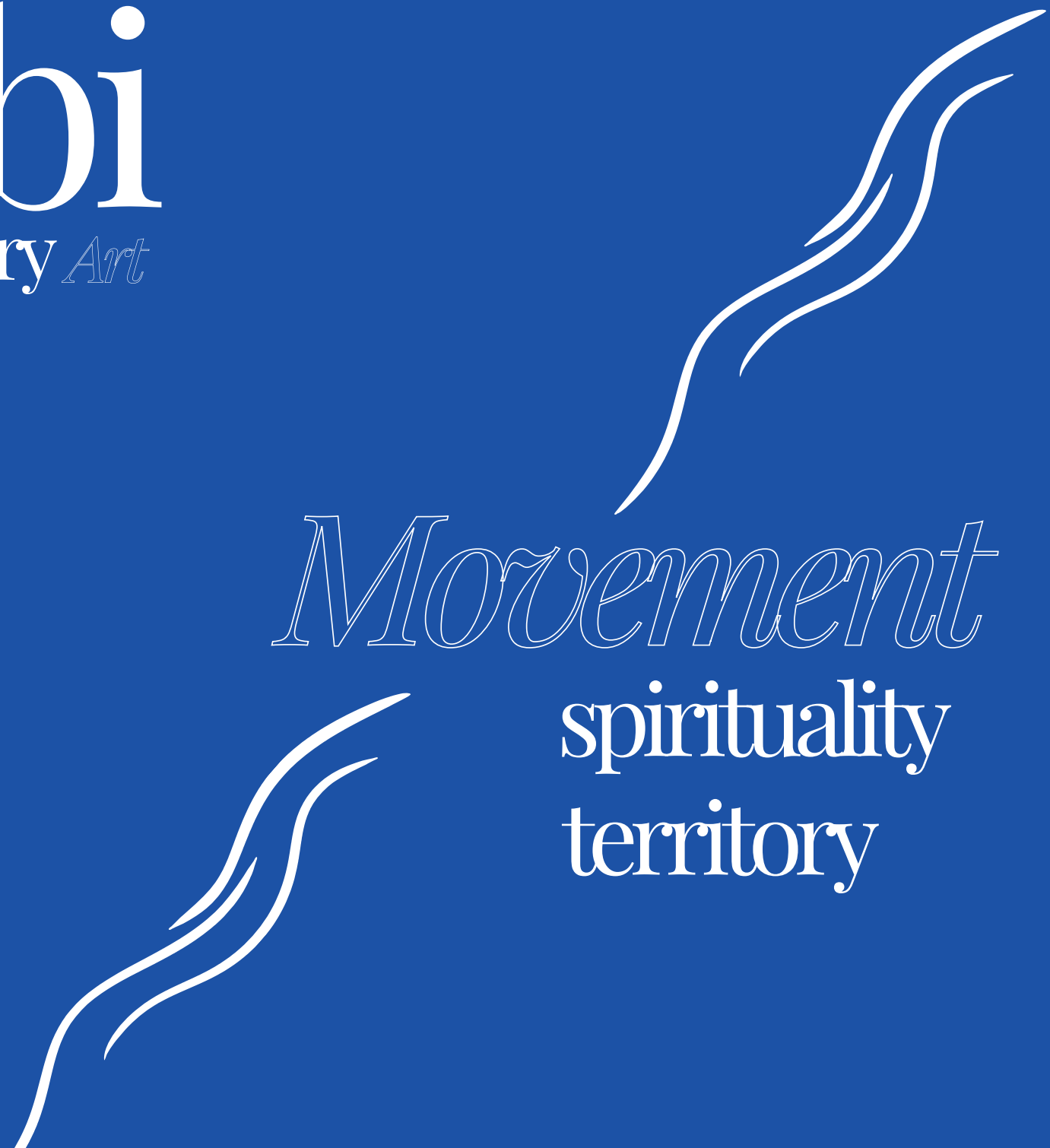


Bëlbi
literary *Art*



Movement

spirituality
territory

Presentation

A project of artistic and literary creation that brings together movement, spirituality, and territory, rooted in more than ten years of community work and spiritual practice developed in Senegal, especially in Gandiol. The project is conceived as a process of research and production that combines writing, artistic installation, and performative action.

