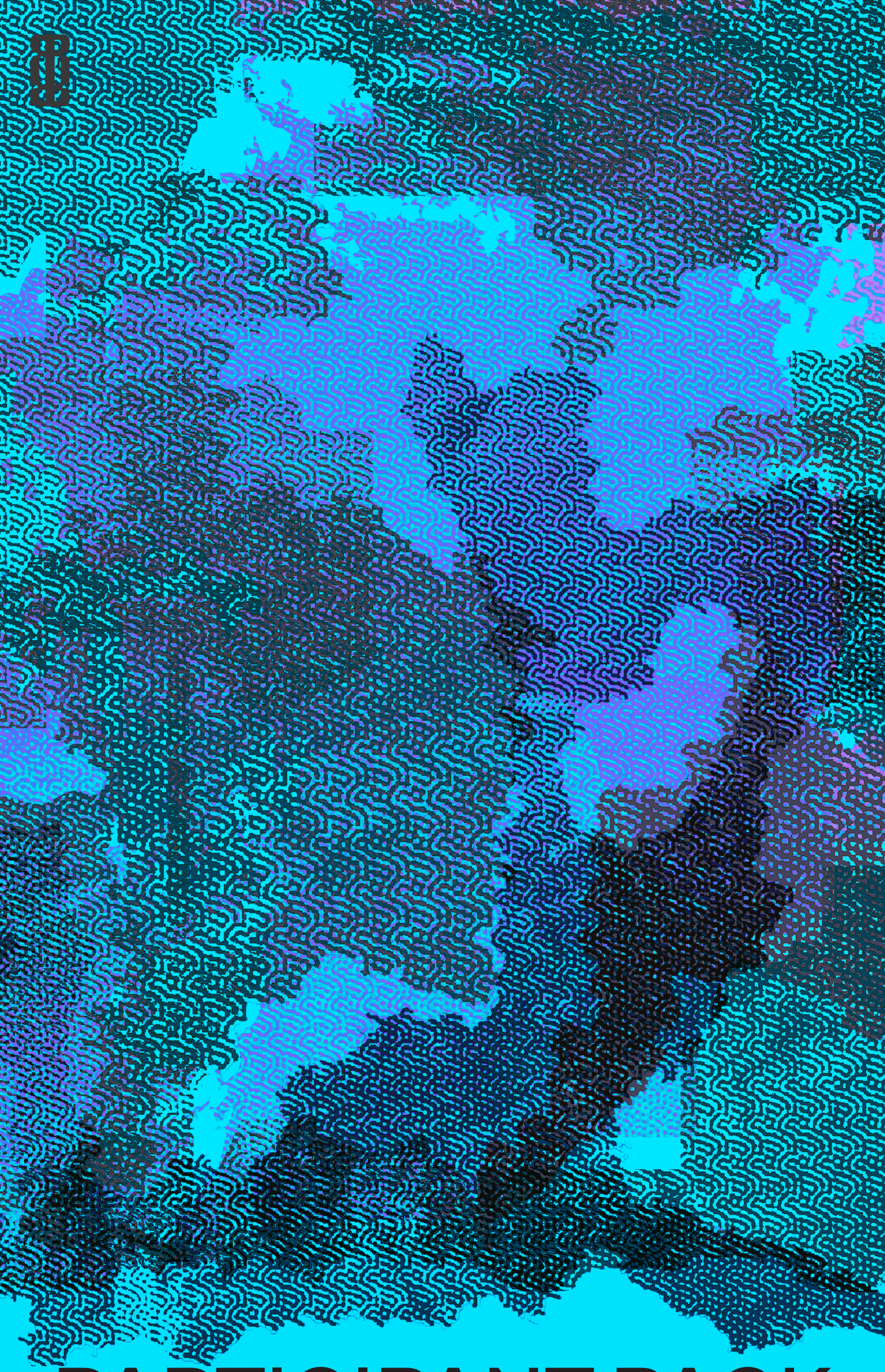

PARTICIPANT PACK

Dear Mokhethi Rampeta,

Karibuni, Welcome to the inaugural Pan-African Biennale.

