

**Elsa M'Bala, Fatou Kandé Senghor,
Caroline Gueye, Nathalie Anguezomo
Mba Bikoro, Ibrahima Thiam, Viyé
Diba, Mansour Ciss Kanakassy, Uriel
Orlow, baobab création, C& Center of
Unfinished Business**

Ré-imaginer le passé

**24.3.24 –
28.7.24**

Curators:

**Mahret Ifeoma Kupka, Isabel Raabe,
Ibou C. Diop, Malick Ndiaye**

Imprint

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Maschinenhaus M2

More information about the discursive programme:
kindl-berlin.com/reimaginer

Curators

Mahret Ifeoma Kupka, Isabel
Raabe, Ibou C. Diop, Malick
Ndiaye

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Ibou C. Diop, Mahret Ifeoma
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Courtesy

The artists

A project as part of the
TALKING OBJECTS LAB



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Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung
für Kultur und Medien



Ré-imaginer le passé A Research Journey

“The imaginative is a strong practice of mind-set change.”

Nikita Dhawan on the occasion of LABoratoire
Ré-imaginer le passé in Dakar, May 2023

Which futures can emerge from our shared history? Which narratives from the past merit recounting? How do we challenge established knowledge? And why is knowledge inevitably also a construct of world orders? These questions laid the groundwork for the project *Ré-imaginer le passé*.

Ré-imaginer le passé is more than an exhibition – it is a research journey, a months-long collaboration between curators, scholars, and artists from the African continent, the Diaspora, India, and Germany. In May 2023, a series of workshops dedicated to this endeavour took place in Dakar, called LABoratoires. During these workshops, the artists Elsa M'Bala, Fatou Kandé Senghor, Caroline Gueye, Nathalie Anguezomo Mba Bikoro, Ibrahima Thiam, Viyé Diba, Mansour Ciss Kanakassy, Uriel Orlow, Alibeta, as well as the scholars Nikita Dhawan and Maria do Mar Castro Varelas worked together with curators Mahret Ifeoma Kupka, Isabel Raabe, Ibou C. Diop, and Malick Ndiaye to explore the notion of reimagining the past and envisioning alternative narratives for the future. The core question is: Could a different understanding of our histories cultivate a new ethical framework guiding relationships between the global South and the global North?

The imaginary served as a creative catalyst for questioning established realities and reshaping them. The project places a particular focus on the repercussions of colonial history, examining the past from a perspective that challenges eurocentric narratives. It aims to carve out room for new approaches, knowledge (re)forms, and narratives. This philosophy permeates every aspect of the project's curation – from omitting standard biographical details in artist descriptions to the sequence in which artists are acknowl-

edged and the creation of a comprehensive discursive programme that includes artist talks, film screenings, and performances.

The works presented in this exhibition were previously on display in Dakar from 25 November 2023 to 8 January 2024 as part of *Partcours d'Art* at Musée Théodore Monod / Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noir. They were either developed through a dialogical process or specifically crafted for this exhibition project. They stand out for their reassessment of objects and their relevance for the present; they reinterpret history and revive knowledge. In doing so, they build a bridge between different times, places, and realities.

Ré-imaginer le passé is part of the artistic research project TALKING OBJECTS LAB – Decolonizing Knowledge, which unfolds through a series of events, artist residencies, and exhibitions taking place in Germany, Senegal, and Kenya since 2020. More information can be found at talkingobjects.org.

We would like to thank the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation), the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media), ifa – Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Pro Helvetia and the Harald-Breuer-Stiftung for their trust and for making this project possible. We would like to thank Fabian Heppe, Head of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Dakar, for his support with the visa application. And many thanks to the entire team of the KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art for the opportunity to show our project here.

Mahret Ifeoma Kupka, Isabel Raabe,
Ibou C. Diop, Malick Ndiaye
Curatorial team

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24.3.24, 13:00 at the
Maschinenhaus M2:
Curators tour

24.3.24,
14:00 – 16:30 at the
Maschinenhaus M0:
*The Concept of
the Imaginary*
Conversations
with the artists
and curators of the
exhibition in four
sessions

1: Nathalie Angue-
zomo Mba Bikoro,
Uriel Orlow, Isabel
Raabe

2: Fatou Kandé
Senghor, Mansour
Ciss Kanakassy,
Malick Ndiaye

3: Miriam Camara,
Caroline Gueye,
NuNu, Mahret
Ifeoma Kupka

4: Viyé Diba, Ibra-
hima Thiam, Malick
Ndiaye

8.5.24, 19:00 at the
Maschinenhaus M0:
*"Critical thinking is
the slow cooking
of the soul"*

