

Minia Biabiany

Portfolio

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Courtesy of the artist and Imane Farès, Paris

Minia Biabiany



Photo: Santiago Quintana

B. 1988. Works and lives in Guadeloupe.

Minia Biabiany's work explores Caribbean narratives, decolonization processes, and the connections between language, body, and territory, drawing on a practice that combines installations, videos, and pedagogy.

Her upcoming solo exhibitions include the Mercosur Biennial (Porto Alegre, 2025), the São Paulo Biennial (2025), and a duo exhibition with Étienne de France (Musarth, Guadeloupe, 2025; KunstMeran, Italy, 2025). In November 2025, she will complete the video produced as part of the Han Nefkens Award.

Her work has been featured in numerous exhibitions, including *Dlo a rasin* (James Madison University, Virginia, 2024), *dife* at the Palais de Tokyo (2022), the 10th Berlin Biennale, TEOR/ÉTica (San José, Costa Rica), Witte de With (Rotterdam), Cráter Invertido (Mexico), SIGNAL (Malmö), the Memorial ACTe (Guadeloupe), the Centro León (Santiago, Dominican Republic), the Corcoran (Washington), and La Verrière (Brussels). She was also awarded the Sciences Po Contemporary Art Prize in 2019.

Her first multilingual monograph, *Ritmo Volcán*, was published by Temblores Editions.

In 2016, she initiated the collective project Semillero Caribe in Mexico and continues her pedagogical research with Doukou, a platform for experimentation exploring the concepts of Caribbean authors through the body and sensory experience.

the sky with rooted-eyes

Galerie Imane Farès, Paris
January 25 – March 15, 2025

For *the sky with rooted-eyes*, Biabiany creates a new constellation — the frog — traced from the night sky of Guadeloupe at the time of the exhibition. Each star of the constellation is embodied in a ceramic sculpture, and together they outline the image of this nocturnal amphibian, whose song signals the shift from day to night. The sculptures are reflected in water-filled calabashes placed on the ground. This creates a dynamic interplay, a mirroring between water, earth, and sky, between the cosmic and the everyday.

Inspired by the Blue Crab constellation—one of the few traditional constellations of the Kalina people that has endured through the ages to reach us, and whose rise above the horizon signals the solar cycle —Biabiany reimagines celestial cycles from her own perspective. Her interpretation provides us with new ways to position and orient human bodies in space.

The works of the installation are interconnected by ropes braided from banana fibers, interspersed with organic sculptures of charred wood, each representing distinctive elements of Guadeloupe's natural environment. Braiding, which is central to Biabiany's practice, becomes both a storytelling tool and a quest for fresh metaphors to express her relationship to the land, and an act of resistance against the erasure of language. Rooted in orality and deliberate slowness, it serves as a thread for reconsidering how we structure narrative and language.

The banana flower—a recurring motif in the installation—embodies the duality of Guadeloupe's history. It simultaneously symbolizes the harmful health effects of chlordecone¹ poisoning and the medicinal properties of the plant itself. Through this contrast, Biabiany explores the land's ability to reclaim its own memory and heal the wounds of colonialism, creating a space where memory, poetry, and politics converge.



dlo a rasin (water from the roots)

Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, Harrisonburg, VA
September 17 – October 18, 2024

Minia Biabiany's solo exhibition explores links between Virginia, where a toxic chemical chlordane (also known as kepone) was produced in the 1960s and places where it was exported for use as an insecticide- including Biabiany's home island, Guadeloupe. Chlordane is both carcinogenic as well as an endocrine disruptor and its pervasive contamination of soil and water has resulted in Guadeloupean population developing a predominance of nervous and reproductive system diseases, including the highest rate of prostate cancer in the world.

Working with collaborators in Hopewell, Virginia – a small town to the east of Richmond known as "The Chemical Capital of the South," Biabiany questions this town's relation to Guadeloupe, engaging those harmed by this toxicity, community and environmental activists, and those impacted by continuing legacies of slavery, colonial exploitation, and environmental racism.



soplo

Trueque, MAC Panama, Panama
May 24 — September 9, 2023

In *soplo exhibition*, Biabiany explores the relationship between the body and space, in connection with the historical, colonial, and identity-related perceptions of Caribbean territories. She selected two paintings by Panamanian artist Haydée Victoria Suescum, titled *Figuras esenciales* and *Hojas/Pulmones*, which feature an organic and dreamlike aesthetic.

