

Biennale

Extra! International
Traveling
Literary Arts
Biennale

Québec

2027

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Mission

"To establish literary arts as a distinct field of creation and expression by celebrating live literature in all its forms – oral, performative, audio, visual, and digital – while fostering transversality, interdisciplinarity, and international exchange. The Biennale aims to break down barriers between audiences, stimulate literary innovation, and position Quebec and its host territories at the forefront of the global contemporary literary arts scene."



C.A. Conrad, exhibition view, © Andy Keate

Genesis and Project Description

Literature is undergoing a profound transformation: challenged by digital shifts and evolving economic models, it is reinventing itself in both form and function. While the book remains the preferred medium for literary creation, today's writing explores a multitude of new paths, drawing from both orality and digital technologies. Literature is reclaiming its dimension as an event, an encounter, and a physical presence.

The concept for this biennale grew directly from reflections by literary sector stakeholders in Canada and Europe, notably the *Rencontres en arts littéraires* initiated by Productions Rhizome. These professional gatherings, which brought together thinkers and practitioners first in Quebec (2019–2023) and then in Europe (2023–2025), led to the creation of the International Literary Arts Network (RIAL) and the biennale project presented here. Our mission: to establish literary arts as a distinct field of creation and expression by celebrating "living literature" in all its forms (oral, performative, sonic, visual, digital) and by fostering transversality, interdisciplinarity, and international exchange. The biennale aims to break down audience barriers, stimulate literary innovation, and showcase host territories within the global landscape of contemporary literary arts.

Extra! Biennale is an international traveling biennale dedicated to the literary arts. The inaugural edition will take place in Quebec in the fall of 2027, followed by editions in Brussels (2029) and Paris (2031). Over a twelve-week period, Extra! Biennale will offer world-class artistic programming, mobilizing all contemporary forms of literary expression: performance, sound creation, digital arts, orality, installation, and more.

The Quebec edition is built upon three operational hubs: Quebec City, Montreal, and Gatineau. This territorial triptych ensures that the biennale's impact spans the entire province.

The collaborative structure behind the biennale brings together Productions Rhizome, based in Quebec and founded by Simon Dumas, and the Centre Pompidou through Jean-Max Colard, Director of the Speech Service, and his team; Louise Brunner, curator; Jérôme Game, poet. The academic committee includes researchers from UQAM, Université Laval, Paris 8, and Sorbonne Nouvelle. To our knowledge, this governance model unites, for the first time, creators, researchers, diffusion organizations, and author representatives around a single project. It reflects our conviction that literary arts are structured not from institutions, but from practices themselves.

Why a Biennale

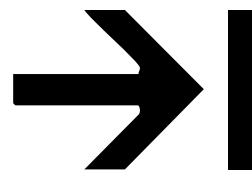
Why now

The biennale format has been deliberately chosen in reference to contemporary art biennales (Venice, Manifesta, Berlin), which in a few decades established the conditions for the internationalization of the visual arts: institutional recognition, circulation of works, a global professional network, international press, and collections. Literary arts do not yet have an equivalent, and we believe the time has come to create one.

This project is based on three key conditions.

- First: the existence of a European partner of the stature of the Centre Pompidou, already convinced of the relevance of an international scene for literary arts – as evidenced since 2017 through its Extra! festival.
- Second: the presence in Quebec of a creative ecosystem that has already undertaken this path – organizations, researchers, authors, and institutions long engaged at the intersection of literature and other art forms.
- Third: an inaugural territory that is simultaneously a site of living oral traditions, engaged contemporary creation, and transatlantic Francophonie.

With these three conditions met, Biennale Extra! can take place.



Québec, Co-Founder

We wish to make a fundamental distinction from the outset: Quebec will not merely host Biennale Extra! – it will be a co-founder.

Rhizome is part of the founding core alongside the Centre Pompidou. This role is structural, not conditional on the 2027 edition; it is embedded in the very architecture of the event for its first three editions and beyond.

This means that when the biennale takes place in Brussels in 2029 at the future Kanal center (an extension of the Centre Pompidou) and in Paris in 2031 for the Centre Pompidou reopening, Rhizome; and through it, Quebec, will be at the heart of each edition. What we are building is a durable export infrastructure for Quebecois literary artists and organizations. Works created for the 2027 edition will be part of an international catalog circulating across two continents. Participating artists will enter a transatlantic professional network, and partner organizations will establish links with European counterparts, generating projects and funding beyond the biennale itself. Investing in the 2027 edition is therefore investing in Quebec's long-term presence on the international literary arts stage.

