

The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of the State of São Paulo, through the Department of Culture, Creative Economy and Industry, the Municipal Department of Culture of São Paulo, the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, Itaú, and Petrobras present

Brazilian Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Conceived by Diane Lima, the proposal brings together historical and newly commissioned works by Adriana Varejão and Rosana Paulino

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São Paulo, April 14, 2026 — The Fundação Bienal de São Paulo announces the curatorial project for the Brazilian Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The exhibition is presented by Petrobras.

Entitled *Comigo ninguém pode*, the exhibition is curated by Diane Lima and brings together, in an unprecedented dialogue, artists Rosana Paulino (São Paulo, 1967) and Adriana Varejão (Rio de Janeiro, 1964), who will occupy the entire Brazilian Pavilion starting in May 2026, the exhibition takes an installation-based approach that challenges the modern architecture of the Brazilian Pavilion, with an exhibition design developed by Daniela Thomas in dialogue with the artists and the curatorial team.

Taking as its starting point and state of mind the syncretic and ambiguous characteristics of the plant popularly known as *comigo-ninguém-pode*, a species that, due to its toxicity, has become a symbol of protection and resilience, the project invites the public to a sensitive experience that proposes new ways of perceiving the relationships between nature, history, and spirituality.

Breaking with the linearity of time, the exhibition brings together historical works from more than three decades of production by the two artists, in which both address colonial wounds and traumas, while highlighting how this rewriting of history also manifests itself through processes of metamorphosis and dialogue with the performance of materialities in space.

Comigo ninguém pode comes from the Portuguese name for the plant known in English as dumb cane or leopard lily (Dieffenbachia), a species widely used in front of houses or doors in Brazil, as a symbol of spiritual protection and ancestral resilience. The ambiguity and syncretism of the term, which also became a popular saying, can be understood as “Nobody can handle me”, “Nobody can defeat me,” or even “Don’t mess with me!”, a meaning that alludes to the plant's toxicity and poison.

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The title also refers to a drawing from Paulino's *Senhora das plantas* [Lady of the Plants] series. In addition, Varejão uses painting to simulate different materialities, such as concrete, flesh, Baroque woodcarving, and ceramics, culminating in the botanical element. “The project invites us to connect to a frequency that opens up the possibility of seeing the transcendent in the visible. By evoking this energy, *Comigo ninguém pode* reflects on the manifestations of faith and spirituality in Brazilian culture, highlighting its close relationship with nature, with more-than-human dimensions and, above all, in the construction of a complex public imagination. These elements constitute everyday practices that allow us to glimpse a reality that is sometimes broader or deeper than what we perceive in the visible world. By rewriting history, *Comigo ninguém pode* reconstructs the walls of memory and assigns new meanings to colonial ruins and wounds through fantastic, celestial, and magical beings”, says Diane Lima.

“In works such as *Aracnes* and *Ninfa tecendo o casulo* [Nymph Weaving a Cocoon], I return to the image of the Black woman as a weaver of life and memory, one who draws from her own body the material to sustain continuity. These are works that affirm the strength of reconstruction, of suture, and of permanence in the face of historical violence”, says Paulino.

“I am working intensely on many new works for the Pavilion, conceived in direct dialogue with the building's architecture. The paintings are distributed in unpredictable ways throughout the space, taking on an installation-like character and making the building an active part of the work”, says Varejão.

The curatorial approach was designed to emphasize the dialogues that run through the prolific careers of both artists. The exhibition brings together commissioned, historical, and previously unseen paintings, sculptures, and drawings, as well as new large-scale works developed especially for this encounter. The works were chosen based on overlaps, tensions, and symbolic, chromatic, material, and iconographic similarities that constitute this historical and cultural national repertoire.

“From the moment the idea of inviting Rosana and Adriana arose, my biggest challenge was to present them as a composition, a single voice, full of harmonies and dissonances, so that this gesture and our own presence would have, as in jazz, a much more performative and sensory dimension than a didactic one about our history. I believe that Brazil will see itself as a reflection and a shadow in the mirror, a self-portrait painted with conversations about flesh, nature, and faith”, adds Diane Lima.

“Diane Lima’s curatorship and the meeting of Adriana Varejão and Rosana Paulino consolidate a celebrated project for Brazil’s presence in Venice. It is a proposal that underpins our institutional commitment to consistent, contemporary participation that is connected to the global debate”, says Andrea Pinheiro, president of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo.

Recovery of the Brazilian Pavilion

The Brazilian Pavilion, designed by Giancarlo Piretti, Henrique Mindlin, and Walmyr Lima Amaral in 1964, was recovered by the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and the

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The process took place in three phases: the first focused on essential structural repairs; the second recovered key elements of the original architectural design, most notably the lateral glass walls and the Pavilion's façade; and the final phase was completed in early 2026.