Lectures by Nikita
Dhawan (Political
scientist, Berlin)
and María do Mar
Castro Varela
(Political scientist,
Berlin)

25.5.24, 14:00 at the
Maschinenhaus M2:
Das Imaginäre
Thematic Tour with
Jeanne Mizero
Nzakizabandi
(Art educator and
curator, Frankfurt/
Main)

14.6.24, 18:00 at the
Berlin Global
Village, Am Sud-
haus 2, 12053
Berlin:
*La Palabre: Ré-
imaginer le passé*
Talks, Food and
Performance

Project coordination

Celina Baljeet Basra

Project assistance

Jasmin Anna Awale

Artist support

Jeanne Mizero Nzakizabandi

Administration

Carina Herring

Production

**raabe – arts and cultural
projects gUG**

Curation public programme

Isabel Raabe, Celina Baljeet Basra

Scenography

Mathias Wölfing, Nora Wölfing

Scenographic consulting

NuNu Design

Graphics

Visual Intelligence

Planning and construction of the pavilion *Au-delàs des mers*

**Cheikh Abdoulaye Niang,
Elhadji Demba Mbaye, Tobias Euler**

Elsa M'Bala

Memory of Understanding 2, 2024
Sound work, 30 minutes

Performance on 17.7.2024 at 19:00

In her sound piece *Memory of Understanding*, artist Elsa M'Bala, also known as A.M.E.T., explores present and future African archives. Based in Berlin and Yaoundé (Cameroon), she stands out as one of the few female sound artists of African heritage. In her work, she employs technology as a tool for self-empowerment, exploring the intersections of technology, race, gender, and spirituality. Part 1 of her sound series was shown in January 2023 at the National Museum of Yaoundé in Cameroon as part of the travelling exhibition *Memoria*. The sound installation incorporates the oldest documented sound recordings from Cameroon – currently housed in the Ethnological Collection at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. *Memory of Understanding 2*, the second part of the series, was shown in late 2023 at Musée Théodore Monod in Dakar and brings together perspectives on the topic of archives from numerous cultural practitioners in Dakar and neighbouring regions. The work engages with current discourse on the restitution of colonial-era looted art and aims to give aesthetic expression to the growing interest in African cultural production. For the exhibition *Ré-imaginer le passé* in Berlin, Elsa M'Bala will present the second part of her sound work on 17 July 2024 as a live performance.

Fatou Kandé Senghor

Au-delàs des mers, 2023

(Beyond the Seas)

Wooden pavilion, fairy lights, garlands

Senegalese artist and film director Fatou Kandé Senghor, who works across photography, film, and text, has created a 3,5-metre-high, walk-in installation outdoors at the KINDL dedicated to the “Signares”. These were emancipated Senegalese women who formed relationships with European men on the island of Gorée and later in Saint-Louis, granting them access to various privileges. Signares played a crucial role in preserving Senegalese culture amidst the cultural disruption caused by the colonial powers’ arrival. Senghor’s artwork is a wooden replica of the historic train station in Saint-Louis, with its structure based on the “Fanal” tradition. The fanal was a lantern carried by Signares during their procession to and from midnight mass on Christmas Eve, accompanied by their servants. Over time, the tradition evolved into a festival, with lanterns made of wood and paper mimicking important buildings or monuments in the city. This tradition, rooted in a forced coexistence with European colonial powers, continues to this day. Signares contributed to shaping local narratives and developing new cultural practices based on the foreign customs they encountered.

