



DICASTERIUM  
DE CULTURA ET EDUCATIONE



La Biennale di Venezia

61. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Press Release  
Monday 27 April 2026

## THE PAVILION OF THE HOLY SEE “ The Ear is the Eye of the Soul” 61<sup>ST</sup> INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION OF LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Featuring new commissions by 24 artists inspired by the life and legacy of  
Saint Hildegard of Bingen

Curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Ben Vickers  
in collaboration with Soundwalk Collective

*Developed in two venues:*  
The Mystical Garden of the Discalced Carmelites, Cannaregio  
Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex, Castello

Press images: <https://tinyurl.com/TheHolySeePavilion>

The Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See presents *The Ear is the Eye of the Soul*, an ensemble of new commissions by 24 artists. Conceived in response to Koyo Kouoh's curatorial proposition for Biennale Arte 2026 to slow down and attune to a quieter register, the exhibition takes the form of a sonic prayer, a call to the contemplative act of listening, inspired by the life and legacy of Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), medieval abbess, poet, healer and composer.

**The participating artists are:**

### **The Mystical Garden of the Discalced Carmelites:**

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Bhanu Kapil                  | 12. Meredith Monk   |
| 2. Brian Eno                    | 13. Moor Mother   |
| 3. Carminho                     | 14. Otobong Nkanga  |
| 4. Caterina Barbieri            | 15. Patti Smith   |
| 5. Devonté Hynes                | 16. Precious Okoyomon                                       |
| 6. FKA Twigs                    | 17. Raúl Zurita   |
| 7. Holly Herndon & Mat Dryhurst | 18. Soundwalk Collective                                    |
| 8. Jim Jarmusch                 | 19. Suzanne Ciani   |
| 9. Kali Malone                  | 20. Terry Riley   |
| 10. Kazu Makino                 | 21. Benedictine Nuns of the Abbey of St. Hildegard Eibingen |
| 11. Laraaji                     |   |

### **Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex:**

1. Alexander Kluge
2. Ilda David'
3. Tatiana Bilbao - MAIO Architects - DOGMA

Presented in Venice's ancient **Giardino Mistico** (Mystic Garden), a monastic green space hidden within a 17<sup>th</sup>-century convent cared for by the Discalced Carmelite community. The first site of the Pavilion

features new sound works by 20 contemporary composers, musicians and poets, responding to Hildegard's chants, writings, and visionary images through voice, instrumentation, and at times, silence.

In the garden, visitors are invited to enter into a contemplative listening experience through headphones, with each of these new commissions, which have been composed into a sonic whole by Soundwalk Collective that also has created a bespoke sonic instrument that listens to the garden in real time, translating subtle natural rhythms, including bioelectrical activity in plants and the micro-acoustics of wind, water, wood, insects and soil, into an evolving composition. As Pope Leo XIV said: «The logic of algorithms tends to repeat what “works,” but art opens up what is possible. Not everything has to be immediate or predictable» (Encounter with the World of cinema, 15/11/2025).

Across the city in Castello, the Pavilion's second venue is the **Complex of Santa Maria Ausiliatrice**, which becomes a contemporary scriptorium (a place where books were copied and illuminated). Triangulated between three anchor points, the venue hosts a living archive, Alexander Kluge's final testament, and the twinned sonic liturgy of the nuns of Eibingen Abbey. The archive has been curated in close collaboration with Sister Maura Zátonyi OSB and the St. Hildegard Academy, whose teachings, research, and preservation of Hildegard's legacy helped to inspire the artists and collaborators of the Pavilion. Within the archive, visitors encounter a curated multilingual library of Hildegardian texts, artist books by Ilda David', and new monastery architecture by Tatiana Bilbao Estudio - MAIO Architects - DOGMA.

The venue will present the final work of celebrated filmmaker and author Alexander Kluge, completed before his death on 25 March 2026 aged 94, a towering twelve-station film and image installation unfolding across three rooms within the industrial logic of the building's ongoing restoration. Kluge also gave the Holy See Pavilion its title: *The Ear is the Eye of the Soul, inspired by Hildegard of Bingen's writings*.

The presentation at the Complex of Santa Maria Ausiliatrice is an evolution of the Holy See's Pavilion at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, building on and continuing their sustained commitment to this site and the continuation of the architectural project of Tatiana Bilbao Estudio and MAIO Architects, *Opera Aperta* (2025).

Hildegard of Bingen was officially declared a Saint and Doctor of the Catholic Church by Pope Benedict XVI, in 2012.