These works inspired an installation composed of sculptures representing medicinal plants common to both Guadeloupe and Panama, such as elderberry, calaguala, and fennel. These sculptures, combined with Suescum's paintings, form a «healing forest,» symbolizing the connection between human bodies and nature, and inviting visitors to reflect on breathing and reconnecting with their environment.



the length of my gaze at night

Fundacion Jumex, Mexico City

October 17, 2024 – January 5, 2025

The works are direct references to the artists' surroundings, showcasing specific locations within the heterogeneous region, from the archaeological site of Yagul in Mexico to the Amazon, passing through Panajachel in Guatemala and the archipelago of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean. Through various formats such as installation, performance, video, and painting, the exhibition space transforms into an immersive environment where the construction of the contemporary landscape is explored, along with its political, historical, and emotional dimensions.

The title is inspired by the relationship between human bodies and unexplored landscapes, a theme present in the artists' practice. This is particularly evident in Ana Mendieta's significant series *Silueta*, in which Mendieta's figure is traced into the earth, making the connection between body and nature inherent. Just as undergrowth affects the area where it grows, in *Siluetas sobre maleza*, the artists' work proliferates and influences its context.



difé

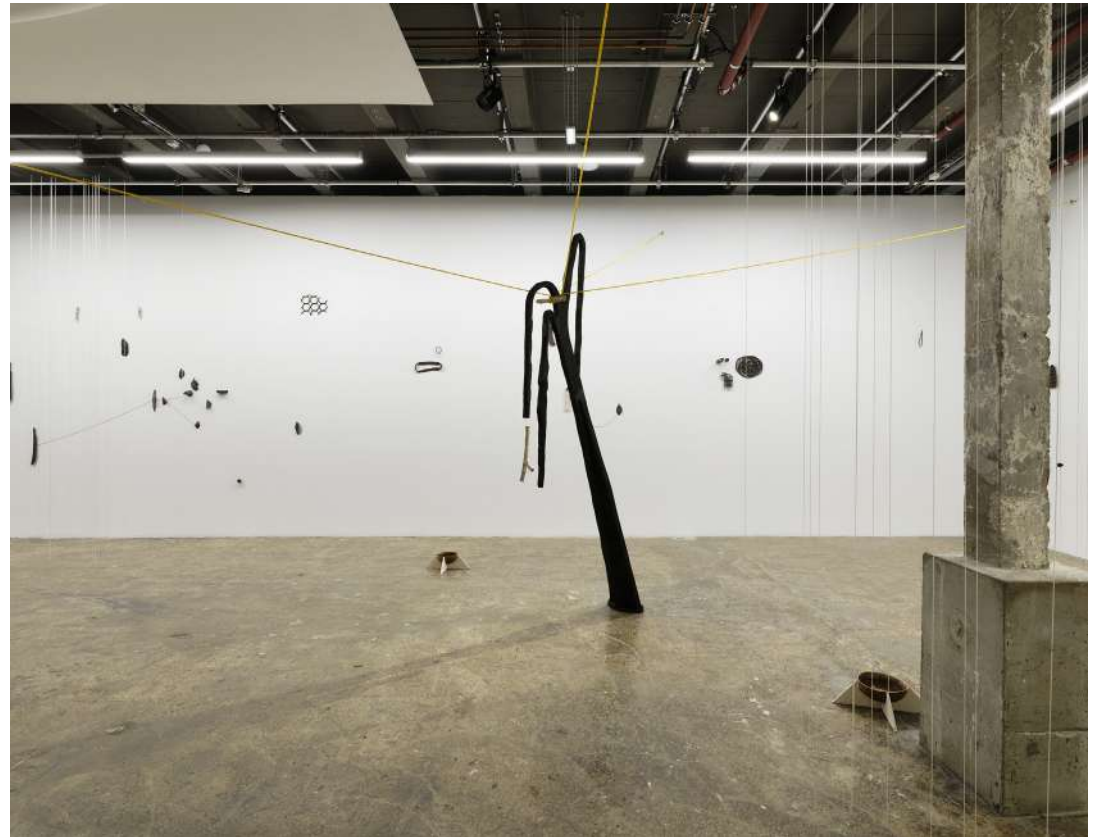
Palais de Tokyo, Paris

October 19, 2022 — January 1, 2023

Titled *difé*, meaning «fire» in Creole, her solo exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo continues with the installation *Nuit* in the group exhibition *Shéhérazade, la nuit*. Natural, transformed, or manufactured materials, realities and fictions, figures and metaphors intertwine and punctuate the spaces. They guide as much as they constrain movement and perception, imposing a certain slowness on the body.

