

2025

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MANDJUANDADI:
Identities in Liberty

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biennial of art

and culture of

Guinea-Bissau

Conceptual Note

Biss

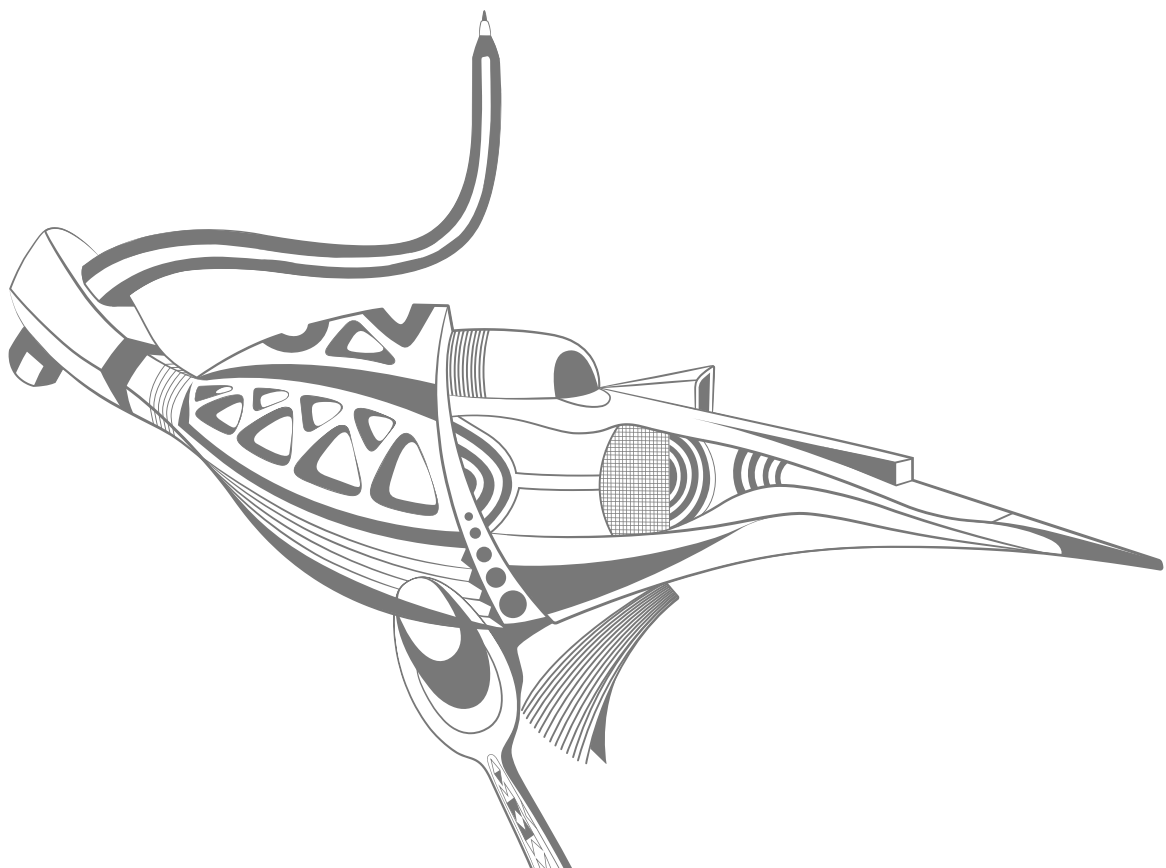
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Conceptual Note

BIENNIAL OF ART
AND CULTURE OF
GUINEA-BISSAU 2025

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THE FOUNDATION

THE MoAC Biss BIENNIAL FOUNDATION “ Showcase of Art and Culture from Guinea-Bissau” is a private institution established in 2023, with the status of a legal person and operating on a non-profit basis. MoAC Biss has five principal areas and/or fields of intervention: Visual and Plastic Arts; Performative Arts; Literature; Cultural Public Policies; and Applied Research in the cultural sector. The fundamental pillars of MoAC Biss include the promotion of the Arts through a) the creation, production, programming, or publishing of projects; b) the exchange between artists, programmers, producers, or technicians; and c) the training of Arts and Culture professionals, as well as the general public. These pillars shall be structured in such a way as to influence the establishment of cultural policies that promote contemporary cultural and artistic creation and enjoyment, fostering critical thinking about Culture and the Arts in general, and in Guinea-Bissau particularly.