About Diane Lima

Diane Lima (Mundo Novo, Bahia, Brazil, 1986) is a curator and researcher, and one of the leading voices of Black feminism in Latin American art. She was part of the curatorial collective of *coreografias do impossível* [choreographies of the impossible], the 35th Bienal de São Paulo (2023), and has curated exhibitions including *Paulo Nazareth: Luzia* at Museo Tamayo (Mexico City, 2024) and *O rio é uma serpente* [The river is a serpent], the 3rd Frestas Triennial of Arts (2020/2021). She also organized the *Diálogos Ausentes* [Absent Dialogues] program at Itaú Cultural (2016–2017), which played a historic role in the anticolonial turn of contemporary Brazilian art. Among her recent recognitions are her appointment as vice-president of the Scientific Advisory Council of documenta and Museum Fridericianum gGmbH (2025, Germany) and the Ford Foundation Global Fellowship (2021). Diane is the author and editor of the anthology *Negros na Piscina: Arte Contemporânea, Curadoria e Educação* [Blacks in the Pool: Contemporary Art, Curatorship and Education] (2024), which documents the last ten years of debates on race and art in Brazil. She was also appointed as chief curator of the 39th Panorama da Arte Brasileira at the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo.

About Adriana Varejão

Adriana Varejão (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1964) has developed, since the 1980s, a body of work marked by critical reflections on colonialism and the plural formation of Brazilian culture. She has held survey exhibitions at institutions including the Centro de Arte Moderna Gulbenkian in Lisbon, the Pinacoteca de São Paulo, Haus der Kunst (Munich), Museo Tamayo (Mexico City), ICA (Boston), Malba (Buenos Aires), Hara Museum (Tokyo), and Fondation Cartier (Paris). She has also participated in the biennials of São Paulo, Sydney, Havana, Liverpool, and Istanbul. Throughout her career she has received major honors, including the Ordem do Mérito Cultural from Brazil's Ministry of Culture and the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres from the French government. Her works are held in museum collections including Tate Modern (London), the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim (New York), Dallas Museum of Art, Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Fundação Serralves (Porto), Museo Reina Sofía (Madrid), and MASP (São Paulo). At Instituto Inhotim in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, a permanent pavilion is dedicated to her work.

About Rosana Paulino

Rosana Paulino (São Paulo, Brazil, 1967) lives and works in São Paulo. She holds a doctorate in visual arts and a bachelor's degree in printmaking from the School of Communications and Arts at USP, and is also a specialist in printmaking from the London Print Studio. Recognized as one of the most significant artists of her generation, she has received major awards including the Konex Mercosur: Visual Arts (Argentina, 2022), the MUNCH Award (Norway, 2024), the Jane Lombard Prize (United States, 2025), and the Black Mountain College award (United States, 2025). Her work is held in the collections of major institutions including MAM SP, Pinacoteca de São Paulo, MASP, Malba (Buenos Aires), Pérez Art Museum (Miami),

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The Studio Museum in Harlem (New York), MoMA (New York), University of New Mexico Art Museum (Albuquerque), Harvard Art Museums (Cambridge), Tate Modern (London), and Centre Pompidou (Paris).

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 Fundação holds the Bienal de São Paulo, created in 1951, the largest exhibition of the Southern Hemisphere, and its travelling exhibitions 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 Fundação, 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.

The Fundação Bienal de São Paulo would like to thank its strategic partner Itaú and its master sponsors Bloomberg, Bradesco, Citi, Petrobras, Vale, and Vivo.

Brazilian Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia: *Comigo ninguém pode*

Commissioner: Andrea Pinheiro, President of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo

Curator: Diane Lima

Participants: Adriana Varejão and Rosana Paulino

Curatorial assistant: Giovanna Querido

Location: Brazilian Pavilion

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

Date: May 9 to November 22, 2026

Pre-opening: May 5 to 8, 2026, 10am – 7pm

Dates: May 9 to November 22, 2026

From May 9 to September 27, 11am – 7pm

From September 29 to November 22, 10am – 6pm

Closed on Mondays (except May 11, June 1, July 7, and November 16)

Press enquiries

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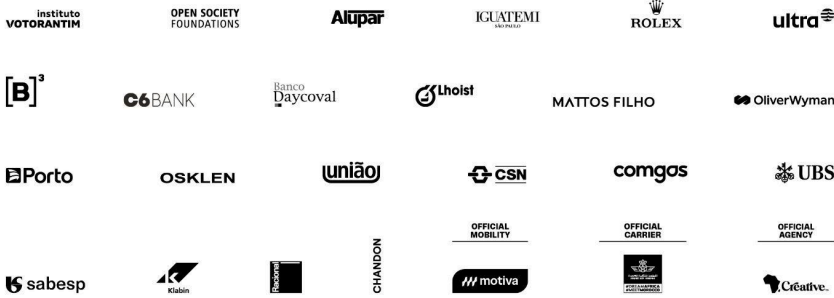
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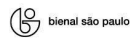
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