

The European Pavilion

Press release

Announcing The European Pavilion 2024:

Liquid Becomings

The laureate of the 500,000 euros commissioning grant awarded by the [European Cultural Foundation](#) for curating and hosting [The European Pavilion 2024](#) was announced at a press conference held at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam on February, 14.

Selected by an independent jury, the consortium led by the artists' collective [espaço agora now](#), and comprising the organisations [FLOW](#), [MS-Fusion](#), [Teatro Meia Volta](#) and [United Artist Labour](#), presents *Liquid Becomings*: a traveling pavilion that takes the form of four boats sailing on four European rivers for twenty-eight days, before coming together in Lisbon for a final artistic programme in November 2024.



Naomi Russell, founder of [espaço agora now](#):
“We are incredibly proud that the jury chose our initiative. The format is atypical for several reasons: not only will there not be a physical pavilion, but the way *Liquid Becomings* is created is different in the sense that it is an artist-developed and artist-led initiative. Through *Liquid Becomings* we will create many small agoras on four European rivers, where artists and communities come together to share lived experiences and co-create new narratives, addressing the complex polycrises of inequality and distrust, degradation of nature, climate change. By listening to the stories of ordinary Europeans outside the usual centers, among others, we want to contribute to redefining the future of Europe.”

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The European Pavilion 2024: Liquid Becomings

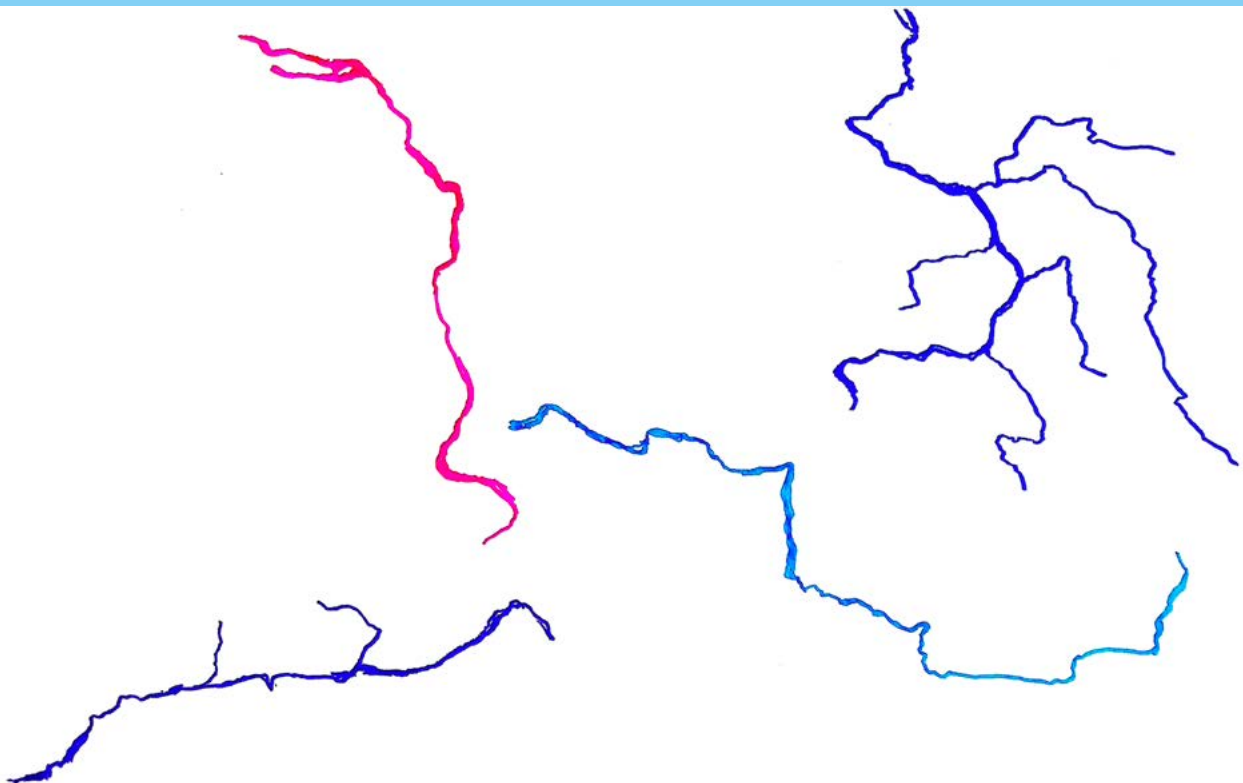
Liquid Becomings is not a traditional Pavilion. It is not an exhibition. It is not even in a single location. *Liquid Becomings* is a journey, an adventure, a radical experiment.