In addition to these pillars, MoAC Biss also aims to be the driving force behind a social movement capable of intervening in the public space, in a manner that kick-starts the professionalisation of the cultural and artistic sector, contributing to the development of a dynamic ecosystem and enhancing international contact networks.

CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION

Guinea-Bissau possesses a rich, diverse, and dynamic cultural mosaic. The worldviews founded in the popular traditions of the various ethnic groups have generated and shaped experiences, practices, knowledge, rituals, manifestations, festivities, language, expressions and artistic creations across different spatial-temporal contexts, whose actors carry great symbolic value and form the matrix of what has been termed “guinendadi.”

The Guinean state’s abdication of responsibility in determining public policies, particularly for the cultural and artistic sector, has had a drastic impact on the promotion, production, and access to quality cultural services, particularly in elevating and integrating Guinean art into the contemporary age. This state of affairs has hindered opportunities for more scholarly productions that add value to modes of employment and creative economies. The weak public investment in the social and cultural sector, reflected in the lack of coverage in the General State Budget for cultural promotion, has left this sector completely unstructured, both in its educational and pedagogical dimensions and in terms of market functioning, failing to contribute to the sustainable development of professional careers.

The survival of the sector has been ensured by international cooperation. However, without predefined national goals or platforms that allow for the development of programming structures, or producers of programmes, the support of international cooperation cannot guarantee the emancipation of cultural offerings nor the impact of artistic production on the national economy.

It is within this context that, in 2022, a group of Guineans residing in the country and in the diaspora, driven by a patriotic sense of responsibility to intervene and change the course of production and access to culture in Guinea-Bissau, decided to take on the challenge of organising an art and culture showcase on a voluntary basis in 2023. The group, thereby, aimed to assess the existing potential and possibilities for holding cultural and artistic events that could place Guinea-Bissau on the map of contemporary art events in West Africa and across the African continent.

Thus, the current proposal of MoAC Biss seeks to influence the development of professionalised cultural policies and institutions as guiding tools for the promotion, monetisation and development of culture, with a perspective that contributes to the transformation of already existing potential and its appropriation by actors within public, private and civil society, financiers, and all stakeholders in the cultural sector.

MoAC Biss assumes its role as a mechanism for mobilising visions, objectives, results, and actions capable of bringing about changes in the way art and culture are approached. It is a mechanism based on a dialogue process that leads to the construction of multiple strategies, including sectoral characterisation and the definition of strategic priority axes, starting with the productive and economic potential, and also the availability and circulation of cultural products and producers in national and international markets.

The organisation of an international event every two years—BIENNIAL MoAC BISS—is the starting point for building such a creative ecosystem which aims to reclaim historical narratives, preserve and provide monetary value to Guinea-Bissau's popular culture; foster exchange among various cultural actors; provide a space for promoting professionals in theatre, dance, cinema, music, literature, visual and plastic arts, artisan crafts, gastronomy, museums, and national cultural and intellectual heritage, as well as international exchanges. In doing so, it will strongly contribute to the affirmation of Guinea-Bissau and its artists on the global contemporary art scene.

BIENNIAL OF BISSAU 2025 MANDJUANDADI: IDENTITIES IN LIBERTY

Bissau, 1st-31st of May

The debate around issues of identity and freedom has been at the forefront of the global agenda, creating tensions and conflicts. If the social perception of identity is a result of the structuring of relationships and the dynamics of history, culture, language, geostrategic policies and of power, then liberty, on the other hand, pertains to the existential dimension, which is fundamental to the formation of a plurality of identities and allows for the free development of individuals, institutions, and societies.