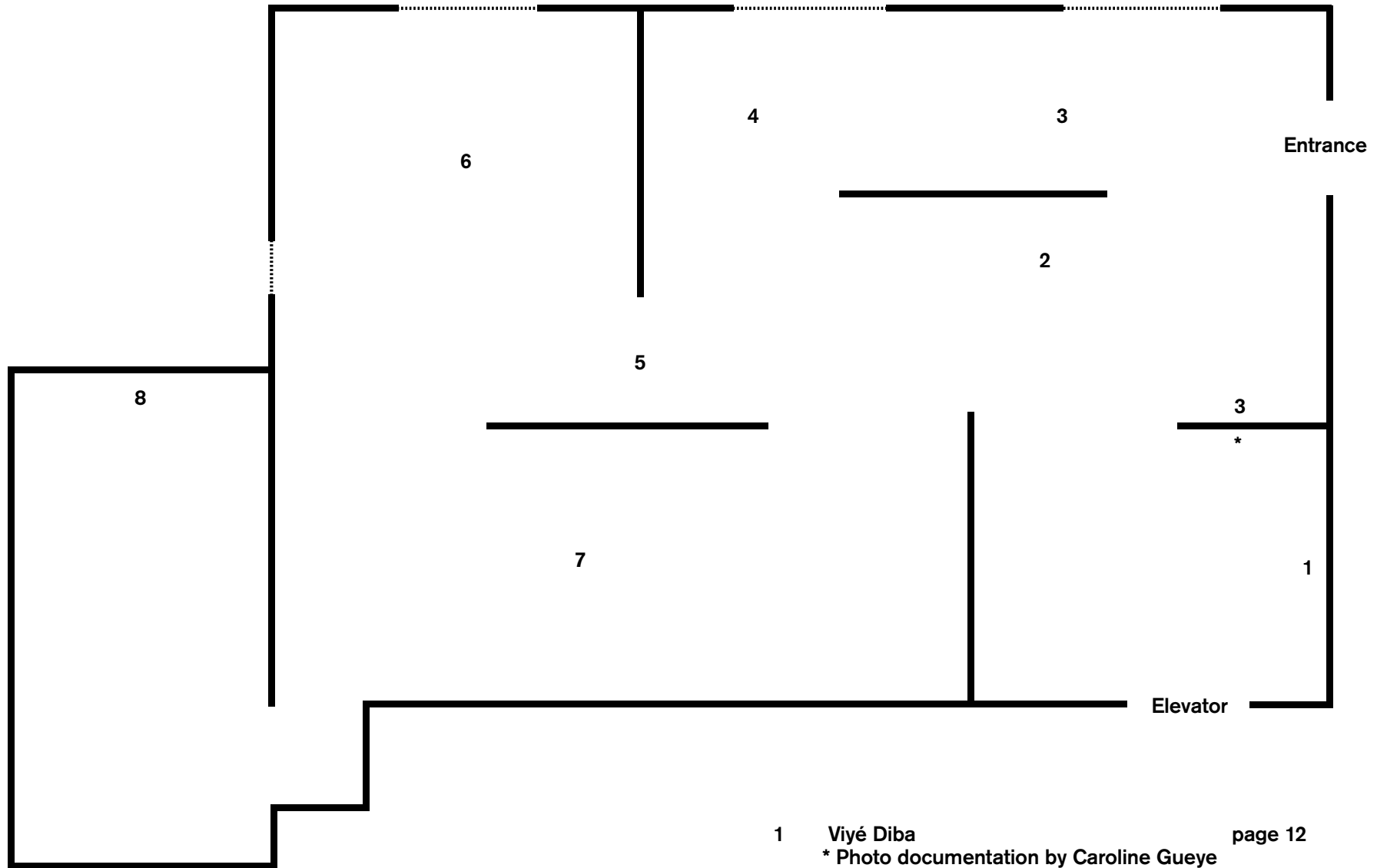
Caroline Gueye

Poussière de lune, 2023

(Moon Dust)

Plastic produced according to a secret recipe of the European Space Agency ESA, moon dust

Caroline Gueye is a Senegalese artist and astrophysicist who studied in France, the USA, and China. Astrophysics plays a recurring and important role in her artistic practice, as seen in her work *Poussière de lune*, developed especially for this exhibition. The title, meaning “moon dust”, can be understood literally – the artist used actual lunar dust on the ends of her filigree structure crafted from a special plastic compound produced according to a confidential recipe from the European Space Agency (ESA). Since the moon’s colonisation began with the 1969 American moon landing, lunar soil samples have been brought back to Earth by numerous moon missions, from Apollo 11 to Apollo 17. Laboratory analyses of these samples revealed that the moon’s floor consists of dust formed from repeated meteorite impacts on the lunar surface. For Gueye, moon dust is a substance with ties to both past and future. At the end of the exhibition route visitors arrive at Gueye’s installation, which encourages them to contemplate the future through the lens of the past.



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- 8 Caroline Gueye page 7

Outdoors:
Fatou Kandé Senghor page 6

Nathalie Anguezomo Mba Bikoro

Obeah: Voyage Au Bout de La Piroge, 2023

(Obeah: Voyage to the end of the pirogue)

Textiles, text, audio, historical photographs, wall lamps, pirogue, wood, mulberry paper, animal skulls, horns, clay, shards of mirror glass, various objects