Setting sail on September 1st, for twenty-eight days, **four boats will travel simultaneously along four European rivers:** the Danube, the Vistula, the Rhine, and the Tagus, crossing a total of thirteen countries. Artists on the boats will focus on the themes: “Ruins and Monsters”, “Perimeters”, “Togetherness”, and “Bodies and Politics”. They will make space for the communities and people they meet along the way to come together and share conversations and creativity, to explore and imagine the stories that will be told by the Europe of tomorrow – stories inspired by these four great waterways.

Each boat, with their crew of five artists and a captain, is committed to imagining alternative modes of togetherness. The artist will research ideas of new imaginaries, alternative living and speculative futures. Each of the boats are simple vessels that offer a simple, sustainable and slow mode of travel. We expect to experience the landscape, the elements and people who live on the rivers from a unique, connected perspective. This is a journey that is participative and contributory.

From 7 to 9 November 2024, all the boats will join forces in Lisbon. A three-day artistic programme celebrating polyphony, liminal spaces and itinerancy, will link the old port of Beato with Quinta Alegre, a socio-cultural complex located on the northern outskirts of Lisbon. The programme will open with Public Kitchen, a community and artistic event based on the cuisine of all the inhabitants of the parish of Santa Clara. During a multicultural dinner served by local residents, stories will be shared about travel, migration and wishes for the future. There will be specially commissioned **new work by Portuguese artists**, including writer **Gonçalo Tavares**, performative, sound artist and musician **Jonathan Uliel Saldanha**, theatre maker **Paula Diogo** and collective **Teatro Meia Volta**. The encounters and conversations, meals, rituals, stories from our journeys will be translated into a new mythology for Europe, told by artists and citizens. The encounters and conversations, meals, rituals, stories from the journeys will be translated into a new mythology for Europe, told by artists and citizens.

Illustration: Siniša Ilić for espaço agora now



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A future told by the river, a future told by all of us.



Liquid Becomings is an espaço agora now production developed together with partners MS-Fusion (Vienna), United Artist Labour (Belgrade), FLOW (Warsaw) and Teatro Meia Volta (Lisbon). It is curated by: **Bojan Đorđev, Laura Kalauz, Maria Magdalena Kozłowska, Siniša Ilić, Alfredo Martins, Annette Mees, Naomi Russell, Olga Uzikaeva.**

espaço agora now expects a total of 46 independent artists from the performance fields to be involved. This February they will launch an invited call for artists to apply for a residency on the boats. They want to include as diverse a group of artists in the Pavilion as possible, including artists based outside Europe and from the Global South.

espaço agora now founder Naomi Russell explains: “We wanted to create a proposal that reaches the perimeters and will be outside of the usual centers. Too many people in our society feel alienated and left behind. The simple act of going to meet people where they are seemed urgent. Because of the European dimension we felt it necessary to reach as many territories as possible.

This meant we had to rethink the concept of being in one fixed place. Our concept started to form around how the only way to make space for a future imagining of Europe was by stepping off solid ground, immersing into the not-knowing, and building an environment for new orders to emerge. Each river traces different routes and connects different regions.”

As well as inviting local experts to the boats on the various routes, *Liquid Becomings* will offer paid work to local people along the route producing their experiences. Via the networks of the European Cultural Foundation along with espaço agora now’s own networks across the cultural field and civil society in Europe, *Liquid Becomings* will cooperate with at least five civil society partners per route. And once the boats are sailing, the public will be able to visit the boats free of charge. A dedicated interactive website and [The European Pavilion](#) webspace ensure audiences can follow the different trajectories of *Liquid Becomings*.

European relevance

Liquid Becomings will investigate the myths, narratives and discourses that make up contemporary Europe. espaço agora now believes that a future imaginary of Europe must allow for the active engagement of Europe’s plural societies and polyphony of voices and experiences, drawing in especially those who sit outside established and institutional structures.