In Guinea-Bissau, one of the most popular ways of expressing our sense of belonging as Guineans, based on identity affirmation and simultaneously demonstrating the possibility of holding discussions with liberty, has been through the “Mandjuandadis.” Mandjuandadi is a dynamic concept; a space for cultural manifestations, but also for organised collectives with a feminist aspect, as well as for artistic and performative productions of oral literature that express Guinean idiosyncrasies.

While a sociocultural phenomenon, Mandjuandadi represents a space of ancestry, memory, and resistance, and therefore, also a space for sociopolitical and identity-based intervention by Guineans. The choice of this theme for the 1st Edition of the Biennial of Art and Culture of Guinea-Bissau is intended, on one hand, to mobilise a strong awareness around the production of agency and visibility for women’s collectives and cultural production forms, through which we challenge contexts and models of inequality and disparities in rights and opportunities that undermine the freedoms and guarantees of the Guinean people.

On the other hand, this mobilising theme aims to recreate new ways of imagining the public space and its role in building emancipatory cultural processes, transforming the territories where the Biennial will take place into spaces of democratic and plural affirmation and creation.

MANDJUANDADI: IDENTITIES IN LIBERTY reflects not only what Guinea-Bissau is—a country of strong cultural diversity, also multiethnic

and multireligious—but it also symbolically represents this Biennial, which belongs to Guineans, both those residing in the country and those in the diaspora, as well as those who love Guinea-Bissau. In this way, the contribution of Guineans to the world will be vividly present and demonstrated throughout an entire month, revealing how Guineans, together with the world, are thinking about the issue of identities in liberty, and how this is expressed through different artistic forms and various possibilities of dialogue and cultural creation.

\ Objectives

The MoAC Biss Biennial has the following objectives:

General Objectives

To contribute to the promotion of contemporary Guinean art through the organisation of cultural events, training of artists, public debates, and the internationalisation of Guinea-Bissau as a stage for major cultural events.

Specific Objectives

- 1\ To encourage cultural production and foster artistic creation across various segments.
- 2\ To promote exchanges between Guinean artists, both within the country, in the diaspora, and with international artists, related to the challenges of the Guinean cultural sector and its integration into the global scene.
- 3\ To initiate processes of heritage preservation and museum development for modern and contemporary art in Guinea-Bissau.

\ Results

The MoAC Biss Biennial aims to achieve the following results:

- 1\ Cultural production and artistic creation being encouraged and promoted.
- 2\ Exchanges between Guinean artists, both in the diaspora and internationally, being promoted.
- 3\ The process of elevating the Guinean language (Kriol) to the status of national cultural heritage being initiated.
- 4\ The process of establishing and conceptualising the museum of modern and contemporary art in Guinea-Bissau being initiated.

\ Products

The MoAC Biss Biennial aims to achieve the following products:

1\ Cultural production and artistic creation

- 5 Communications
- 2 Expositions (IN)
- 9 Offices
- 9 Launches of works of art
- 11 Artistic residences
- 21 Showcases
- 18 Performances
- 5000 Participants (public)

2\ Exchange between artists and creators

- 2 Documents
- 10 Artistic residences
- 10 Events
- 14 Sessions

3\ Elevation of the Guinean language (Kriol) to the status of national cultural heritage

- 1 Engagement document
- 1 Roundtable
- 2 Projects
- 2 Business partnerships established

4\ Museum development process

- 1 Project
- 3 Business partnerships established
- 3 Museums

\ Methodology

This first edition of the MoAC Biss Biennial will take place throughout the month of May 2025, in the city of Bissau, across the multi-use spaces in the capital.

As a pioneering initiative, the enhancement of internal human resources is based on the enhancing of the value of the professional experience of the founding members, operative actors and recognised contributors to the cultural sector.

For each curatorial area, those responsible were challenged to individually conceptualise the programme's execution based on activities that could integrate the following: a) alignment with the theme, b) creativity, c) cultural relevance, d) public education, e) content production with civic and cultural engagement, f) dialogue with other artistic and cultural realities, and g) the availability of the main participants to be present during the event. Based on these guiding principles, potential participants were identified, and the respective invitations were extended.

