

The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo and Itaú present

The Brazilian Pavilion at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Under the title Terra [Earth], the representation of the Brazilian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2023 proposes to rethink the past in order to design possible futures, bringing to the fore actors forgotten by the architectural canons, in dialogue with the curatorship of the edition, Laboratory of the Future.

São Paulo, 30 March 2023 – The Fundação Bienal de São Paulo announces the project that will occupy the Brazilian Pavilion at the **18th International Architecture Exhibition**, La Biennale di Venezia [Venice Biennale]. The exhibition is jointly curated by the architects **Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares**, and **features the following collaborators, announced here:** Mbya-Guarani Indigenous people; Tukano, Arawak and Maku Indigenous peoples; Alaká Weavers (Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá); Ilê Axé Iyá Nassô Oká (Casa Branca do Engenho Velho); Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto; Ayrson Heráclito; Day Rodrigues with the collaboration of Vilma Patrícia Santana Silva (Grupo Etnicidades FAU-UFBA); Fissura collective; Juliana Vicente; Thierry Oussou and Vídeo nas Aldeias.

From a reflection on the Brazil of yesterday, of today and of the future, the exhibition places land at the center of the debate both as a poetic and as a concrete element in the exhibition space. To this end, the entire pavilion will be filled with earth, putting the public in direct contact with the tradition of Indigenous territories, *Quilombola* dwellings, and *candomblé* ceremonies.

"Our curatorial proposal is based on thinking of Brazil as earth. Earth as soil, fertilizer, ground and territory. But also earth in its global and cosmic sense, as planet and common house of all life, human and non-human. Earth as memory, and also as future, looking at the past and at heritage to expand the field of architecture in the face of the most pressing contemporary urban, territorial and environmental issues," say the curators.

Elements of Brazilian popular dwellings are present at the entrance to the Brazilian pavilion and contrast with the building's modernist features, such as the fences with the *sankofa* symbol – pertaining to an African writing system called Adinkra, by the Akan people of West Africa, which has been widely used in fence designs and can be seen in most Brazilian cities, meaning "to look at the knowledge of our ancestors in search of building a better future".

The first gallery of the modernist pavilion has been named "**Decolonizing the Canon**" by the curators, questioning the imaginary surrounding the version that Brasília, the capital of Brazil, was built in the middle of nowhere, given that its Indigenous and *Quilombola* inhabitants had been removed from the region in the colonial period, and were finally pushed to the fringes with the imposition of the modernist city. The aim is thus to show an image of a more complex, diverse and plural territory, architecture and heritage of national formation and modernity in Brazil, presenting other narratives through architecture, landscape and heritage

neglected by the architectural canon. In a variety of formats, the works that fill the gallery range from the projection of an audiovisual work by the filmmaker Juliana Vicente, created in conjunction with the curatorship and commissioned for the occasion, to a selection of archive photographs, compiled by the historian Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, to the ethno-historical map of Brazil by Curt Nimuendajú and the “Brasília Quilombola map”, the latter also commissioned for the occasion.

The second gallery, named **"Places of Origin, Archaeologies of the Future"**, welcomes us with the screening of the video installation in two supports by Ayrson Heráclito – *The Shaking of the Casa da Torre and of the Maison des Esclaves in Gorée*, from 2015 – and turns to memories and the archaeology of ancestry. Occupied by socio-spatial projects and practices of Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian knowledge about land and territory, the curatorship brings forth five essential memorial heritages of reference: The Casa da Tia Ciata, in the urban context of Pequena África in Rio de Janeiro; the *Tava*, as the Guarani call the ruins of the Jesuit missions in Rio Grande do Sul; the ethnogeographic complex of *terreiros* in Salvador; the Indigenous Agroforestry Systems of the Rio Negro in the Amazon; and the Iauaretê waterfall of the Tukano, Arawak and Maku. The exhibition demonstrates what several scientific studies prove: that Indigenous and Quilombola lands are the best preserved territories in Brazil, and in that way point towards a post-climate change future where “decolonization” and “decarbonization” walk hand in hand. Their practices, technologies and customs linked to land management and production, like other ways of doing and understanding architecture, are located in the earth, are equally universal and carry within themselves the ancestral knowledge to re-signify the present and design other futures, for both human and nonhuman communities alike, towards another planetary future.

