A Scavengers Reign artist explores contemplative sci-fi in new comics

You may recognize Jonathan Djob Nkondo's work from animated projects like the surreal sci-fi series *Scavengers Reign* or the recent Gorillaz short film *The Mountain, The Moon Cave and The Sad God*. But before that the French artist and animator made self-published comics that depicted strange alien worlds and future societies. Now he's revisiting that work with a lush release of two graphic novels. "I think most of the people who follow my work don't necessarily know that I published comics," Nkondo tells *The Verge*. "I am mainly known for my work in animations, so revisiting those books and promoting them again was a good way to spread the word."

Earlier this month Nkondo launched a Kickstarter for English versions of these books, and the campaign blew past its funding goals. He says that he "wasn't expecting much" with the crowdfunding campaign, but it so far has raised more than $100,000, when the initial goal was just $7,500. "I might be living too much in my bubble," Nkondo says. "I'm not really aware about the things that would interest people."

The two books in question are called *Peaceful Remission* and *Wandering*, and they both were previously published in French. As part of the campaign, the black-and-white comics will be available in both digital and hardcover formats, depending on how much you pledge; a limited-edition version complete with an artbook is also available at the $99 tier.

Peaceful Remission follows the lives of an elderly couple who live in a sort of space-age suburb where the houses are built

into asteroids, further complicating their already complicated relationship. *Wandering*, meanwhile, is a dialogue-free trek through a far-future vision seen from two perspectives: a wealthy man inside of a futuristic city, and a younger man trying to survive the wasteland that exists outside of it.

Both explore personal relationships on an intimate scale, and for fans coming from *Scavengers Reign*, the books move at a similarly measured, contemplative pace. They also just look cool as hell, with stunningly original designs for the architecture, technology, and more. Nkondo says that when it comes to design, he starts with the aesthetic side before worrying about practicality or realism. “I think about shapes in the first place and then I try to apply them to fashion, architecture, or vehicles,” he says. “My designs could look cool but usually they aren’t the most pragmatic.”

Another similarity between *Scavengers Reign* and Nkondo’s solo projects is a sense of quiet. Both rely more on visual storytelling than dialogue, and that’s especially true in *Wandering*, which has no text whatsoever. It forces the reader to slow down and absorb each image to understand what’s going on. Nkondo says this form is simply a byproduct of the stories he wants to explore. “I feel like in comics, like in my short films, the stories that I tell aren’t necessarily dialogue-driven so I don’t feel the pressure to add too many words,” he explains. “I’m fine with depicting actions or moods with visuals.”

There’s still some time left in the Kickstarter campaign, and the books are expected to start shipping this summer. It’s a chance for those who came to Nkondo’s work through his larger collaborations to discover a new side, one that has a similar energy but more personal stakes. When it comes to the future, however, he notes that two upcoming projects — a comic and a short film — are a bit of a departure, exploring a more dialogue-heavy style of storytelling. “It is a challenge as interesting as the more silent stories I worked on,” he says.

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