These works were created to sing. While Koyo Kouoh's curatorial theme unfolds "in a minor key" throughout the Biennale, I wanted to create something that soars, something that longs, that reaches skyward from within a place marked by shadowed spiritual undertones. Venice, and the Arsenale in particular, carries a density and darkness that felt essential to respond to with uplift, breath, and resonance.

For me, Venice carries an ominous energy. It is a place where much has happened that does not belong in the light. The Arsenale holds that history—in its bricks, in the dampness of the walls, in the heaviness of its floors and ceilings. There is a kind of saturation in the air. When I began thinking about the work I wanted to make there, I knew I needed to introduce lift—chromatic lift—into a space that feels dense with memory.

I found a teal shipping container. I was drawn to it immediately.

A shipping container holds contradiction. The metal skin is surprisingly soft; when crushed, it crinkles into delicate tendrils, almost like paper. Yet it is structured by strong spinal beams that hold everything together. It offers both fragility and endurance. It is a material saturated with meaning: import, export, industry, containment, displacement. Assembly lines. Systems. The global circulation of goods and bodies. A container carries weight long before you touch it.

This particular container was teal—an unusual, almost singular color—manufactured by a company in China called Dongfeng, whose logo features two dolphins. Dolphins, often described as among the most intelligent mammals, carry associations of perception, sensitivity, and deep communication. Whether consciously or not, that lineage felt embedded in the object.

Inside the teal, I began thinking about the sky; about sunset tones: pale pinks, yellows, periwinkle, and deep blues dissolving into one another. I thought of the tension in the pastels of Willem de Kooning and how brightness can hold disturbance, how softness can carry violence. I am always thinking about him: the way chaotic color fields create bodies that feel unstable, yet alive.

Before crushing the container, I mapped the color with restraint. Every line of paint mattered. Once a color runs the full length of a container wall, it becomes fragmented when the structure is cut and crushed. That fragmentation allows it to be redistributed across multiple works. The painting had to anticipate rupture; I applied color knowing it would be broken.

After crushing the container with a machine, I brought the fragments back to the studio. Each piece was washed and reassembled. I approach metal as a form of collage, building my canvases to respond to the material, allowing steel to function as both armature and surface.

The three pieces in this body of work carry a different chromatic relationship. *Disciples of joy in the material world* holds a soft, pale pink—a tender echo against steel, subtle and playful, like a flower turning toward the sun, searching for light. *The shelter of knowledge* is anchored in a deep, grounded blue, a tone that feels almost oceanic, like the intelligence of a wave gathering force beneath the surface, offering stability and presence. *The bond between matter and heaven* is a 25-foot-tall, nine-part suspended installation, heavily engineered and architectural. Its periwinkle, almost cornflower, blue overwhelms me. It brings tears to my eyes. It is the kind of blue painters use as a final touch, the note that pulls everything into coherence, while simultaneously opening it outward and reaching upward.

Koyo's mentor, Issa Samb, whose 2014 performance *From the Ethics of Acting to the Empire Without Signs* explored sound as an embodied and ethical force, has added a new valence to how I think about vibration and meaning. Much of my work echoes poetry: its memory, its cadence, its ability to carry life through form. Each piece is intentionally imbued with a sense of aliveness, as I attempt to provoke matter at its vibrational, atomic quality—something breathing, something awake.

When I apply the paint skins, I think of painting in the most physical sense. I use a brush, yes, but also my whole body. The gesture is not only manual; it is full-bodied. The marking becomes a stroke of weight and breath, not just pigment. The steel receives the color, but it also resists it. That tension—between softness and force, lift and gravity, system and rupture—is where the work lives.

Together, the works function as an ode and an invocation, an offering meant to replenish the provocative force within each of us. *The bond between matter and heaven* soars; *The shelter of knowledge* grounds; *Disciples of joy in the material world* plays. In their interplay, they reach, they breathe, they sing.