In terms of spatial organisation, the Biennial's activities are designed to facilitate mobility within the city through three (3) central locations: enlightened spaces (Cultural Centres), public spaces (public gardens), and community and peripheral spaces (the neighbourhoods of Bandim, Pilum, and Chão de Papel). This distribution aims to transform the city of Bissau into various stages, enabling both locals and visitors to engage in the various concourses and interactions offered by the Biennial.

The public is invited to explore this diversity of spaces, not only as consumers but also as cultural protagonists, participating in the rebirth of these places through their interaction with the artworks and the artists.

In terms of accessibility, the majority of the event's activities will be free of charge (80%), particularly in areas such as visual arts, plastic arts, literature, conferences, and workshops. However, as the Biennial is a new entity, some activities will be geared towards resource mobilisation (20%) to support its expenses, such as in the case of musical concerts.

\ Business partners and financing

Creating a Biennial in an atypical context and without public funding demands a high level of commitment from all involved parties, which ordinarily includes organisers, collaborators, the public and future business partners and financiers.

Based on this broad commitment, the MoAC Biss Foundation will seek to establish and maintain a synergy with the various biennials around the world. In parallel, it will foster collaborative relationships with cultural institutions, public entities, diplomatic bodies, private organisations, and non-governmental organisations in Guinea-Bissau, with the Foundation being open to receiving financial, technical, material, and logistical resources. The mobilisation of operational financial resources for the realisation of the program will primarily be achieved through seeking funding/donations from cooperation entities and/or international agencies, private foundations, and benefactors.

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Efforts will also be made to generate income through activities held during the Biennial, with the aim of raising financial resources that can be reinvested according to needs and priorities. However, for large-scale and long-term initiatives (such as heritage preservation and museum development), the resource mobilisation strategy will involve designing projects to be submitted for international funding, involving multiple stakeholders.

Finally, some more specific initiatives will be supported by collective or participatory funding (Crowdfunding), allowing the gathering of resources through the mobilisation and public involvement of citizens in the construction of common heritage.

\ Communication and visibility

A communicative approach will be adopted for social and resource mobilisation, serving as the driving force behind the production and dissemination of MoAC Biss's vision and activities, with these being a proposal for social and economic transformation in the way culture and art are approached.

To achieve this, a team will be assembled, combining experts in communication, culture, marketing, and resource mobilisation, which shall enable the engagement of different audiences in real time and expand the reach and impact of the messages.

The website of the MoAC Biss Biennial (<https://bienalmoacbiss.org/>) will, initially, serve as the primary source for all official communications. MoAC Biss's digital platforms and social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, and YouTube) will function as tools for maximising information dissemination and providing interactive contact with the public, contributing to monitoring the impact of our accomplishments in the public sphere.

Direct communication will be employed through the placing of posters and distribution of informational leaflets in cultural centres, commercial spaces, educational institutions and public spaces with high visibility. Additionally, popular marketing agencies and mobile advertising will be used.

A media relations group will be established to maintain contact with journalists specialising in culture, as well as with cultural producers and editors. Direct engagement will also be maintained with the organs of social communication (community radios, both public and private; radio stations; national and international television channels; newspapers and magazines specialising in culture; national and international digital platforms).

Partnerships with Guinean cultural platforms, such as the Cultural Agenda of Bissau, the House of Culture of Guinea-Bissau, and cultural promotion groups with online platforms, will also form part of the contacts and partnerships for the optimisation of the activities of the Biennial.

\ Impacts

The MoAC Biss Biennial is one of the most ambitious projects with the greatest potential for impact ever conceived for the Guinean region. Its structure is based on the combination of five key pillars: - artistic creation, - the creative economy, - cultural public policies, - cultural education for citizenship, and - urban regeneration.

From this perspective, the potential impacts of the Biennial are as follows:

Short term

1\ Cultural impact: Greater stimulation of creativity and of cultural and artistic production among Guinean youth, and the creation of employment opportunities.

