

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

## **Fundação Bienal de São Paulo presents the first *Invocation* of the 36th Bienal in Morocco**

*On November 14 and 15, Marrakech will be the first city to host a series of activations (poetry, performances, music, discourse) leading up to the next edition of the Bienal*

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**São Paulo, November 4, 2024** – The first *Invocation* of the 36th Bienal de São Paulo – *Not All Travellers Walk Roads – Of Humanity as Practice* will take place in Marrakech, Morocco, on November 14 and 15. Titled *Souffles: On Deep Listening and Active Reception*, the *Invocation* focuses on the circularity as well as the precarity of breath, Gnawa music as a way of being, Sufi cultures, and listening as a practice of coexistence, as well as place- and space-making.

The gathering is conceived by the 36th Bienal's conceptual team in collaboration with Laila Hida, as part of her curatorial practice of exploring sound and music as channels of knowledge. Organized in partnership with LE 18 and the Fondation Dar Bellarj, the *Invocation* features Maalem Abdellah El Gour, Fatima-Zahra Lakrissa, Ghassan El Hakim, Kenza Sefrioui, Laila Hida, Leila Bencharnia, Maha Elmadi, Mourad Belouadi, Simnikiwe Buhlungu and Taoufiq Izzediou.

Marrakech is a crossroads of cultures, belief systems and languages, with much of its vast knowledge being transmitted through sound and gesture. The first *Invocation* explores how these sonic (oral and aural) traditions are enacted, preserved and passed down. The ancient practices of deep listening – from the performative rituals of Gnawa brotherhood to the oral tradition of Halqa in North African theater forms – serve as the starting point for this edition.

The title is borrowed from *Souffles*, a poem by Birago Diop, on the potential of listening to a plethora of beings — animate and inanimate —, but also a pioneering magazine that dared to envision liberation and

emancipatory political imaginaries through poetry and experimentation with language. Founded in Morocco in 1966 and inspired by thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Mário de Andrade and René Depestre, it was one of the few to document these oral traditions until its last issue in 1971.

For *Souffles: On Deep Listening and Active Reception*, a group of cultural practitioners from different disciplines, such as writers, musicians, artists, poets, performers as well as scientists, were invited to contribute to the discursive and performative program. It will also investigate how these traditions have been accessed and preserved in different media over the years, including publications.

The program is divided into two days, November 14 and 15, the first based on the spiritual practice of listening to rhythm and its resonance in the body, and the second focused on breathing to create and claim spaces and existence, and on the legacy of *Souffles* magazine.

This *Invocation* will take place at [LE 18](#), a multidisciplinary cultural space and artist residency established in 2013 in the Medina of Marrakech, and at the [Fondation Dar Bellarj](#), a cultural center dedicated to enhancing Morocco's architectural, artistic and cultural heritage through pedagogical, inclusive and community-based programming and approaches.

**Program:**

**Nov 14, 2024, Thurs, LE 18**

11am–12pm Introduction by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, poetry reading by Alya Sebti, followed by a collective listening session of poetry and guembri Maalem

12pm–1pm *Qui est Ahmed Ben Draoui?* Performative reading on fiction and representation of the origin by Laila Hida with Mourad Belouadi

3pm–4:30pm Lecture by Ghassan El Hakim on his research contextualizing the practice of Gnawa master Maalem Abdellah El Gourad

5pm–6pm Lecture performance by Simnikiwe Buhlungu on synthesis, intonation and looping

6:30pm–7pm Introduction and screening of the film *La terre en transe* by Taoufiq Izzediou

7:30pm–9pm *Gnawa Again!* Performance by Ghassan El Hakim with Gnawa master Maalem Abdellah El Gourd accompanied by multi instrumentalist Mourad Belouadi

**Nov 15, 2024, Fri, LE 18 and Fondation Dar Bellarj**

10am–11am Collective reading of Abdellatif Laâbi's poems with Kenza Sefrioui [at LE 18]

11am–12pm Lecture performance by Kenza Sefrioui on the legacy of *Souffles* [at LE 18]

12pm–1pm Lecture by Fatima-Zahra Lakrissa on the magazine *Maghreb Art* [at LE 18]

3pm–4:30pm Listening session by Leila Bencharnia [at LE 18]

5:30pm–6:30pm Opening speech by Maha Elmadi and video screening by Laila Hida [at Fondation Dar Bellarj]

6:30pm–7:30pm *Hadra*, final performance with Lalla Khala and the Gifted Mothers of Dar Bellarj [at Fondation Dar Bellarj]

**About the *Invocations***

In preparation for the 36th Bienal de São Paulo – *Not All Travellers Walk Roads – Of Humanity as Practice*, and to introduce and tune in to the conceptual thread, a series of public programs called *Invocations* will take place in four different cities around the world: Marrakech, Morocco; Les Abymes, Grande-Terre, Guadeloupe; Zanzibar, Tanzania; Tokyo, Japan.

Each edition mirrors the exhibition concept of *Humanity as Practice* from a specific local context, reconfiguring and expanding it through live events and a publication. The aim of the *Invocations* is to expand the vocabulary of humanity, at points of intersection between different longitudes and latitudes.

If humanity were a verb, how would it be conjugated in these different geographies? The Senegalese director Djibril Diop Mambéty once described film – and therefore art – as “la grammaire de ma grande mère” [my grandmother’s grammar], alluding to the familiarity of art, the intergenerational aspects of artistic practices, the colloquialism of art and art/artistic practice as grammar. The four *Invocations* will explore how artistic practices around the globe help to situate, enrich and expand these grammars.