Nathalie Anguezomo Mba Bikoro is an artist, healer, and Black feminist with roots in Gabon. In her work, she examines power dynamics and scientific fictions. This installation revolves around Andrea Manga Bell, the former queen of Douala, recounting her profound grief following the loss of her son, Prince José Emmanuel Berroa Manga Bell in 1947, and her 30-year quest to uncover the truth behind his murder. Visitors are invited to enter the imaginary royal palace as the scene of the crime. Flickering wall lamps evoke those gifted by the French writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline to the Cameroon royal family, which were installed in the royal palace in Douala around 1942. Céline was a political-ly controversial figure due to his overt anti-Semitism and Nazi collaboration. An audio collage intertwines classical music, a composition by Andrea Manga Bell's father – with narratives of colonial entanglements, violence and lies, as well as King Alexandre Manga Bell's incomplete confession to his son's shooting. The artist considers her installation as a ritual of resurrection and healing. The word "Obeah" in the title refers to a healing tradition rooted mainly in creolised West African practices. Bikoro invokes this tradition, translating it into a feminist practice to help heal colonial trauma.

3.4.24, 19:00 at the
Maschinenhaus M0:
OBEAH: resurrection
Performance by
Nathalie Anguezomo
Mba Bikoro

Ibrahima Thiam

Déekilate, 2023

(Rebirth)

Drywall, baobab and moringa trees, cactus, photographs, clay pots

“Écoutez plus souvent les choses que les êtres” (“Listen more often to things than to beings”) writes the Senegalese writer Birago Diop in the poem *Souffles*. Ibrahima Thiam’s installation *Déekilate* draws inspiration from this quote and invokes the unseen powers of nature to foster a convergence between the sacred and art. Originally from Saint-Louis, Senegal, Thiam studied economics in Dakar before pursuing his passion for photography. In his artistic work, he explores themes of archives, memory, African oral tradition, and African myths and legends. The gods of the Lébou people are often a theme in his photographic practice. The installation features depictions of two such deities, Maam Njaré and Maam Ndeuk Daour, captured in Thiam’s photographs. At the heart of the installation stands the baobab tree, revered for its spiritual significance across many West African countries. The title of the work means “rebirth” in Wolof, the predominant language spoken in Senegal. Through this lens, the artist views his work as an invitation to healing and self-discovery, reconnecting with the earth and the spirits. It serves as an urging to rediscover traditional healing practices – such as the Ndeup, one of the most significant rituals still observed in Senegal today – along with exploring myths, legends, rituals, and spiritual knowledge.

Viyé Diba

Synthèse, 2021

(Synthesis)

Wood, raffia fabric, nylon, potato sacks, diverse fibres

Viyé Diba is a mixed media, installation, and performance artist from Senegal. His works, which use mainly recycled, local, and unprocessed materials, have been featured in numerous international exhibitions and are represented in various institutional collections. Formerly a professor at the National School of Art in Dakar, Diba was involved in training several generations of artists. His work *Synthèse* was created during the three-week TALKING OBJECTS LAB Artists Residency at Musée Théodore Monod in Dakar. In developing this work, the artist engaged with objects from the museum's collection, focusing on how to reconnect these preserved artefacts with modern Senegalese society. A Senufo loincloth and a Tuareg bedpost provided the starting point for his installation. Impressed by the intricate bedpost design and the artisanry of the loincloth, woven from beaten raffia palm bark, Diba offers a contemporary reinterpretation of the fabric using raffia, nylon, potato sacks, and other fibres. "Art is an appropriation of what our living environment provides. I am just a mediator between these two worlds", remarks the artist. By blending historical references with modern materials, his work bridges past, present, and future.

Together with Viyé Diba's installation, digital photographs by the artist Caroline Gueye are shown in a loop on screen, which were taken during their joint TALKING OBJECTS LAB residency in Dakar in 2021. She documents the original objects that Viyé Diba worked with, and, in her very own way, focuses on the material and the knowledge that lies within.

Mansour Ciss Kanakassy

Memory Of Time.

*Boulene Ko Niit! Neeke Bou Leneum Tal Takoul Bou Leene
Ko Niit!*, 2023

(Memory Of Time. Look! A dark room! Don't try to light it up!)
Drywall, wood, ceramics, textiles, audio, scented sachets,
sand

The works of Mansour Ciss Kanakassy, a Senegalese artist residing in Berlin since the early 1990s, address power dynamics stemming from colonialism as well as pre-colonial African knowledge and its symbolism. In 2001, the artist launched *Laboratoire de Déberlinisation*, a project scrutinizing the aftermath of the Africa Conference in Berlin in 1884/85, which led to the partitioning of the African continent among major European powers. Kanakassy's installation in the exhibition features 54 oversized matchboxes, symbolizing each of the 54 African countries. The work draws inspiration from the saying, "Honour is akin to a match, useable only once in a lifetime." The boxes are adorned with Adinkra symbols from Ghana and the Ivory Coast, as well as photographs of young men in traditional attire that the artist photographed during a research trip in the 1980s. Scented sachets of thiouraye, an incense reputed for its aphrodisiac properties, are nestled within the installation. The song playing in the background gives the artwork its title. Kanakassy's interest lies in the viewer's gaze and perception, as well as the questions and mental images evoked through engagement with his creations.