2\ Economic impact: Increased investment by cultural actors in professionalisation and job creation due to the financial influx generated by the Biennial, implying the circulation of resources, new production chains, and internationalisation.

Medium term

1\ Social impact: Greater availability and decentralisation of services and facilities leading to the democratisation of access to culture; integration of cultural assets into the production chain or services in socially vulnerable areas, and actions that improve the quality of life.

Long term

1\ Impact on citizens: Greater possibilities for cultural education through the adding of value to processes triggered by heritage and museum projects, providing children, adolescents, young people and adults with more opportunities for knowledge.

2\ Impact on the city: The emergence of a cultural city due to the creation, operation, and existence of more cultural complexes and facilities.

3\ Impact on the country's image: Improvement of the country's external image and its integration into the map of cultural cities in West Africa.

\ Activities and programme

Activities

For the effective implementation of the MoAC Biss Biennale 2025, the activities to be carried out are based on the foundation of the five existing curatorships, aiming to offer the public a wide range of activities throughout the month of May. This will contribute to an unprecedented cultural offering, integrating more than fifty (50) scheduled activities, with participants from eleven (11) countries, mobilising seven (7) cultural and multi-use centres, and five (5) neighbourhoods in the Guinean capital.

In this way, the planned activities are organised into three phases, as follows:

Phase 1\ Preparatory

- a\ Preparation of the conceptual note
- b\ Formation of the Honour Committee
- c\ Building of the visual identity
- d\ Selection and mobilisation of curators
- e\ Elaboration of the Programme
- f\ Selection of the venue(s) for the Biennial
- g\ Elaboration of the budget
- h\ Selection of strategic partnerships and resource mobilisation
- i\ Design of communication materials and tools
- j\ Official launch of the Biennial
- k\ Promotion of the Biennial
- l\ Training of operational teams

Phase 2\ Execution

- a\ Execution of the scheduled events
- b\ Coverage and promotion of the events
- c\ Monitoring of coverage in the media
- d\ Roundtables
- e\ Documentation

Phase 3\ Follow-up

- a\ Evaluation of the Biennial
- b\ Production of the technical and financial report
- c\ Publication of the report on the results and impacts of the Biennial
- d\ Mobilisation of future business partnerships
- e\ Development of strategies for implementing the Biennial's recommendations
- f\ Development of the roadmap for 2027
- g\ Selection of the theme and organisational structure for the 2027 Biennial.

\ Programme

	FIRST WEEK [1 st to 3 rd]	SECOND WEEK [4 th to 10 th]	THIRD WEEK [11 th to 17 th]	FOURTH WEEK [18 th to 24 th]	FIFTH WEEK [25 th to 31 st]
	OPENING OF THE BIENNIAL				CLOSING
MORNING		INAUGURAL CONFERENCE	ROUNDTABLE	KRIOL WORKSHOP	
	DESIGN WORKSHOP	TALK ON INFANT AND YOUTH LITERATURE	CREATIVE WRITING AND SPOKEN POETRY WORKSHOP	SHORT STORY AND ILLUSTRATION ATELIER & OPENING OF THE "BOOK SHOWCASE"	MASTERCLASS CONFERENCE
	MUSIC WORKSHOP	1 st MASTERCLASS	INDUSTRIAL WORKSHOP FOR MUSIC	STORYTIME AND BOOK FAIR	
		2 nd MASTERCLASS		HIP HOP WORKSHOP	
AFTER-NOON	INAUGURATION OF THE EXPOSITION OF PLASTIC ARTS	EDITORS AND WRITER'S ROUNDTABLE	SLAM CONTEST	STORYTIME	MANDJUANDADI WORKSHOP
	PERMENANT VISUAL ARTS EXPOSITION	INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND INAUGORATION OF THE BOOKSTAND	PLASTIC ARTS WORKSHOP	PAINTING OFFICE	4 th SHOWCASE
	PHOTOGRAPHY EXPOSITION	2 nd INDOOR CONCERT	3 rd MASTERCLASS	4 rd MASTERCLASS	THEATRE SPECTACLE
	THEATRE SPECTACLE	THEATRE SPECTACLE	2 nd SHOWCASE	4 th INDOOR CONCERT	
	CINEMA SHOWING (1)	CINEMA SHOWING (1)	CINEMA SHOWING (1)	CINEMA SHOWING (1)	CINEMA SHOWING (1)
		POPULAR SPECTACLE	SPOKEN AND DANCE PERFORMANCE	THEATRE SPECTACLE	
	CINEMA SHOWING (2)	CINEMA SHOWING (2)	CINEMA SHOWING (2)	CINEMA SHOWING (2)	PERFORMATIVE ARTS WORKSHOP
			PHOTOGRAPHY EXPOSITION	BIENNIAL ROUNDTABLE	
	1 st INDOOR CONCERT	1 st SHOWCASE	3 rd INDOOR CONCERT	DIDACTIC CONCERT	4 th INDOOR CONCERT
	THEATRE SPECTACLE			3 rd SHOWCASE	4 th SHOWCASE
				ENDING CEREMONY	