The inaugural edition in Quebec will run for twelve weeks, from September to November 2027, under the working title “Convergence of Oralities.” This title captures an essential aspect of our vision of Quebec as the inaugural territory: one of the few places in the world where millennia-old Indigenous oral traditions – alive, multiple, and creatively resurgent – coexist with an oral heritage and a contemporary creation scene among the most advanced in the articulation between literature and other disciplines. This is not an exotic context we wish to showcase; it is a unique global position that renders fundamental questions about literary arts both urgent and highly visible.



Rhizome, Chœur pour castelet, 2017

Programming

A first component of the programming is organized around “carte blanche” assignments to partner artist centers (Creation Partners), who will dedicate part of their 2026–2027 programming to creating original literary works at the intersection of their respective practices and literature. All across Quebec, these partners will ensure the biennale resonates well beyond the three central hubs of Quebec City, Montreal, and Gatineau, securing a presence in multiple regions of the province.

Another component arises from an advisory artistic committee including the artistic directors of partner diffusion centers. This committee will submit proposals, some of which will be approved by the biennale steering committee. The result will be a set of works labeled Biennale Extra!, which each partner can integrate into its programming. This dual model – carte blanche from creation centers and coordinated proposals from diffusion partners – guarantees both territorial anchoring and curatorial excellence. In all cases, works will be included in the official catalog and proposed for the Brussels and Paris editions.

The biennale’s programming will draw, among other sources, on ongoing creations within the Quebec ecosystem. Three representative examples include:

“Cathédrale Vivier” (text by Kev Lambert, directed by Denis Marleau, UBU production, world premiere at Usine C on September 7, 2027) brings together five performers, a dancer, and a percussionist in the nave of an imaginary cathedral around the life and work of composer Claude Vivier. The piece is a spectral theater where Lambert’s text dialogues with Vivier’s musical score – exactly the type of hybrid creation, at the intersection of literary and other arts, that lies at the heart of the programming.

“Reliques d’un archipel de papier” (Magali Baribeau-Marchand and Charles Sagalane, Centre Regart, Lévis) explores the book as living matter, exposed to fire, cold, sun, and water across thirty island libraries set in nature. The resulting artifacts – books sculpted by the elements, poems proliferating on bark and stone – embody the thematic axis “Territorialities” in its most material sense: the relationship of literature to the ground, the elements, and living beings.

“La Nouvelle Compagnie des Sens” (Juliette Bernatchez, Étienne La Frenière, Chloé Clemens, Perrine Estienne, and Emile Beauchemin) is a transatlantic literary performance uniting artists from Quebec and Belgium in live, sensory, and ceremonial writing. Created in co-production between La Charpente des fauves (Quebec) and Théâtre de la Vie (Brussels), the project embodies the biennale’s transatlantic model: anchored on two continents and ready to circulate.

Confirmed Partners

Creation Partners:

- Banff Centre
- Centre Bang
- La Serre-Arts Vivants
- La Quadrature
- Recto-Verso
- Sporobole
- Festival de poésie de Montréal
- L'Écart

Presenting Partners:

- Maison des arts littéraires de Gatineau
- ExMuro
- FIL (Montreal)
- Galerie de l'UQAM
- Kwahiatonhk!
- LANTISS (Université Laval)
- Maison de la Littérature
- Place des Arts
- MAC Montreal
- Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
- Théâtre du Trillium

Academic Partners:

- UQAM
- Université Laval
- Université Paris 8
- Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3



Rhizome La chute du piano, 2011



Rhizome & Théâtre Niveau Parking, La méthode Kerouac

Thematic Pillars

Territorialities

Each edition of the International Biennale is deeply rooted in the cultural specificities and iconic locations of its host territories. With the selection of Quebec, this inaugural edition emerges with particular clarity: this territory serves as an exceptional laboratory where North America's oldest oral traditions converge with its most daring contemporary literary innovations. While the theme certainly invites an exploration of "literary territories" and the various forms literature can take, the International Biennale's primary focus is to integrate the cultures and languages of North America and potentially welcome other Indigenous societies—exploring local memories, collective histories, and environmental issues.

