

16<sup>th</sup> edition of  
the Biennale of  
Contemporary  
African Art

**(Anti)fragility:**  
*Arts of*  
**Repair** *and*  
**Counter-Shock**  
*Strategies*

# (Anti)Fragility: Arts of Repair and Counter-Shock Strategies

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## Presentation of the General Concept

The 16th Dakar Biennale is devoted to the theme of “(Anti)fragility.” It brings together artists from across the African continent and its diasporas worldwide, including island and archipelagic contexts. All seek to rethink our modes of living together, mutual aid, coexistence, and cohabitation—not only among humans but also with the living world.

**To be (anti)fragile is to adopt an attitude that transforms fragility into a strength (both expressive and artistic) by valuing social and communal bonds (co-creation).**

This concept originates with the thinker Nassim Nicholas Taleb, who explains how one can learn to live in an uncertain and chaotic world, and even benefit from difficult situations and shocks in order to emerge from them strengthened and transformed.

In the artistic field, this idea becomes both a source of inspiration and a site of experimentation. Artists use error, accident, or lack as points of departure within a (co)creative process. In an unstable and conflict-ridden world, they devise alternative systems often inspired by local knowledge and practices, develop strategies of survival and gift/counter-gift exchange, construct shelters, and adopt (post-)therapeutic approaches to art. Within this reparative dynamic, new communities of artists, artisans, researchers, and citizens emerge. Practices rooted in urban and popular cultures, as well as design disciplines, are called upon to play a central role.

To be antifragile therefore means:

- transforming fragility into strength, valuing simplicity, and elevating the everyday
- repairing what is damaged, healing wounds, and reinventing function
- learning from shocks, studying risks, and anticipating disruptions

**(Anti)fragility is thus also a philosophy of the fertilization of worlds and of tremor.**

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1. See the book by Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder*, Random House-Penguin, 2012.

## **The Three Main ideas/chapters of the (Anti)fragility Dakar Biennale**

### **1. The Powers of the Fragile**

Fragility is not a weakness; it can be both beautiful and powerful. Artists engage with the small details of everyday life, with organic and minimalist forms, as well as with nature. They use cracks and fissures as spaces of possibility; they celebrate the principle of “less is more” and our presence in the world.

### **2. The Arts of Care and Repair**

Repairing, healing, and preserving are fundamental gestures—whether specialized forms of knowledge or practices of the common good. Such acts of repair may concern communities or individual bodies, and may also consist in rehabilitating signs or languages that have been rendered invisible. Artists transform wounds into fabric for a new skin, and scars into bodily drawings or tattoos.

### **3. Counter-Shock Strategies**

Artists act as forerunners in their responses to crises and instability. Through various strategies of recycling, collective solidarity, and short supply chains, they inspire new ways of living together. They teach us to better anticipate shocks and, in the face of uncertainty, to invent new possibilities.

**Morad Montazami**

Artistic Director of the 16th edition  
of the Biennale of Contemporary African Art



République du Sénégal

*Un Peuple - Un But - Une Foi*

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