\ Organisational structure

The Honour Committee

Abdulai Sila
writer \ Guinea-Bissau

Augusta Henriques
environmental activist \ Guinea-Bissau

Brahim Elmazned
cultural manager \ Morocco

Charles Akibodé
heritage specialist \ Cape Verde

Fernando Cabral
model \ Guinea-Bissau

Flora Gomes
film-maker \ Guinea-Bissau

Heloisa Pisani
socio-cultural and international relations promoter \ Brazil

Iva Cabral
historian \ Cape Verde

Jacqueline de Montaigne
urban artist \ Portugal

José da Silva
businessman and cultural promoter \ Cape Verde

Kalaf Epalanga
writer and musician \ Angola

Kiyomi Kawaguchi
cultural promoter \ Japan

Manecas Costa
musician \ Guinea-Bissau

Marcelino Sambé
dancer \ Portugal

Neusa Trovoada
designer, visual artist \ Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe

Nuno Sardinha
journalist \ Portugal

Ousseynou Wade
cultural promoter \ Senegal

Paula Nascimento
art curator \ Angola

Paulo Gomes
cultural promoter \ Guinea-Bissau

Teresa Montenegro
writer \ Chile and Guinea-Bissau

\ Biennial 2025 team

Coordinator

Miguel de Barros

Secretary

Mamadu Alimo Djaló

Curators

Plastic and Visual Arts \ Nú Barreto

Performative and Set Arts \ Welket Bungué

Literature \ Zaida Pereira

Music \ Karyna Gomes

Conferences and Public Policies \ António Spencer Embaló

Assistants to the Curators

Plastic and Visual Arts \ Alexandrino Quadé

Performative and Set Arts \ Mamadu Djaló

Music \ Ndiny Indi

Literature \ Emiliano Fernando da Silva

Conferences and Public Policies \ Andetni Có

Composition

Minhone Seide and Sumaila Djaló

BMoAC Communications and Social Media

Laila Soares, Mamadu Alimo Djaló, and Julinha Sambu

Logistics (reception of guests and hotels)

Débora Martins, Papa Mané, Malado Djaló, and Mário Tchongo

Accounting/finances

Iliane Benjamim Correia and Bubacar Djadjo

Photography of the Biennial

Danilo Vaz; Diana Na Matchina; Ítalo Dias Pontes

CONTACTS

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Address Rua António MBana, Bissau Velho
(Bissau, Guiné-Bissau)

Website bienalmoacbiss.org

Email fundacaobienalmoacbiss@gmail.com

Facebook [fundacao.bienal.moac.biss](https://www.facebook.com/fundacao.bienal.moac.biss)

YouTube @BIENALMoACBiss

Instagram @bienal.moacbiss23

TikTok @Bienal_MoacBiss

Tel (+245) 96 659 89 40

X @Bienal_MoacBiss