### **About the participants**

**Abdellah El Gour**

Abdellah "Boulkhair" El Gour is a Master healer Gnawa musician born in 1947 in the Kasbah of Tangier, Morocco. He transformed his traditional medina in Tangiers into an institute for the instruction, practice and promotion of Gnawa culture.

**Fatima-Zahra Lakrissa**

Fatima-Zahra Lakrissa is an independent curator and researcher. She is interested in the layered subjectivities of European modern art history and the construction of Moroccan modernism through the works of artists engaging with the vernacular. Her research is oriented towards the sociology and history of the artistic avant-garde in Morocco during the 1960s and 1970s. Lakrissa also studies contemporary art practices that tend to reorganize relations between rural and urban areas, scholarly and popular culture, and crafts and fine arts, and analyzes the new patrimonial and historiographical perspectives they reflect.

**Ghassan El Hakim**

Ghassan El Hakim is an actor and director. He founded the Jouk Attamthil Al Bidaoui troupe and the show Kabareh Cheikhats, an ode to traditional female singers and dancers. Since then, he has taken part in various international conferences on popular music in Morocco and the effect of colonization on the musical culture of formerly occupied people.

**Kenza Sefrioui**

Kenza Sefrioui is a cultural journalist, literary critic and publisher. She was in charge of the literary section in the *Journal hebdomadaire*. She wrote the doctoral thesis in comparative literature at the University Paris

IV - Sorbonne Souffles (1966-1973), *espoirs de révolution culturelle au Maroc* (Sirocco Edition, 2013 Grand Atlas Prize).

Laila Hida

Laila Hida is an artist based in Marrakech, where she founded LE 18 in 2013. Hida's work uses private spaces and narratives to explore the place of the individual within a society gripped by change. She investigates projections and frictions of desire, ideas, and concepts in both local and western contexts through curation, publishing, installations, and photography projects.

Leila Bencharnia

Born in Morocco, Leila Bencharnia is a sound artist, acousmatic interpreter, and musician based in Milan, Italy. Daughter of a traditional Moroccan musician, their dialogue with sound began in the village near the Atlas mountains where they spent their childhood. Their sonic work is composed of analogic material including tapes, vinyls, and synthesizers.

Maha Elmadi

Maha Elmadi is director of the Dar Bellarj Foundation since 2007, succeeding its founder Susanna Biedermann, with whom she began her career. Since then, she has pursued the initiator's mission of building a transgenerational community around the questions of transmission and neighborliness. Among her many projects and achievements, she is the initiator of the Mamans douées group and concept, and initiated the Achoura festival.

Mourad Belouadi

Mourad Belouadi is a multi-instrumentalist, photographer, currently based in Sale, Morocco, son of a Gnawa musician. He studied and traveled with Gnawa Masters and embarked on a solo path, constantly picking up and mastering new instruments, at times even building them himself.

Simnikiwe Buhlungu

Simnikiwe Buhlungu is an artist from Johannesburg engaged in a research-based practice that involves film, sound, installations, and text. Her works seem to ask important and long-overdue questions about the nature of knowledge production and dissemination, as well as the

contexts and circumstances that surround these epistemological phenomena.

Taoufiq Izzediou

Choreographer Taoufiq Izeddiou is inspired by the ritual dances and music which seek transcendence and self-transcendence in trance. Breath is the core source of the practice of the Hmadcha, a brotherhood born at the end of the 17th century in Morocco. The founder of On Marche festival combines tradition and contemporary research in his creations.

**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 Cicillo 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.

**About LE 18**

LE 18 is a multidisciplinary cultural and residency space established in 2013 and located in the medina of Marrakech (Morocco). It aims to provide time and space for research, creation, encounter, mutual learning and the crosspollination of knowledge. Engaging with a fluid network of collaborators and a variety of formats including exhibitions, residencies, conversations, workshops, and publications, LE 18 has become a collective learning platform. One which permits it to listen to, and critically tackle the multiple dynamics, processes, and infrastructures which shape the cultural, political, and economic lives of our local ecosystem and its place in a global dynamic.

**About Fondation Dar Bellarj**

The Fondation Dar Bellarj was created by Susanna Biedermann as a place to celebrate and learn at the same time. Experienced as a cultural center dedicated to the enhancement of Morocco's architectural and artistic heritage, and its living culture, Dar Bellarj is a place for living, a school for the senses. Its location in the heart of Marrakech's Medina makes it a place where artists and Marrakchi alike can meet and share. Dar Bellarj places art and culture at the heart of its project, through the heritage dimension of its architecture, but above all through a rich program and an inclusive, community-based approach to teaching. Contemporary art dialogues with traditional arts, opening the doors to a transcultural imagination. Open to all, Dar Bellarj's programs link the "Spirit of the Place" to today's artistic movements, turning this grand traditional Riad

into an *Ágora* where all generations come together. This vision is articulated around four major axes: promoting Morocco's tangible and intangible heritage, supporting artistic creation and arts and crafts, research and transmission.

**Service**

**36th Bienal de São Paulo – *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

Invocation #1 – Marrakech, Morocco

*Souffles: On Deep Listening and Active Reception*

Nov 14–15, 2024

free admission

LE 18

Thurs, 11am–8pm

Fri, 10am–4:30pm

Riad Laarouss, 18 Derb El Ferrane

Fondation Dar Bellarj

Fri, 5pm–7:30pm

9 Toualat Zaouiat Iahdar

Marrakech, Morocco

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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