The *difé* exhibition traces a path between figures of banana trees made of burnt wood and ceramic pathways forming a fragile and shifting alphabet on the walls. The banana tree evokes the history of Guadeloupe—its brutal exploitation, its monocultures for export, and the ongoing ecocide caused by the use of chlordecone, a pesticide employed between the 1970s and 1990s in plantations with the complicity of the French state, which continues to poison the soil, water, and inhabitants to this day. The presence of fire reflects an imaginary shaped by a land transformed by the volcanic activity of La Soufrière—a voice of lava that alters, expands, and reshapes. A gentle fire that consumes silence.

Rooted in a personal archaeology that considers the body as a territory of relation and in relation, the artist transposes a real place marked by various traumatic events into a psychological landscape.



nuit

Palais de Tokyo, Paris

October 19, 2022 — January 1st, 2023

Within the group exhibition *Shéhérazade, la nuit*, her installation *nuit* unfolds on the ground, tracing the traditional weaving pattern of the nasse, a trap system that the artist associates with the narrative of the territory, the voice of water, of the ocean as a cemetery—an echo also present in the video *the length of my gaze at night* (2022).

Suspended at varying heights beyond the human scale, sculptures with cutouts evoking both organic forms and elements of traditional Guadeloupean architecture have been burned, bearing witness to the violence of their gradual disappearance. Playing with different intensities and rhythms through shifting shadows and organic sculptures in wood and ceramic, the artist creates subtle events within the space.

With minimal means and through a perceptual rather than representational approach, Minia Biabiany transforms the tensions of her lived environment into an imaginary, poetic, and political insular landscape. Through interwoven narrative, sensory, and material threads, she examines the traces of the slave system and its ongoing colonial condition on bodies and territories.



l'oubli présent, lectures tracées

La Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire

October 8, 2022 – December 31, 2022

Many cultures have imagined shapes by connecting certain stars with imaginary lines. Everything is a sign: constellations have been used for celestial and terrestrial navigation, as well as to guide sailors. Associated with myths, they have also been invested with the power to read destiny.

Why does the farthest reach the closest? This seems to be the question Minia Biabiany poses as she reclaims the language of constellations. Printed on fabric, her drawings evoke a history where we encounter plants with healing properties, symbols of emancipatory political movements, La Soufrière—the volcano that has accompanied the artist since childhood—and animals. These constellations are connected by cotton threads to small ceramic pieces, shaped either geometrically or drawn from myth, depicting figures such as a mermaid, a fish, or a uterus.

On the ground, large undulating lines resemble the depth contours of nautical charts. Made of coarse salt—a material of purification and preservation—these reliefs disrupt our movements, inviting a careful and deliberate approach.

The artist also integrates charred wooden sculptures that resemble mental doorways, engaging with memory. Here, Minia Biabiany references the ties connecting Guadeloupe to the African continent and Gorée Island, known as the largest slave trade center on the African coast. Today, Gorée houses a vast memorial complex, including the *Door of No Return*, commemorating the deportation of millions of enslaved people.

But Minia Biabiany's doors are not without return. Adorned with black beads, punctuated with openings, and crossed by taut threads like ropes, they are doors that speak—of forgetting, which is inseparable from the act of remembering. They are doors that, once again, bring the earth and the sky closer together.



Peaux de terre, pétales tombés

Fondation Pernod Ricard
Bonaventure (Trafiquer les mondes)
September 7, 2021 — October 30, 2021

One of the great challenges of our time is for knowledge to be transformative—to awaken the imagination, to make the world even more fascinating, to free us from the dullness of «we already know» and «it's nothing but.»

In a world as fragile as ours, what can the artist do if not create beings and worlds, question truth, repair or short-circuit history, heal and repopulate the imagination, weave new narratives, or unravel the threads of possibilities buried within reality?

This exhibition brings together a generation of artists with diverse and multifaceted practices, deeply engaged with pressing social, identity-related, and global issues. They navigate an era of uncertainty, where the current crisis only heightens the sense of ambiguity and unpredictability.