At its core, BĚLBI includes a literary work at an advanced stage, titled *The Fourth Journey*, which constitutes the conceptual backbone of the project. The book (autofiction based on Mamadou's Life) narrates the journey of Dudu, a young man who crosses the sea believing he is searching for a destination and ends up undergoing a profound inner transformation. The work explores the journey and is structured in four parts based on four major movements: the crossing, the initiation, the offering, and the great crossing.



Presentation



Alongside the writing process, BĚLBI envisions the development of an exhibition project for the creation of an artistic installation entitled Tabax Nité, conceived as a material and sensory extension of the book. This installation will integrate photography, video, sound creation, and writing, together with materials linked to community work and bioconstruction, such as straw bales, earthen walls, handcrafted furniture, dyed fabrics, water, and paint. Matter is used as a language, carrying memory and collective experience.

The project is completed by a series of literary performances under the title From the river to the sea, in which the word—read, spoken, and embodied—activates the installation and creates a space of encounter with the audience. The performance does not function as representation, but as an act of living transmission, where body, voice, and territory enter into dialogue.

Taken as a whole, BĚLBI proposes a situated form of creation that connects personal experience and collective process, and seeks to transform years of community work into an artistic and literary work capable of dialoguing with other territories, audiences, and contemporary contexts.

With this dossier, the search is launched for residencies oriented toward contexts that foster research, experimentation, and exchange. These residencies will make it possible to advance the final writing of the book, produce the artistic installation, and rehearse the performative formats, adapting them to different cultural spaces.



Genesis

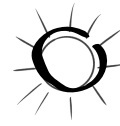
After years of travel and displacement, Mamadou Dia decides to write his first two books as an urgent and visceral gesture. 3052 (2012) and At 15:00 (2015) are born out of a need to expel what had been lived, to say what he did not yet know how to hold inside. They were writings of rupture, marked by the experience of travel, migration, and the search for meaning, produced before he was able to take distance from what he had lived.

After this cycle, he makes a fundamental decision: to return. He goes back to Gandiol and focuses his energy on building community projects, with the aproch learnign by doing. For more than a decade, the work shifts from narrative to action: creating spaces, training young people, accompanying collective processes, building with his hands and with the community. During this time, writing falls silent, but experience becomes denser.

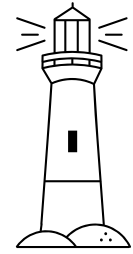
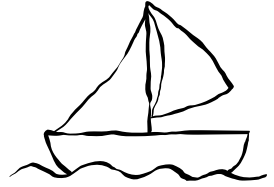
As the projects grow, a dimension emerges that goes beyond the social: the artistic, political, and spiritual dimension of the entire process. From the preschool built with recycled bottles, to the community radio constructed with car tires, to bioconstruction centers made of earth and straw; from the creation of a garden and a farm, to the founding of the artistic residency Dekandoo, and through theater pieces, concerts, celebrations, and dance performances, creation has always been present. Not as ornament, but as a living language of the community process.



Genesis



I asked the river where the sun sleeps



With time comes gratitude. Gratitude for what has been learned, for the people encountered, for the mistakes and the transformations. From this place—more mature, more philosophical, more conscious—emerges the desire to write again, no longer from the urgency of rupture, but from embodied experience. Thus begins the writing of *The Fourth Journey*, a book that does not repeat the journey, but rereads it, integrates it, and transforms it into shared knowledge.

At an advanced stage of this writing, an evidence appears: the book alone is not enough. The experience lived over the years has been material, bodily, sonic, and collective. Writing therefore calls for an expanded space. From this need arises the artistic installation as an essential part of the BĚLBI project—an installation that dialogues with matter—earth, straw, water, fabrics, built objects—and with the images, sounds, and gestures that have always accompanied the community work.

BĚLBI is thus born as a living synthesis between action and reflection, between construction and writing, between memory and contemporary creation. Not as a project that explains a past experience, but as a process that extends it, transforms it, and offers it as a space of encounter. From the river to the sea, from doing to saying, from community to the work, and from the work back to the world.



