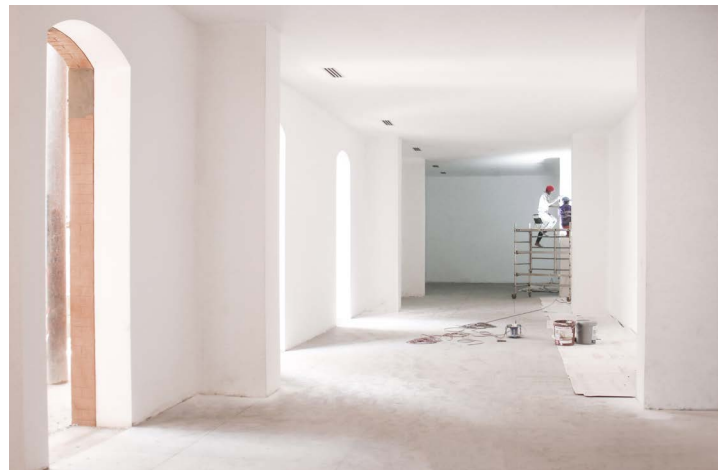
As a jury, the three curators have also selected the following artists for a three-month research and creation residency at Fondation H in Antananarivo, prior to the inaugural exhibition: **Amina Agueznay** (Morocco), **Masami** (Japan/Reunion Island) and **Grace Dorothee Tong** (Cameroon).

The three artists were chosen for their bold and innovative use of materials at their disposal, their penchant for experimentation, and their interest in **weaving not only as craft but also as technology and social phenomenon**. Be it through painting, meshing, spinning, twisting or otherwise, they bring together physical and psychological threads, and through their practices, directly follow in the footsteps of Madame Zo.

A wide programme of conferences and workshops accompanies the inaugural exhibition, for which the three curators Alya Sebti, Bérénice Saliou and Prof. Dr. Bonaventure Soh Bejang Ndikung have invited international curators, art critiques and artists to discuss Madame Zo's practice. An exhibition catalogue, the first publication dedicated to the artist, will also be produced.

Lastly, in an effort to rehabilitate the city centre's historical heritage and to understand the background of the new Fondation H, photographer **François-Xavier Gbré** (Côte d'Ivoire/France; winner of the 2020 Prix Découverte Louis Roederer of the Rencontres de la Photographie d'Arles) has been invited to conduct a research project based on the architectural heritage of the Ambatomena district. His work will be exhibited at the time of the new building's inauguration and will also be published in print.

THE BUILDING



Rénovation du nouvel espace de la Fondation H, Antananarivo, Madagascar © Fondation H

Located in the heart of the Malagasy capital Antananarivo, within **the district of Ambatomena, which means «red stone place» in Malagasy**, Fondation H's new space was built at the beginning of the 20th century to accommodate the Central Directorate of Posts and Telecommunications, under the French colonial regime.

Boasting typical architecture for that period, the building was **extensively restored over two years**, under the supervision of Madagascar-based studio Architecture Otmar Dodel, and **in close collaboration with local trades, some of which rediscovered and rehabilitated ancient techniques** for the renovation project. A second building was designed, perfectly complementing the old one especially through the choice of materials. Finally, a traditional inner courtyard and a large garden were designed and laid out.

The new space will boast **900 m2 of exhibition space, a contemporary art library, workshops for resident artists, spaces dedicated to cultural mediation and groups, a restaurant, and an apartment** to accommodate a resident artist or curator on site.

FONDATION H

While the Malagasy capital Antananarivo has no public contemporary art museum or art school despite its immensely rich historical and cultural heritage, Fondation H has been playing a crucial role within this context since 2017 through its different programmes. Now a popular destination with both locals and tourists in Antananarivo, **Fondation H welcomes more than 15,000 visitors per year in its current venue in Madagascar.**

Created in 2017 in Madagascar by patron and entrepreneur Hassanien Hiridjee, and acknowledged as public utility since 2018, Fondation H has been developing various programmes for the past six years:

- **Solo exhibitions, carte blanche to African and diasporan artists** via research/creation residencies and scholarships within the **foundation's spaces in Antananarivo, Madagascar, and Paris, France;**
- **Prix Paritana**, which annually rewards three artists from the Malagasy art scene;
- **A professional training programme, Ainga, certified by the Malagasy State**, and aimed at supporting artists in the structuring of their careers;
- **A cultural mediation programme, Hay**, dedicated to young audiences, through which young people aged 2 to 20 are offered tailor-made tours and workshops in connection with current exhibitions in the foundation's spaces;
- **A programme of events** based around each exhibition, where curators, critics and artists are invited to exchange with visitors;
- Supporting the influence and dissemination of artistic creation from Madagascar and the African continent by **sponsoring international exhibitions**, such as SaisonAfrica 2020;
- **A contemporary art collection** largely focused on African and diasporan artists.

PRESS CONTACT

Claudine Colin Communication

Chiara Di Leva

chiara@claudinecolin.com / +33 7 62 64 29 10

Fondation-h.com