For **the jury**, “*Liquid Becomings* choreographs an artistic flow across Europe’s modern and increasingly impermeable borders, by launching small boats carrying a diverse group of artists down its ancient trading and people routes - the Vistula, Rhine, Danube, and Tagus rivers. Seeking to involve different and diverse communities, along as well as in the historic centre and outskirts of the history-laden port of Lisbon, *Liquid Becomings* has the potential to be impactful to those touched by it, and by doing so help to imagine a shared, polyphonic future.”

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Meet the jury

Chaired by **Sepake Angiama** (artistic director of the [Institute for International Visual Art in London](#)), the jury comprised six distinguished personalities with a wide range of cultural backgrounds, expertise, and practices: **Ferran Barenblit** (visiting professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and curator of the 16th Cuenca Biennale), **Máté Gáspár** (cultural manager, university lecturer and NGO expert, artistic director of Budapest Brand), **Hassan Mahamdallie** (author, commentator, playwright and theatre director, director of the Muslim Institute in London), **Teja Reba** (vice-president of the Expert Commission for Performing Arts at the Ministry of Culture and member of the Expert Group for the Strategic Development of Contemporary Dance in Slovenia), **Françoise Vergès** (writer, political theorist, antiracist feminist and independent curator), **Olga Wysocka** (cultural manager and political scientist, director of the Warsaw Observatory of Culture). They selected *Liquid Becomings* from among five finalists, out of the thirty-nine proposals that came in following the open call .



The European Pavilion: a space for imagining Europe

[The European Pavilion](#) is a pan-European and multidisciplinary arts programme that puts the question of Europe and its future at the forefront through artistic projects and art commissions. It was initiated by the [European Cultural Foundation](#) (ECF) in 2020, and stems from the belief that we need more cultural spaces that go beyond national borders to explore and imagine what Europe is and what it can or should become.

In 2023, the ECF launched a new commissioning grant of 500,000 euros to be awarded to the cultural organisation that presents the most ambitious, imaginative and convincing project for The European Pavilion 2024.

By offering fresh and inspiring perspectives on Europe and its future, The European Pavilion contributes to bringing Europe closer to its communities and contributes to ECF's mission to strengthen a European sentiment.

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André Wilkens, Director of ECF, adds: “At a time when we are faced with a resurgence of nationalist sentiments, and when the future seems to be on hold, it is all the more important to keep an open mind, to dare to imagine change, and to formulate new questions. And this is precisely what artists do best: they challenge our perspectives and they project new and unexpected trajectories. That’s why, in 2020, the idea of creating The European Pavilion was born: out of the conviction that a new kind of artistic platform is needed, one that focuses explicitly on the question of Europe: what it could or should become.”

According to the jury, The European Pavilion “offers an opportunity to have the courage to walk away from the concept of the pavilion as purely a built space that audiences are obliged to come to, and to invent something new and decentralising that goes out to Europe’s communities.”

About the Cultural Foundation

Our founders created the European Cultural Foundation in 1954 as they envisioned a united Europe where citizens feel proudly European, a place where they can live, express themselves, work, and dream freely, in diversity and harmony. Ever since, the ECF promotes a European sentiment by developing and supporting cultural initiatives that let us share, experience, and imagine Europe. We believe our mission is as urgent now as it was back then.

About espaço agora now

espaço agora now is a new independent platform founded in 2021 that is reimagining artist development and public experiment in the performing arts. It celebrates radical imagination and radical artists as illuminating and galvanising forces in the center of society.

It is a project of the Dutch Culturele ANBI Stichting Pássaros, and driven by a growing movement of over 300 artists, producers and cultural activists representing the variety of performance disciplines and genres around the world. Together they are organically creating an international network of permanent and nomadic spaces of meeting that establish fresh connections between performing artists, local citizens and public action. Pilots are now underway in Rotterdam and Buenos Aires. Other hubs in development include Lisbon, Belgrade and Maputo.

The starting point for espaço agora now was the need in the performing arts for ‘liquidity’ of time and space when ideas are first formed, and the need to bring different disciplines and communities together. They asked: Could we gather enough critical mass to create spaces for residencies together, open them up in new ways, as vital necessities for our collective futures? At the center of the vision for espaço agora now is a commitment to make inclusive spaces centered on the needs of artists and communities in different contexts across the world. This is at the heart of their proposal for The European Pavilion.

Press material

You can watch the video recording of the press conference on [ECF’s YouTube channel](#).

[Download Press Kit](#)

Contact

For press inquiries, please contact Friso Wiersum, ECF Communications Manager: fwiersum@culturalfoundation.eu or +31-6-47158535.