

“Ivana Adaime Makac, *Tight Bonds*”

By Gabriela Galati

One of the central concepts informing Ivana Adaime Makac’s oeuvre is domestication. She started exploring the paradoxical relationships of humans with the non-human, as well as the different states of the living and un-domestication processes around twenty years ago. Her work is a continuous investigation in constant mutation in which one artwork is linked to the others, both conceptually and materially in different ways.

The central body of work in this exhibition focuses on Adaime Makac’s ongoing project *Gourdes sous contraintes* (*Gourds under Constraints*), which explores non-Western artisanal traditions that employ techniques to shape gourds or calabashes by applying constraints during their growth, guiding them to develop into altered, constrained forms. The gourds sometimes adapt their growth to the shape of the objects that constraint them, sometimes, they “rebel” against them, breaking them partially or completely, to continue their growth undisturbed. The artist explains: “*By cultivating different varieties of gourds (lagenaria siceraria), I observe the different behaviours that these fruits experience in response to the constraints imposed (ropes, various debris from protective packaging, waste from everyday objects). Some varieties will push back, or even tear the constraints by their growth force, while other varieties will adapt to the constraint and ‘self-sculpt’ through it*”.

Tight Bonds, the title of the exhibition, refers to the relationship between the gourds and the elements that have constrained—or not—their growth. It also points to the “tight bonds” connecting several of the artist’s projects, which are linked through the re-use or recycling of elements at both material and symbolic levels. *Tight Bonds* further suggests the entangled, often mutual, relationships of domestication between humans and other living beings, as well as the intertwined connections with the vegetal and animal realms. Finally, the title acknowledges the dialogues that Adaime Makac establishes with other artists, particularly, in some aspects of this show, with Marianne Berenhaut’s *Poupées Poubelles* series (1970-ongoing).

Developing between late March (the sowing period) and autumn’s end (the harvest period), *Gourdes sous contraintes* is a sculptural project that integrates gestures of gardening and organic farming, engaging with the presence of other non-human beings—such as slugs—often considered “harmful.” For example, one of the elements that contribute with the uniqueness and aesthetic qualities of these objects is the result of the action of bacteria on the gourds’ skin during the drying process. This “partnership” is just one of the aspects of the agency of the non-human living that the project explores. As the gourds or calabashes dry and harden over the winter, they become autonomous sculptures or elements within larger installations, as presented at **WIZARD LAB**.

For this exhibition, Adaime Makac has conceived the gallery as a single, cohesive installation in which gourd sculptures and bronze casts of calabashes intermingle with recurring and newly developed elements of the artist's practice. The sculptures and assemblages are installed sometimes on wooden market fruit cases, sometimes hanging from green elastic threads that form a light web close to the ceiling, and also, just resting against the wall, forming a sort of score, or abstract text. They intermingle with elements that are typically used for domesticating and guiding plant growth in certain directions, like gardening tutors; and with ready-made elements, like walking sticks, that the artist carefully searches for and selects because of the relationship with vegetal elements and constraints to adopt a certain shape during the growth of the trees and plants they are made of. The predominance of the green colour, typical of her previous installative works with other vegetal species, in particular Savoy cabbage, is reversed in *Tight Bonds* to the artificial elements—like fishnet stockings and elastic strings—, whereas the predominant colours are variations of brown and beige, typical of the dried gourds.

The concealment of decline and death is characteristic of flower-arranging techniques—as seen, for instance, in her *Zombie* series—and also appears in contemporary industrialised societies, reflected in the success of aesthetic surgery and anti-aging treatments. In *Tight Bonds*, Adaime Makac includes gourds that will continue to dry throughout the exhibition and after it ends. These elements show the always evolving, changing, and eventually decaying nature of all the living, and non-living too: whether evident or not, entropy is always at work.

Initiated in 2020, *Gourdes sous contraintes* is a long-term project that has been developed as part of a residency in the garden of the Clinamen association at Georges Valbon Park (La Courneuve).

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