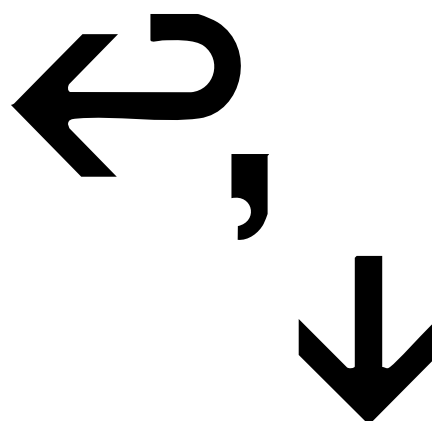
Plasticities & Oralities

Under this thematic heading, drawn directly from the artistic field, the goal is to highlight how textual creation within the literary arts hybridizes with other mediums and art forms—whether visual, oral, performing, cinematic, digital, and beyond. The International Biennale is committed to actively supporting the creation of hybrid forms unique to the literary arts, fostering experimentation and innovation in literary-artistic practices, from artificial intelligence to new technologies. Special attention will also be given to historical perspectives, anchoring the literary arts within the long history of both literature and the arts.

Around "Care":

Practices of Healing and Social Well-being

Developed early on within Quebec's social and intellectual spheres—particularly in connection with the North American context—the concept of "Care" allows for innovative literary programming. This approach focuses on issues of physical and mental health, vulnerabilities, and the motif of reparation in contemporary literary arts. Far from essentializing a male/female distinction, the dimension of care instead highlights issues of sexism and inequality. Here again, the objective is to encourage exchanges between communities, promote the concept of care as the heart of social relations, and explore the theme of living better together.



Appendix 1: First Nations and Orality in Quebec

A Unique Territory of Convergence

The choice of Quebec for this inaugural edition is a natural one: this territory serves as an exceptional laboratory where North America's oldest oral traditions converge with its most daring contemporary literary innovations.

The Living Legacy of Indigenous Orality

For millennia, the First Nations of Quebec have preserved their history, languages, cultural traditions, and a rich literary corpus of stories, speeches, and poems through oral tradition. The eleven Indigenous nations present in Quebec – Abenaki, Algonquin, Atikamekw, Cree, Huron-Wendat, Innu, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Mohawk, Naskapi, and Inuit – have each developed distinct oral traditions that testify to the richness and diversity of Indigenous literary expression.

A Contemporary Creative Renaissance

Far from being relegated to the past, this living practice of orality is currently experiencing a remarkable creative renaissance. A new generation of Indigenous artists is reinventing these heritages through contemporary forms that engage with the performing arts, performance art, sound poetry, multimedia installations, and digital technologies.



Tania Tagaq, Split Tooth : Saputjiji (2025).

A Collaborative and Respectful Approach

The Biennale Extra! is committed to developing its programming in close collaboration with First Nations communities, following a process rooted in respect, reciprocity, and co-creation. The partnership with Kwahiatonhk! First Nations Book Fair – an official partner whose director, Louis-Karl Picard-Siouï, sits on the programming committee – along with guidance from the Mikana agency, ensures the depth and authenticity of this approach.

Appendix 2: Academic and Research Component

Pioneers in the Theorization of Literary Arts

UQAM and Université Laval – confirmed academic partners – were among the first institutions in the world to develop conceptual frameworks and research programs specifically dedicated to the literary arts. In particular, Université Laval’s Ex situ Laboratory, a confirmed partner, is a leading research-creation infrastructure for the study of digital literary arts. This internationally recognized Quebec expertise makes the territory a natural choice to host the inaugural edition of a biennale that combines artistic excellence with intellectual rigor. The academic committee is currently developing programming for university audiences, which will invite researchers and students to participate in salons, symposiums, and conferences.



Violaine Lochu, Dojo Sister, (performance, 2024).

Furthermore, the UQAM School of Design will handle the visual identity; in 2026, a specific course will be dedicated to the biennale's design, allowing students to develop a complete graphic identity in a professional, international context.

Academic Committee

René Audet (Université Laval) ; Emmanuelle Choquette (UQAM) ; Véronique Cnockaert (UQAM) ; Bertrand Gervais (UQAM) ; Véronique Hébert (UQAM) ; Caroline Hotte (UQAM), Marc André Brouillette (UQAM).

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Festival Extra, Hypnotic show ©Hervé Veronese

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