The Fourth Journey, the book



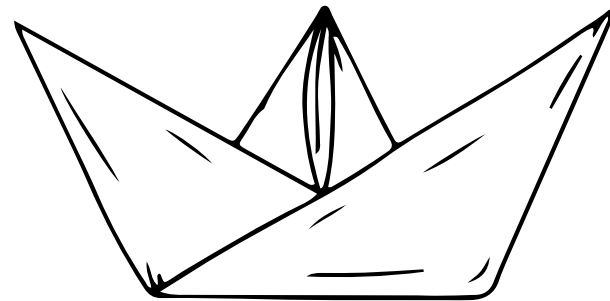
The Fourth Journey narrates the path of Dudu, a young man who crosses the sea believing he is searching for a destination and ends up undergoing his own transformation. Between exile, precarity, and learning, his experience becomes listening, service, and awareness. It is not a story of arrival, but of inner return: a journey where the wound is transformed into knowledge and memory into a shared path.

1. The Crossing

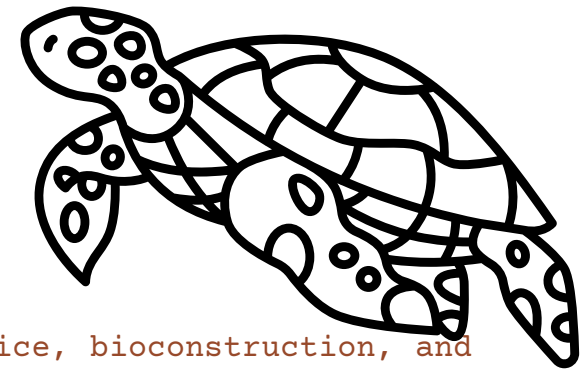
The crossing is born from an inner question and from a force that pushes before it can be named. Dudu leaves the familiar shore driven by the desire to understand the world and his place within it. The sea does not appear as a border, but as a threshold: to cross it means shedding one's name, the protected body, and inherited certainties. At this stage there is still no awareness of the cost of the journey, only the need to move forward.

2. The Initiation

Initiation is the time of fracture. Dudu enters a system that classifies, cools, and dehumanizes: reception centers, numbers instead of names, confinement, waiting, everyday racism, and precarity. The outward journey becomes an inner trial. The body learns cold, language becomes a territory of struggle, and silence weighs as much as the noise of the city. Here he understands that resistance does not mean hardening, but transforming without losing dignity.



The Fourth Journey, the book

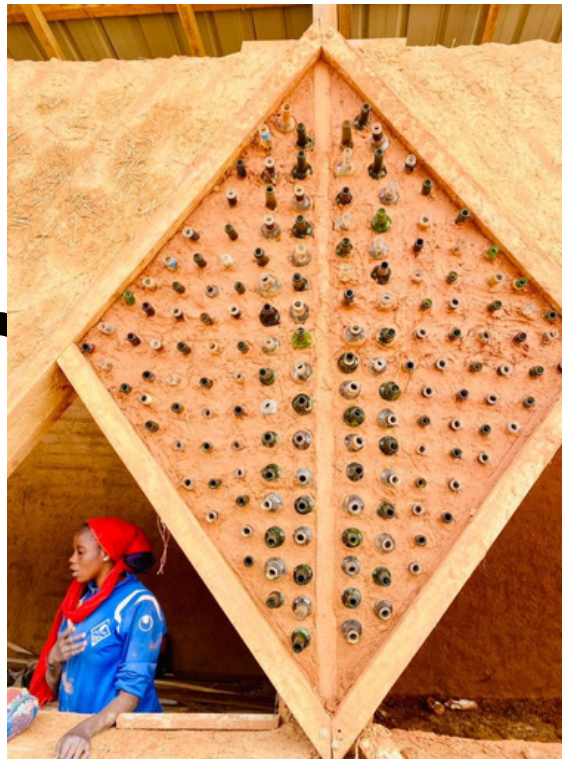


3. The Offering

The offering marks the moment when Dudu stops walking alone. Community work, service, bioconstruction, and human bonds appear, restoring meaning to experience. The relationship with matter, time, and others is redefined. Serving ceases to be sacrifice and becomes conscious responsibility. Learning is no longer only personal: it begins to be shared.