## **The Pavilion of the Holy See**

### ***The Ear is the Eye of the Soul***

**Commissioner:** Card. José Tolentino de Mendonça, Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See

**Curators:** Hans Ulrich Obrist, Ben Vickers

**Exhibitors:** Alexander Kluge, Benedictine Nuns of the Abbey of St. Hildegard Eibingen, Bhanu Kapil, Brian Eno, Carminho, Caterina Barbieri, Devonté Hynes, FKA Twigs, Holly Herndon & Mat Dryhurst, Ilda David', Jim Jarmusch, Kali Malone, Kazu Makino, Laraaji, Meredith Monk, Moor Mother, Otobong Nkanga, Patti Smith, Precious Okoyomon, Raúl Zurita, Soundwalk Collective, Suzanne Ciani, Tatiana Bilbao – MAIO Architects - DOGMA, Terry Riley.

**Production:** Nicola Picco & Raul Betti – Mattia Marzaro  
Soundwalk Collective & Tessa Nijdam – Elena Origliasso

## **Venues:**

\* **Complesso di Santa Maria Ausiliatrice**, Fondamenta S. Gioachin, Castello 450  
No booking required

\***Giardino Mistico dei Carmelitani Scalzi**, Cannaregio 54  
Registration required at [www.coopculture.it](http://www.coopculture.it)

**Pavilion Hours:**

11 am - 7 pm (from May to September)  
10 am - 6 pm (from October to 22 November)  
Closed on Mondays (except 11 May, 1 June, 7 September, 16 November)  
[www.dce.va](http://www.dce.va)

**PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**The Dicastery for Culture and Education** is the department of the Roman Curia entrusted with relations with the contemporary art world, listening to its protagonists, and engaging in collaborative dialogue on the major questions of the present. Among its various initiatives, the DCE organizes the Holy See's national participation in the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia and manages the Conciliazione 5 space, a platform open to contemporary art.

**Hans Ulrich Obrist** (b. 1968, Zurich, Switzerland) is Artistic Director of Serpentine in London, and Senior Advisor at LUMA Arles. Prior to this, he was the Curator of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Since his first show 'World Soup (The Kitchen Show)' in 1991, he has curated more than 350 exhibitions.

In 2011 Obrist received the CCS Bard Award for Curatorial Excellence, in 2015 he was awarded the International Folkwang Prize, and in 2025 he received the Prix François Morellet. Obrist's recent publications include *140 Ideas for Planet Earth* (2021), *Edouard Glissant: Archipelago* (2021), *James Lovelock: Ever Gaia* (2023) *Remember to Dream* (2023), *Worldbuilding: Gaming and Art in The Digital Age* (2024) and *A Life In Progress* (2025).

**Ben Vickers** is a curator, publisher and technologist. He is currently developing a wilderness retreat and research campus called New Water, in New Hampshire (USA), a place focused on the future of technology and spirit, rooted in the landscape. Previously he founded unMonastery, publishing studio Ignota Books and the Arts Technologies department at the Serpentine. He is a strategic advisor to Ian Cheng's Opponent Systems, LAS Art Foundation, and cosmogenesis.

**Soundwalk Collective** composed of contemporary artist Stephan Crasneanski and producer Simone Merli, Soundwalk Collective integrates sound, film, and mixed media in site- and context-specific artwork. Evolving along multi-disciplinary lines, they have cultivated long-term creative collaborations with artist and writer Patti Smith, late director Jean-Luc Godard, photographer Nan Goldin, choreographer Sasha Waltz, director and musician Jim Jarmusch, and actress and singer Charlotte Gainsbourg, among others.

Central to their artistic philosophy is the exploration of sound as a medium to navigate and interpret the complexities of human experience and environment. In doing so, their practice engages in the narrative potential of sound across mediums such as art installations, dance, music and film.

The Holy See's participation in this year's Venice Biennale will once again be supported by Intesa SanPaolo, as the main partner, which has chosen to support the Dicastery of Culture and Education in this artistic and human endeavour.

**Intesa Sanpaolo** is the largest banking group in Italy, with a significant international presence. Alongside its financial leadership, the Group pursues a structured commitment to cultural promotion through Progetto Cultura, a multi-year program dedicated to enhancing artistic heritage and supporting the country's cultural development.

At the core of this strategy is the Gallerie d'Italia, the Bank's museum network, which across its venues in Milan, Naples, Turin, and Vicenza showcases a selection of around 40,000 works from the Group's collection, spanning from archaeology to contemporary art. In addition to its permanent collections, the Gallerie hosts major temporary exhibitions, educational programs, and inclusive initiatives, promoting access to culture and fostering dialogue with local communities. The project also extends to restoration activities, the enhancement of historical archives, and training opportunities for younger generations, contributing to the preservation and dissemination of Italy's cultural heritage.

**dstgroup** is a leading Portuguese business group active in the fields of Engineering & Construction, Environment, Renewable Energy, Telecommunications, Real Estate, and Ventures. It is a cultural patron par excellence, with support for culture and the arts being an integral part of its DNA, a fact most visibly reflected in its brand signature, "building culture."

**HENI** is an international art services business working with leading artists and estates across publishing, printmaking, digital, film, and art research.

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