Uriel Orlow

Soil Affinities, 2021

Wooden boxes, videos, photographs, soil

Uriel Orlow, a Swiss artist, grounds his work in interdisciplinary artistic research. In his work *Soil Affinities*, he examines the historical and contemporary ties between Senegal and France through the lens of agriculture. The work's starting point is a 19th-century vegetable-growing area in the Parisian banlieue of Aubervilliers, which was closed down as European countries began establishing colonial agriculture in Africa. After the Berlin Conference (1884/85), which partitioned the African continent among European powers, the French Colonial Ministry established an experimental colonial garden in Paris. Plants were transported from the Americas to Paris and then to newly established test gardens in Dakar, Saint-Louis, and other West African locations in custom-made "Ward crates". These gardens cultivated European staples like onions, tomatoes, peppers, and green beans to sustain the steadily growing French settler population. Following Senegal's independence from France in 1960, the commercial cultivation of these vegetables in West Africa surged. Several European companies established industrial farms in Senegal primarily to supply Rungis, one of Europe's biggest wholesale markets in Paris. Orlow's installation uses nonlinear video images, photographs, and archival material to trace the relationships between plants and people across various geographies and time periods.

19.7.24, t.b.c. at the
Spore Initiative,
Hermannstraße
86, 12051 Berlin:
Screening *Theatrum
Botanicum* with
Uriel Orlow

baobab création

Textiles made of cotton and yarn, 2023

Textile production in many African nations today relies heavily on overseas imports. The types of fabric used by the West African fashion industry, such as Pages, Wax, Getzner, or Bazin, are mainly imported from Dutch and Chinese companies. These imports have significantly diminished the domestic textile industry. In response, various initiatives are advocating for the revitalisation of African textile production and a reevaluation of traditional fabric histories. One such initiative – baobab création – offered young designers from Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Germany the opportunity to collaborate and reinterpret traditional African textiles and imagery into contemporary fashion. They were accompanied in this process by mentors Marie Madeleine Diouf (designer and founder of NuNu Design) and Kamal RAW (designer and stylist), alongside curators Miriam Camara, Maimouna Dembele, and Saraya Gomis. The project was implemented by Akoma Coaching & Consulting and Each One Teach One (EOTO), funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. The exhibition showcases innovative interpretations of traditional fabrics that draw inspiration from the woven textiles and weaving techniques of Mandjack and Serer weavers. These textiles speak a unique language through their texture, colours, and essence, conveying a story of the past, present, and future. Woven messages run like red threads through the creations.

C& Center of Unfinished Business

Mobile reading room, 2024

For the exhibition at the KINDL – Centre for Contemporary Art, Contemporary And (C&) was invited to present the C& Center of Unfinished Business, an artistic intervention in the form of a mobile reading room. This unique space offers visitors an extraordinary, sometimes disconcerting selection of books that are linked to the topic of colonialism in various ways. From German colonies to Congolese fashion to capital markets of the 21st century the reading room spans the many different areas still influenced by colonial legacies. The aim is not to compile a collection on colonialism that is consistent and complete because: when would it ever be? Colonialism is an unfinished business that continues to exist in many ways. C& Center for Unfinished Business is an ongoing project by Contemporary And (C&), a dynamic platform for reflection and connections within contemporary visual art discourse. It publishes the online magazines C& Magazine and C& América Latina Magazine in multiple languages, along with regular print issues several times a year. In addition to the C& Center of Unfinished Business, C& undertakes various other projects, such as C& Commissions, C& Artists' Editions, the C& Critical Writing Workshops, and the C& Mentoring Program for young journalists.

Many thanks to Raul Walch for providing the stools he designed for the C& Centre of Unfinished Business.

26.4.24,
18:00 – 20:00 at the
Maschinenhaus M2:
Reading Session
with C& Center for
Unfinished Business,
moderated
by Celina Baljeet
Basra (Author and
curator, Berlin)



KINDL

**KINDL – Centre for
Contemporary Art**

**Am Sudhaus 3
12053 Berlin**

kindl-berlin.com

Opening hours

Wed

12:00 – 20:00

Thu – Sun

12:00 – 18:00