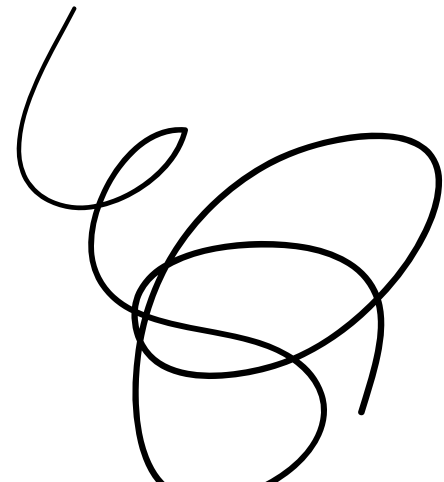
4. The Great Crossing

The great crossing is not a physical displacement, but a profound transformation. Dudu passes through pain, solitude, and the wound in order to turn them into knowledge, transmission, and celebration. The return is not backward, but inward. Experience is integrated and given back to the territory and the community as living memory. The journey is completed when he understands that his story can become a path for others.



Sources of inspiration for research and creation

- Spaces of community work and bioconstruction, where matter—earth, straw, water, wood—is transformed collectively and generates ways of inhabiting, learning, and transmitting.
- Sabars, celebratory music, and collective bodily movements, where rhythm, gesture, and the body become language and shared memory.
- Rites of passage and care: Ataaya ceremonies, circumcision ceremonies, ndeup rituals, thiant ceremonies, baptisms, weddings, and funerals, understood as spaces where the community accompanies life, the wound, and loss.
- Sufi, Murid, Bay Fall, Ritual and spiritual experiences lived outside Senegal, such as the wisdom of Lao Tzu in China, funerals in India, and Yoruba rituals in Nigeria, which expand the project's symbolic field and connect it to other ways of relating body, death, celebration, and transcendence.
- Spaces of water—the river and the sea— as constant symbolic matrices: places of origin, transit, rupture, and return.
- Spaces of confinement and control, such as CIEs and European prisons, where the migrant body is reduced to a number and waiting, and where time acquires an extreme density.
- Architecture, craftsmanship, and bioconstruction in Morocco, the Sahara, and Mauritania, without forgetting the deserts.
- The language of migration and the figure of the expatriate, observed as political and symbolic constructions that traverse the body, identity, and the ways of naming the world.



Stages

1. What I have done

Over the past years, I have carried out travels, residencies, and research experiences. These experiences have taken place in different territories, understood as spaces of learning, observation, and creation:

- Africa: Senegal - Gandiol Construction and accompaniment of community centers and spaces that form the living foundation of the project: the Aminata Cultural Center, the Defaratt plastic recycling center, early childhood schools, the Tabax Nit  center, the House of Women, JiKoom (agroecology), Baan ak Suuf (bioconstruction), Nit  Gandiol (textiles), the Dekandoo artistic residency, the JangKom center dedicated to creative and cultural industries, and Ndar Weesul, focused on heritage and memory. These spaces have functioned as laboratories of creation, body, matter, and community.
- Africa: Morocco, the Sahara, and Mauritania Direct observation of migratory processes and spaces of transit, waiting, and confinement, as well as architecture, bioconstruction, and craftsmanship, deserts, displacement, and borders as physical and symbolic experiences.
- Europe, especially Spain and Greece Deepening of the writing process, analysis of contemporary migratory dispositifs, and study of spaces of control and confinement, transit, and exclusion.
- America, through stays and collaborations in Colombia and Cuba Work with community, cultural, and artistic projects that have expanded the dialogue between memory, territory, and collective creation.
- The East, through an experience of pilgrimage and reflection in Mecca Deepening of the spiritual and symbolic dimension of the project, linked to the body, ritual, and silence.



Stages

1. What I have done

For more than seven years, I have coordinated Jamkunda, an area of reflection and dialogue within Rototom Sunsplash, one of the most important reggae festivals in the world. Jamkunda has functioned as a living laboratory of thought, listening, and transmission around migration, African culture, spirituality, memory, and global justice.

In parallel, within the framework of my research project Ñu seeti leen (Let's get to know each other), I have visited, learned from, and connected with dozens of African community projects, expanding a field of living references that nourishes both the writing of the book and the future artistic installation.

University collaborations: University of Saint-Louis, Yale University, University of Granada, Polytechnic University of Barcelona, University of Jaén, Complutense University, university Aalto, Helsinki.



