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The Ministry of Culture, the São Paulo State Government, through the Department of Culture and the Creative Economy, São Paulo Municipal Department of Culture, the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo and Itaú present the 36th Bienal de São Paulo

36ª Bienal de São Paulo: Nem todo viandante anda estradas / Da humanidade como prática [Not All Travellers Walk Roads / Of Humanity as Practice]

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With Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung as chief curator, the 36th Bienal de São Paulo announces its title, curatorial concept, partners and visual identity, as well as an important change in its exhibition period

São Paulo, Oct 24, 2024 – The Fundação Bienal de São Paulo has announced the title, curatorial concept, partners and visual identity of the 36th Bienal de São Paulo, which will take place as of September 2025 at the Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion. Entitled *Not All Travellers Walk Roads – Of Humanity as Practice*, the edition will be led by chief curator Prof. Dr. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung together with his conceptual team of co-curators Alya Sebti, Anna Roberta Goetz and Thiago de Paula Souza, as well as co-curator at large Keyna Eleison and strategy and communication advisor Henriette Gallus. The exhibition takes its cue from AfroBrazilian poet Conceição Evaristo's enigmatic poem "Da calma e do silêncio" [Of calm and silence].

The exhibition is also accompanied by a historic change in the organization of the event, which is traditionally held from September to December. The Fundação Bienal is pleased to announce that the 36th Bienal will be extended by an additional four weeks, being presented free of charge to the public from September 6, 2025, to January 11, 2026. The decision was made by President Andrea Pinheiro and her Board of Directors to further expand the reach of the exhibition, allowing a larger number of visitors to enjoy it during the school holiday period.

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The central proposal of this Bienal is to rethink humanity as a verb, a living practice, in a world that requires reimagining relationships, asymmetries and listening as the basis for coexistence, based on three curatorial fragments/axes. The metaphor of the estuary – a place where different water currents meet and create a space for coexistence – guides the curatorial project, inspired by Brazilian philosophies, landscapes and mythologies. This concept reflects the multiplicity of encounters that have marked Brazil's history and proposes that humanity comes together and transforms itself through an attentive ear and negotiation between different beings and worlds.

According to chief curator Prof. Dr. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung: “In a time when humans seem to have, again, lost grip on what it means to be human, in a time when humanity seems to be losing the ground under its feet, in a time of aggravated sociopolitical, economic, environmental crisis across the globe, it seems to us urgent to invite artists, scholars, activists, and other cultural practitioners anchored within a wide range of disciplines to join us in rethinking what humanity could mean and conjugating humanity. Despite or because of all these past-present-future crises and urgencies, we must afford ourselves the privilege of imagining another world through another concept and practice of humanity. *So Not All Travellers Walk Roads — Of Humanity as Practice* is an invitation to think and manifest humanity as a verb and a practice, to think about humanity as encounter(s) and negotiations upon the meeting of varying worlds. It is an invitation to deliberate on the dismantling of asymmetries as a prerequisite for humanity as a practice, just as this Bienal gives us to center joy, beauty and their poeticalities as the gravitational forces that keep our worlds on their axes... for joy and beauty are political. This is an invitation to imagine a world in which we place an accent on our humanities in a moment when humanity is literally failing us.”

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Regarding the 36th edition, Andrea Pinheiro, president of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, reflects: "The Bienal de São Paulo is a Brazilian artistic legacy, and this edition is the result of a collective process that began with our advisory board, responsible for deliberating and selecting the curatorial project most aligned with contemporary challenges. This year, we were thrilled to receive the project *Not All Travellers Walk Roads – Of Humanity as Practice*, proposed by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung. This project not only reaffirms the Bienal's role as a space for reflection and dialogue on the most pressing issues of our time, but also demonstrates the institutional commitment of the Fundação to promoting artistic practices in a way that is accessible and relevant to diverse audiences. And it is precisely with the aim of reaching as many people as possible that we have extended the duration of the exhibition by four weeks, until January 2026, so that more visitors have the opportunity to engage with the incredible artistic production that the curatorial team is gathering."

The curatorial proposal

This edition of the Bienal de Sao Paulo is structured as a research project that will manifest itself in three fragments/axes. The first curatorial fragment/axis advocates for claiming space and time, it seeks to slow down and pay attention to details and other beings that constitute our surroundings. This fragment situates itself within Conceição Evaristo's poem "Da calma e do silêncio" and evokes the importance of exploring the submerged worlds that only the silence of poetry and poetic listening can access, by welcoming differences and suggesting a reconnection with the natural environment and its subtleties.

In the second fragment/axis, the Bienal invites the public to see themselves in the reflection of the other. The proposal is to question what we see when we look at ourselves and others, confronting the barriers and borders of our societies. This fragment situates itself within the poem by Haitian poet René Depestre *Une Conscience En Fleur Pour Autrui* and it explores the interconnectedness of experiences, proposing a coexistence that is more attentive to collective needs.