For José Olympio da Veiga Pereira, president of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, “the International Architecture Exhibition of the Biennale di Venezia is a privileged space for the discussion of the most urgent issues in architecture and urbanism, a field that ultimately reflects on our dynamics of life through the use and sharing of common spaces as a society. At a time when humanity is facing great challenges, the exhibition proposed by architects Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares is a way of giving visibility to research and practices that can contribute to the collective shaping of our future.”

About the curators

Gabriela de Matos is an Afro-Brazilian architect and urban planner, born in Vale do Rio Doce in Minas Gerais, who creates multidisciplinary projects with the aim of promoting and highlighting Brazilian architectural and urban culture from the perspective of race and gender. She graduated from the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at PUC Minas in 2010, and, in 2016, specialized in Sustainability and Management of the Built Environment at UFMG. A Master's student at Diversitas – Center for the Study of Diversities, Intolerances and Conflicts of the Faculty of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences (FFLCH) of the University of São Paulo, she currently teaches undergraduate Architecture and Urbanism at Escola da Cidade. She is the CEO of Estúdio de Arquitetura – Gabriela de Matos, created in 2014. She is also vice-president of the São Paulo department of the Brazilian Institute of Architects, and is the founder of the project *Arquitetas Negras*, which maps the production of black Brazilian architects. De Matos researches architecture produced in Africa and its diaspora with a focus on Brazil. Among other things, she proposes actions that promote the debate on gender and race in architecture as a means of bringing visibility to the issue. She was awarded Architect of the Year 2020 by IAB RJ.

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Paulo Tavares explores the interfaces between architecture, visual cultures, curatorship, theory and advocacy. Operating across multiple media and mediums, his work opens up a collaborative arena focused on environmental justice and counter-narratives in architecture. His designs and texts have been featured in various national and international exhibitions and publications, including *Harvard Design Magazine*, *The Architectural Review*, the Oslo Architecture Triennial, the Istanbul Design Biennale, and the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo - *Live Uncertainty*. Tavares was co-curator of the Chicago Architecture Biennale 2019 (USA) and is currently a member of the curatorial board of the second edition of the Sharjah Architecture Triennale 2023 (UAE). He has curated the projects *Acts of Repair* (Preston Thomas Memorial Symposium, Cornell University, USA), and *Climate Emergency > Emergence*, at the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT) in Lisbon (Portugal). Tavares is the author of several texts and books that question the colonial legacies of modernity, including *Forest Law/Floresta Jurídica* (2014), *Des-Habitat* (2019), *Memória da terra* (2019), *Lúcio Costa era racista?* (2020), and *Derechos No-Humanos* (2022). His design projects are also featured at this year's Biennale in the Arsenal pavilion.

About Brazil's participation in the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of the Biennale di Venezia

The prerogative of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo to officially represent Brazil in the Biennale di Venezia is the result of a decades-long partnership with the Brazilian Federal Government, which has granted the Fundação Bienal the responsibility of appointing the curators and conceiving and producing the exhibitions, as a recognition of the excellence of its work in the artistic and cultural field. Created with the aim of promoting Brazil's artistic production in the most traditional art event in the world, the exhibitions take place in the Brazilian Pavilion, designed by Henrique Mindlin and built in 1964.

Brazilian Pavilion at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia Exhibition: *Terra* [Earth]

Commissioner: José Olympio da Veiga Pereira, President of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo

Curators: Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares

Participants: Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto; Ayrson Heráclito; Day Rodrigues with a collaboration from Vilma Patrícia Santana Silva; Fissura collective; Ilê Axé Iyá Nassô Oká (Casa Branca do Engenho Velho); Juliana Vicente; Mbya-Guarani Indigenous peoples; Tukano, Arawak and Maku Indigenous peoples; Alaká Weavers (Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá); Thierry Oussou; Vídeo nas Aldeias.

Venue: Brazilian Pavilion

Address: Giardini Napoleonici di Castello, Padiglione Brasile, 30122, Venice, Italy

Date: 20 May to 26 November 2023

Press and professional preview: 18 and 19 May 2023

Press contacts

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