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Manifesta 12 Reveals an Ultra-Eclectic Array of Participants for Its Upcoming Botany-Themed Edition in Sicily

The twelfth edition of the traveling European biennial promises processions, dance, philosophy, and more.

Henri Neuendorf (<https://news.artnet.com/about/henri-neuendorf-205>), April 26, 2018



Cooking Sections (Daniel Fernández Pascual and Alon Schwabe). Photo by Ryan Lowry. Courtesy of Manifesta.

Organizers of the twelfth edition of the traveling European biennial [Manifesta](http://m12.manifesta.org/) (<http://m12.manifesta.org/>), which sets up shop in the Sicilian capital of Palermo this summer, have revealed the first 10 participants and six locations that will host the show.

This year's theme, "[The Planetary Garden. Cultivating Coexistence.](https://manifesta.org/2017/11/manifesta-12-palermo-concept-released-the-planetary-garden-cultivating-coexistence/)" (<https://manifesta.org/2017/11/manifesta-12-palermo-concept-released-the-planetary-garden-cultivating-coexistence/>)" uses the garden as a metaphor for diversity and cultural cross pollination that embodies the city of Palermo, which has a long history as a meeting point between civilizations due to the island's geographic position in the Mediterranean Sea at the crossroads of Africa and Europe. The exhibition encompasses 30 newly commissioned artworks scattered around more than 15 venues throughout the historic port city.

Here's what we know so far about how Manifesta is shaping up.

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Maria Thereza Alves. Photo by Cave Studio, courtesy Manifesta.

- Brazilian artist [Maria Thereza Alves](http://www.mariatherezaalves.org/) (<http://www.mariatherezaalves.org/>), who frequently depicts plant life, will exhibit an installation dedicated to the floral diversity of Sicily.
- Gilles Clément, a French philosopher and landscape architect who inspired the title of the show with his book *The Planetary Garden* (<http://www.gillesclement.com/art-463-tit-The-Planetary-Garden>), will create an urban garden in collaboration with the London-based design studio Coloco in Palermo's Zen district.



Jelili Atiku. Photo by Enoh Lienemann, courtesy Manifesta.

- Pioneering Nigerian performance artist [Jelili Atiku](http://jeliliatiku.webs.com/) (<http://jeliliatiku.webs.com/>), will lead a procession through the city streets on Manifesta's professional preview day on June 15.
- London-based collective [Cooking Sections](http://www.cooking-sections.com/) (<http://www.cooking-sections.com/>), have developed a project based on site-specific agricultural irrigation systems that will be installed at various venues.



John Gerrard. Photo by Mark Glassner, courtesy Manifesta.



- Irish computer graphic artist John Gerrard will present his works at Palazzo Ajutamicristo and Palazzo Forcella De Seta.
- Swiss artist Uriel Orlow has prepared a video installation on memory and the power of botany, to be screened at Palazzo Butera.
- Belgian architectural collective Rotor will show an “urban intervention” near Palermo’s Pizzo Sella.



Khalil Rabah. Photo by Mahmoud Safadi, courtesy Manifesta.

- One of the most exciting projects comes from Khalil Rabah, artist and director of the [Riwaq Biennale](http://riwaqbiennale.org/en/) (<http://riwaqbiennale.org/en/>), who will create a market of artifacts at the Botanical garden decorated with assemblages and sculptures inspired by local markets on the island.



Marinella Senatore. Photo by David Chalmers, courtesy Manifesta.

- Representing the host country, [Marinella Senatore](http://www.marinella-senatore.com/) (<http://www.marinella-senatore.com/>), will stage a collective dance movement in the historic city center.
- And finally, for those for whom exploring the venue is the real attraction, the writer and screenwriter Giorgio Vasta has created [an innovative smartphone app](http://m12.manifesta.org/artists-giorgio-vasta/) (<http://m12.manifesta.org/artists-giorgio-vasta/>), narrating the city called “City Scripts.”

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Henri Neuendorf

Associate Editor

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Always Unconventional, Manifesta Picks 4 ‘Creative Mediators’ to Curate Its 2018 Edition in Palermo

The nomadic European biennial will take place in Palermo, Sicily, and add botany and architecture to the mix.

Kate Brown (<https://news.artnet.com/about/kate-brown-671>), November 30, 2017





One of Manifesta 12's Palermo Venues, the Teatro Garibaldi, © Manifesta 12 Photo by CAVE Studio.

