

# Bill Bidjocka

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## Biography

Bili Bidjocka was born in Douala, Cameroon, in 1962, but lived in Paris from the age of twelve. Nowadays, he moves between Paris, Brussels, and New York. Though he says of himself that he is a painter not a writer, Bidjocka acknowledges that he often begins a work with writing, with a title. 'I am more inspired by writing than by painting' he says. He has made works that are indicative of this impulse, the impulse to write, to reflect on writing, and, by extension, to create an archive of his own travels, memories, and experiences, but also of the memories and thoughts of others. This led to his creating an ongoing *Le carnet de voyage* and also a mammoth project called *L'écriture infinie* – envisioned as the 'biggest archive of handwriting in the world' in which people write as if what they are writing is the last thing they will write by hand in their lives. Bidjocka is inspired by African knowledge systems and draws on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. A spectacular beaded curtain invokes the Seder question, 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' and suggests associations with sacred practices. A photograph of Venice adorned with beaded script inspired by Arabic texts asserts an Islamic presence largely occluded in the centres of Europe. In all of these movements, across religious and secular texts and practices, Bidjocka asserts the primacy of making meaning out of experience.

Bidjocka has exhibited in the Johannesburg, Havana, Dakar, Taipei, and Venice biennales. He has also participated in landmark international exhibitions such as *Zeitwenden* at the Kunstmuseum in Bonn in 1999; *Black President* at the New Museum, New York in 2003; and *Africa Remix* (Düsseldorf, London, Paris, Tokyo, and Johannesburg, 2005–2007). In collaboration with Emily Cantrell and Jesus Polanco, he founded Matrix Art Project in 1995, a contemporary exhibition space in New York with branches in Paris and Brussels.