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Finally, the third fragment/axis focuses on spaces of encounters – like estuaries that are spaces of multiple encounters, not only the meeting of sweet and salt water, but also the encounter of the so-called new world by the enslaved people abducted from Africa. This fragment reflects on coloniality, its power structures and the ramifications thereof in our societies today. This reflection is based on the manguébit movement and its ‘Crabs with Brains’ manifesto, understood as a representation of the so-called collective social brain. Brazil’s history, marked by the fusion of Indigenous peoples, Europeans and enslaved Africans, is a microcosm of the power asymmetries that still persist. Along these lines, the exhibition explores how cultures and societies deal with these differences and create new paths of coexistence and beauty, as manifested in Patrick Chamoiseau and Edouard Glissant’s *The intractable beauty of the world. tável do mundo*”, de Patrick Chamoiseau e Edouard Glissant.

Global convergences

As an essential part of its curatorial proposal, the 36th Bienal de São Paulo will feature the *Invocations*: a series of partnerships with cultural institutions from different parts of the world that precede the São Paulo show. *Invocations* are poetry, music, performance, discursive, panel gatherings that echo the central ideas of the 36th Bienal, investigating and apprehending notions of humanity within different geographies.

The cycle of *Invocations* will include talks, lectures, workshops and performances in four different cities around the globe. The first two events will be presented in 2024 in Marrakech, Morocco, and Les Abymes, Grande-Terre, Guadeloupe. The Moroccan encounter will take place at Le18 and Fondation Dar Bellarj, lead by Laila Hida and Maha El Madi; while the second *Invocation* will take place at Lafabri’K, led by Léna Blou. In 2025, *Invocations #3* and *#4* will take place in Zanzibar, Tanzania, and Japan, respectively, in venues yet to be announced.

The first *Invocation*, entitled “*Souffles: On Deep Listening and Active Reception*”, and held in November 14 and 15 in Marrakech, will be a deliberation on the precarity of breath, on Gnawa, and Sufi cultures, and address listening as a practice of coexistence.

The second *Invocation*, entitled “*Bigidi mè pa tonbé!*” [Totter, but never fall!], presented in December 5 to 7 in Les Abymes, Guadeloupe, will reflect on the intelligence of the movement of bodies between rupture and adaptation to maintain the balance in movement in times of crisis.

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The third Invocation held in February 2025 in Zanzibar, entitled “Mawali-Taqsim: Improvisation as a Space and Technology of Humanity”, is based on the perception of Taarab not only as a rhythm, but as a construction of encounters and multiple exchanges that the territory of Tanzania and the Indian Ocean have fostered.

The fourth and final Invocation, held in March 2025 in Japan, “The Uncanny Valley or I’ll Be your Mirror” brings thoughts and encounters about the dynamics of affection between humans and non-humans, people and machines in an exercise of building co-existences, interactions, distances and proximities.

These meetings will act as tributaries, converging on the main body of the 36th Bienal in São Paulo, at the Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion.

An important tributary of the 36th Bienal de São Paulo will be Casa do Povo [lit. The People's House], in São Paulo, a cultural center that revisits and reinvents notions of culture, community and memory. It will host a performance program developed by Benjamin Seroussi (Casa do Povo’s artistic director) and Daniel Blanga Gubbay (Kunstenfestivaldesarts’ artistic director). Other tributaries will be announced in due course.

Visual identity

The Berlin studio Yukiko, founded by Michelle Phillips and Johannes Conrad, will be responsible for the visual identity of the 36th Bienal. Renowned for its experimental style, the studio brings an approach that dialogues directly with the curatorial concept of this edition, creating a visual and graphic experience that reinforces the role of listening and the idea of confluences based on the image of the estuary.

The designers explain: “The visual concept for the 36th Bienal de São Paulo is inspired by the idea of humanity as a practice, emphasizing interconnectedness, empathy, and creative coexistence. Drawing from the curatorial axis of sound and the manguebit movement, the visual identity is grounded in polyphonic sound waves and the harmonic series, symbolizing the overlapping frequencies of human experiences. These sound waves represent the idea that humanity is constantly evolving and reshaping through encounters, much like the estuary, where multiple worlds meet and blend. This visual manifestation reinforces the Bienal’s core message: that through intentional listening and deep reflection, we can reimagine humanity as a living, breathing practice.”

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About the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo

Founded in 1962, the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo is a private, nonprofit institution with no party political or religious ties, whose actions aim to democratize access to culture and foster interest in artistic creation. Every two years, the Foundation holds the Bienal de São Paulo, the largest exhibition of the Southern Hemisphere, and its traveling exhibitions program in several cities in Brazil and abroad. The institution is also the custodian of two items of Latin American artistic and cultural heritage: a historical archive of modern and contemporary art that is a standard reference in Latin America (the Arquivo Histórico Wanda Svevo), and the Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion, the head office of the Foundation, designed by Oscar Niemeyer and listed as historical heritage. The Fundação Bienal de São Paulo is also responsible for conceiving and producing Brazil's representations at the Venice Biennales of art and architecture, a prerogative bestowed upon it decades ago by the Federal Government in recognition of the excellence of its contributions to Brazilian culture.

36th Bienal de São Paulo – Nem todo viandante anda estradas – Da humanidade como prática [Not All Travellers Walk Roads – Of Humanity as Practice]

Chief curator: Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung / Co-curators: Alya Sebti, Anna Roberta Goetz, Thiago de Paula Souza / Co-curator at large: Keyna Eleison / Strategy and communications advisor: Henriette Gallus

Sept 6, 2025 – Jan 11, 2026

Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion

Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo, Brazil

The title of the 36th Bienal de São Paulo, 'Not All Travellers Walk Roads', is made up of verses by the writer Conceição Evaristo.

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