Toli Toli

Akademie der Künste, 10th Berlin Biennale, Berlin
June 27, 2018 — September 5, 2020

Carrying throughout the installation *Toli Toli* (2018) in a revival of a forgotten past, elderly voices sing a song that was part of a traditional children's game in rural parts of Basse-Terre, an island of Guadeloupe. In the game, a child would find a *toli toli*, a butterfly chrysalis the shape of a tiny finger, point it in a direction, and playfully imagine a distant or (un)known destination through the words of the song. Today, the children of Basse-Terre no longer know this song.

Reflecting on knowledge systems, gestures, and narratives that are disappearing or already lost, Minia Biabiany explored the old technique of weaving bamboo fish traps for the installation *Toli Toli*. With great difficulty the artist managed to find a fisherman who could teach her this skill. In the work, weaving becomes a metaphor for the painful entanglement of Guadeloupe's tropical environment with the colonial past and present. Biabiany's traps cast shadows on the floor. Like ghosts they disappear and reappear, depending on the movement of the viewer through the space. Shifting between revealing and erasing the meshwork of an elusive past, the spectator enters the schizophrenic state of the islands.



musa nuit

La Verrière, Fondation d'entreprise Hermès,
Brussels

June 27 — September 5, 2020

The third artist invited by Guillaume Désanges, Minia Biabiany, contributes to the *Matters of Concern | Matières à panser* cycle with the exhibition *musa nuit*: a reflection on the sexuality of Guadeloupean and Caribbean women today and how it remains unconsciously marked by history. In the Brussels space, the visual artist creates a sensual and metaphorical journey, where handcrafted objects, sculptures, and a banana flower (also known as *musa*) contribute to the reactivation of a repressed memory. Born in Guadeloupe (France) in 1988, Minia Biabiany envisions the exhibition as a ritual, allowing her to address questions of identity in a way that is both poetic and politically engaged.



J'ai tué le papillon dans mon oreille

Magasin des Horizons, Grenoble
January 30 — June 7, 2020

In 2020, Minia Biabiany presented the exhibition *J'ai tué le papillon dans mon oreille* (*I Killed the Butterfly in My Ear*) at the Magasin des Horizons in Grenoble. This exhibition explored ecology from a non-Western, specifically Caribbean, perspective, questioning lesser-known aspects of French colonial history and the insidious violence that stems from it.

The main installation, titled *Pawòl sé van* (in Creole, "words are wind"), incorporated elements such as cotton threads, bamboo, and conch shells, creating an immersive space where visitors were invited to wander. This work examined the deconstruction of narratives through installations, videos, and drawings, constructing an ephemeral poetics connected to colonial realities.

Minia Biabiany's work focuses on spatial perception and explores the paradigm of weaving processes as well as the concept of opacity in visual, oral, and written languages. Her poetic and political approach encourages us to take a closer look at overlooked aspects of French colonial history, which continue to be perpetuated through concealed acts of violence.



Qui vivra verra, qui mourra saura (Who will live will see, who will die will know)

Crac Alsace, Altkirch
June 13— September 15, 2019

With *Qui vivra verra, Qui mourra saura* (Who will live will see, who will die will know) Minia Biabiany explores the forgotten knowledge that structures the traditional Guadeloupean «case» garden.

The «case» garden is one of the earliest forms of territorial appropriation and construction for the enslaved people of Guadeloupe. It is both a space for domesticating nature and a site of social relationships, particularly those between the living and the dead. The garden surrounding the dwelling consists of successive «shells» of ornamental, medicinal, or therapeutic plants that protect, heal its inhabitants, or enhance this private yet visible space.

The dwelling itself is built from a two-room module, approximately 2.80 × 5.60 meters, covered by a tin roof with two or four slopes—serving as the base for an expansion process. It typically has two doors on each long side and one on the shorter sides. Extensions are made by adding new rooms through the existing French doors, which then become interior doors—gradually transforming the house into a labyrinthine space according to the family's needs.

Its layout reflects a concern for protection, with careful cleaning of its surroundings and the presence of protective plants guarding against acts of witchcraft by spirits or through the placement of objects. The color of the house walls also conveys the diplomacy of its occupants with spirits, whether benevolent or malevolent. Blue signifies maximum protection, red repels attacks and manifests strength.

Finally, depending on its dominant color and the shape of its leaves, a single plant may have a different name depending on whether it is placed in front or behind the house. When planted at the front, *Qui vivra verra* promotes longevity, whereas at the back, *Qui mourra saura* facilitates the transmission of knowledge between generations.

The shell-like structure of the case garden serves as a tangible site of negotiation and mediation with the invisible. Although its structure still exists today, its meaning has almost entirely faded.