Manifesta, the nomadic European biennial of contemporary art, has unveiled the concept and curatorial team for its next edition, which will take place in Palermo, Sicily, in 2018. For the first time, Manifesta 12 is doing away with its single-curator format and introducing an interdisciplinary team of “creative mediators” that extends beyond the field of contemporary art. Manifesta 11 in Zurich last year was curated by the German artist Christian Jankowski. While it enjoyed record attendance, reviews were mixed.



Palermo Panorama

Photo by: Bernhard J. Scheuven aka Bjs via Wikimedia Commons

Manifesta 12 is due to open on June 16 (until November 4, 2018)—right smack in the middle of Art Basel in Basel. So collectors and curators will have bounce on from Switzerland to Sicily, if they intend to combine the two mega-events.

Titled “The Planetary Garden: Cultivating Coexistence,” the exhibition sets out to investigate invisible networks, transnational private interests, algorithmic intelligence and ever-increasing inequalities through the “unique lens” of the Sicilian city. Before getting started, Manifesta 12 did something completely different: It appointed the architecture firm, OMA, to carry out an urban study called *Palermo Atlas*, led by Italian architect and OMA partner, Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli.

Laparelli is now one of the four “mediators” behind the upcoming edition. He is joined by the Dutch journalist and filmmaker Bregtje van der Haak, Spanish architect Andrés Jaque, and Mirjam Varadinis, a Swiss contemporary art curator from the Kunsthhaus Zurich. Together, they will push the contemporary art biennial beyond its traditional boundaries, delving further into topics of architecture, science, geography, anthropology, and social design, to name a few.

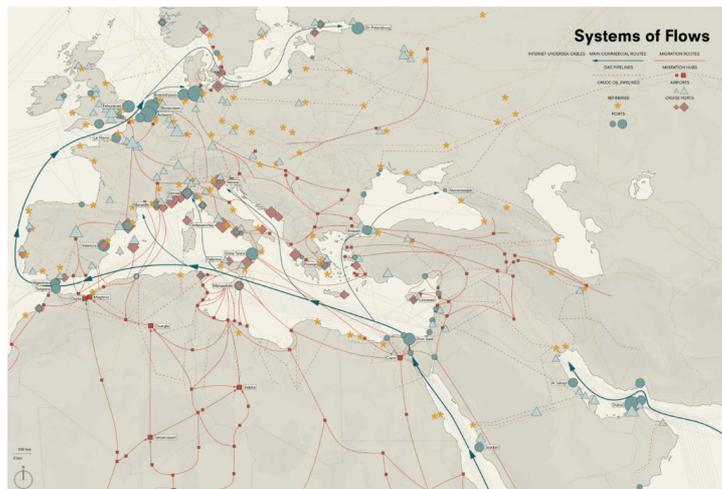




Francesco Lojacono's *View of Palermo* (1875). Courtesy OMA

Palermo's botanical garden and a painting by Francesco Lojacono, *View of Palermo* (1875), serves as a starting point for the team's curatorial concept. The landscape, which pictures olive trees from Asia, aspen from the Middle East and eucalyptus from Australia alongside other foreign natural bounty exemplifies the migratory forces that have always been at work in the city. Inspired by this and Palermo's botanical garden Orto Botanico, which was founded in 1789 as a laboratory to test, mix and gather diverse species, Manifesta 12 will look at the notion of the world as a "garden", and as a creative site for aggregating differences, capturing motion and migration, and the cross-pollination of goods, people, and ideas (you can read the full concept [here](http://m12.manifesta.org/planetary-garden/) (<http://m12.manifesta.org/planetary-garden/>)).

With its core motive of being socially engaged and politically charged, this edition will delve into contemporary challenges from the Italian city's perspective as a Mediterranean hub. Sicily is the poorest region in Italy, a semi-autonomous island that has been plagued with corruption, poverty, and a huge Mafia presence. It has also had to respond to the refugee crisis, and has seen an exodus of its younger, native population. Manifesta 12 will also attempt to mobilize the energy of Palermo in hopes to create a more sustainable impact, through education programmes and long-term projects.



Migration charted by Palermo Atlas. © OMA

Manifesta 12 will host four main sections that each touch on key topics related to the central curatorial concept: "Garden of Flows", "Out of Control Room", "City on Stage", and "Teatro Garibaldi", which will also be the heart of the exhibition and is already hosting the pre-biennial programme "Waiting for Manifesta 12".

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Kate Brown

Associate Editor, Berlin

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