



PRESS RELEASE

The Prix Fondation Édouard et Maurice Sandoz 2024 has been awarded to the artist Apnavi Makanji for their project entitled “K(NOT)WEED”.

Pully, Switzerland, 11 June 2024

In 1996, the Fondation Édouard et Maurice Sandoz established a prize for artistic creation amounting to CHF 100,000 in memory of the two Sandoz brothers whose names it bears, who were artists and patrons of the arts. For its 2024 edition, the prize was awarded for painting on the theme: “**Gardens, Flowers, and Herbaria**”.

The invited Jury for the Prix FEMS 2024, whose members were Isabelle CAILLAT, François FELBER, Etienne KRÄHENBÜHL, Charlotte LANDOLT, Jean-Léonard de MEURON, Lada UMSTÄTTER, Sylvie WUHRMANN, and which was chaired by François LANDOLT, met in May to consider the 59 anonymous projects which had been submitted for examination. At the end of a first deliberative session, the Jury’s choice fell on the projects submitted by five candidates, the finalists for the Prix FEMS 2024 : Marion JIRANEK, Apnavi MAKANJI, Guy OBERSON, Chantal QUÉHEN, and Maya ROCHAT.

At the end of the meetings with the finalists, after lengthy deliberations and numerous rounds of voting, it was unanimously decided by the members of the invited and permanent juries to award the Prix FEMS 2024 to **Apnavi Makanji** for their **K(NOT)WEED** project. The artist now has one year in which to complete the project which earned them this distinction, and they will receive for this purpose the sum of CHF 100,000, which is the annual amount of the prize.

Apnavi Makanji was born in Mumbai in 1976 and a few years later they arrived in Geneva, the city that would become both their place of residence and workplace. Their artistic work is characterised by a multidisciplinary approach that combines watercolour, sculpture and video, but with a predilection for drawing and a particular fondness for working on paper. Apnavi Makanji’s artistic trajectory is marked by questions relating to ecology, the notion of “home”, and colonialism. Through his art, the artist seeks to re-examine norms and to challenge prejudices, while, at the same time, weaving links between natural sciences, social sciences, and visual arts. New York, Mumbai, New Delhi, Miami, Brussels, and Geneva: since 2006, Apnavi Makanji’s works have been exhibited around the world in both collective and personal shows.

Apnavi Makanji’s ambition with this project is to tell the story of Japanese knotweed, from its origin in Asia to its arrival in Europe, as well as its change of status from a plant valued for its medicinal properties to an invasive species. The idea is beautiful and ambitious: to treat a subject exhaustively, from its roots to its flower, to delve further, and to investigate with the undisguised aim of achieving exhaustiveness. Taking the form of a series of works on large format paper, the artist aims to present their research using a singular visual language that is both extremely precise and intensely poetic, thus generating a complex reflection in which art, politics, and ecology interact.

Their investigation is thus transformed into a quest: Retracing the migratory path of Japanese knotweed, making the journey in reverse, and going back to its origins. Apnavi Makanji’s project aims to subtly explore the parallel between life paths – that of migrants, possibly their own – and that of the unloved knotweed. *Neophyte*, *naturalisation*, and *invasive species* are all botanical terms which are sometimes misused in a certain political discourse. Art thus offers another path which opens up the possibility of reversing the stigma and transforming the knotweed’s odyssey into an ode to the unloved.

The Fondation Édouard et Maurice Sandoz wishes to warmly thank the candidates for their participation in the Prix FEMS 2024 as well as to congratulate the finalists for the high quality and originality of their projects, which were commended by the members of the jury. The next edition of the Prix FEMS will be held in 2026, opening with the publication of the Regulations in November 2025.

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