2. Where I am now

The book *The Fourth Journey* has begun its own path. I am currently sharing the first phase of the writing, receiving critical readings and feedback, and revising the text from a more mature, philosophical, and artistic perspective.

At the same time, I am collaborating with artists, visiting creative projects and cultural spaces, and deepening my engagement with contemporary references that allow me to refine the material, spatial, and sensory language of the BĒLBI artistic installation.

This moment represents a phase of decantation: lived experience, writing, and artistic research are beginning to align in a more conscious, precise, and coherent form.



3. What I need / Next steps

To move forward into the next phase of the BĚLBI project, I identify several key needs, particularly linked to creative and research residencies:

- A writing residency dedicated to the completion of the book *The Fourth Journey*, in a context that supports concentration, critical reading, editorial dialogue, and literary mentorship.
- A residency in Nigeria, with the aim of deeply experiencing Yoruba culture, engaging with its rituals, music, and worldview, and visiting the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, a key space during the project's initial phase of literary and symbolic research.
- A residency in China, oriented toward philosophical and spiritual research around the thought of Laozi and the legacy of the *Tao Te Ching*, in order to deepen notions of flow, emptiness, non-action, and harmony, which are central to the conceptual structure of BĚLBI.
- Practice and research workshops with students and faculty in architecture, art, and spatial practices, in Gandiol or other territories, as part of the process of creating the artistic installation.
- Research and engagement with museums, galleries, and cultural and social spaces, with the aim of initiating the production, adaptation, and contextualization of the artistic installation, identifying potential exhibition venues, and generating dialogues between contemporary art, territory, and community-based practices.

These next stages will make it possible to consolidate BĚLBI as an integral project, in which book, installation, and performance develop in a coherent and organic way, and in which lived experience is transformed into a work capable of engaging with diverse audiences, geographies, and cultural traditions from an artistic, political, and spiritual perspective.



Lab



def 'Art



Jotna



Approximate / desired timeline

- Workshop with Yale University: March 2026
- Residency in Nigeria: April 2026
- Residency in China: June 2026
- Trip to Rototom: August 2026
- Writing residency: September / October 2026
- Publication of the final book: April 2027
- Performative readings: throughout the year



Author · Mamadou Dia

Born between the river and the sea, Mamadou Dia (1983, Gandiol, Senegal) builds his work around the idea of travel as a process of knowledge—not only geographic, but also inner, spiritual, and political. Migration, exile, return, and community responsibility constitute architecture and the central axes of his thinking and creative practice.

He published his first book, 3052, in 2012, followed in 2015 by At 15:00. These works inaugurate a phase of writing marked by the experience of displacement, critical observation of the world, and the search for identity. After this initial cycle, he decided to return to Senegal in order to commit directly to community work as a form of creative and ethical continuity.

In 2016, he founded HAHATAY - Sonrisas de Gandiol, a community and cultural organization through which he promotes social, cultural, and educational processes in the territory of Gandiol. Since then, he has accompanied the creation of more than ten community spaces and centers conceived as places of learning, construction, artistic creation, and intergenerational encounter, structured around culture, education, support for youth and women, and a conscious relationship with the territory.



Author · Mamadou Dia

Since 2017, Mamadou Dia has coordinated Jamkunda, the space for reflection, dialogue, and critical thinking within the international festival Rototom Sunsplash, where he curates conversations on migration, youth, memory, spirituality, African culture, and global justice, connecting voices from the Global South and the Global North.

Throughout his career, he has given hundreds of conferences, talks, and meetings in cultural, educational, and community contexts, and has collaborated with social and artistic projects in Africa, Europe, and the Americas, particularly in countries such as Cuba, Colombia, and Spain. His work maintains an ongoing dialogue with African, European, and American universities, where he shares methodologies of situated creation, processes of community self-realization, and approaches that integrate culture, territory, and spirituality.

Mamadou Dia conceives creation as an act of service and collective responsibility. For him, writing, building, teaching, and accompanying are not separate gestures, but expressions of a single practice: listening, transmitting, and caring for what is alive. His work draws on local knowledge, ancestral practices, non-dogmatic spirituality, and contemporary thought, generating a language of his own that overflows the boundaries between art, literature, and social action.