Thank you for accepting the call to bring this first-of-its-kind, Biennale to life.
Not as guests, but as co-authors of the foundation of this long-unheard continental story, a chance to redefine the African narrative within a global landscape.
In your hands and imaginations lie the beginnings of the amplification of what Africa is, and what we know the world learns from us.

Shifting the Center: From Fragility to Resilience
This Biennale is not just an exhibition; it's a living collaboration: a gathering of architects, artists, visionaries, and storytellers united by a belief in transformation, and an understanding that design can shape a just and regenerative future.

We're claiming our right on the world stages, and moving from representation to authorship. From participation in global discourse, to shaping global discourse.
It's a call to remember, that we indeed are, and have always been the center of design.

Kenya, the first country for the PAB
Kenya, our host, sits at the crossroads of innovation and heritage; where ancient soils meet digital frontiers, and where every city hums with possibility. As you explore with us, may you draw from its resilience, its rhythm, its spirit of humanness and deep sense that we become more fully ourselves through one another.

What to expect
As preparations are underway, we expect there will be many questions around expectations.

Here are a few items to prepare for:

Communications, media and marketing

- Each exhibitor will be featured in the official Pan–African Biennale communications, including press materials, digital platforms, and printed publications. We have included a brief requesting various marketing, media and communications items.

Community

- The Pan-African Biennale is not only an exhibition but also a platform for exchange and collaboration. You can expect opportunities to connect with fellow exhibitors, curators, students, experts from different fields and cultural leaders through dialogues, workshops, and networking sessions in the future.

We thank you for bringing your brilliance to this collaboration and shared vision, and look forward to seeing it come to life.

Please, find your curatorial guidelines below:

PAN-AFRICAN BIENNALE — PHASE 1 PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES
Curatorial Theme: "Shifting the Center: From Fragility to Resilience"
Manifesto Submission — Inaugural Edition (Nairobi, 2026)

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the **Pan-African Biennale,** the first architecture biennale in history conceived, authored, and curated from within the African continent. This Biennale is not simply an event; it is an intellectual project, a political stance, and a cultural intervention aimed at reshaping global architectural discourse.

Your contribution begins with **Phase 1: the Manifesto.**

This is a concise but rigorous articulation of your practice's position.
This manifesto constitutes the **intellectual foundation** of the Biennale. It is the lens through which your Phase 2 installation will be developed and the text that will enter the Biennale's first official publication.

This is not an academic essay.
It is an act of authorship — a declarative position within a global conversation that has too often misinterpreted, minimized, or overwritten African architectural knowledge.

2. PURPOSE OF THE MANIFESTO

Your manifesto must address the following three intellectual pillars:

2.1 Interrogating the Category: "African Architecture"

The Biennale begins by questioning a premise that has long shaped
- and distorted and discourse:

Does **"African architecture" exist at all — and if so, on whose terms?**
How can a continent of fifty-four nations, thousands of languages, and immeasurable ecological and cultural worlds be collapsed into a single architectural category?

If such a definition exists, **who claims the authority to articulate it** — practitioners rooted in place, or institutions historically positioned outside the continent?

And if such a unified category does not exist, then why does the global narrative continue to insist on naming it as though it were a monolith?

What purpose does this flattening serve
Is it simply intellectual laziness, or does it function as yet another mechanism through which colonial power maintains its agency — keeping Africa legible only through external frameworks rather than allowing its people, its histories, and its practices to define themselves?

You are invited to critically explore:

- The danger of collapsing a continent into a single category;
- The persistent external framing of Africa as architectural periphery;
- The Western habit of homogenizing diverse spatial cultures into one aesthetic;
- The political implications of reclaiming (or rejecting) the term.

Your response must be grounded in your context, your region, your history, and your practice.

2.2 Responding to the Curatorial Theme: "Shifting the Center: From Fragility to Resilience"

This inaugural edition positions fragility not as weakness, but as a condition shaped by:

- colonisation,
- displacement,
- geopolitical extraction,
- environmental precarity,
- and structural inequality.

Likewise, it positions resilience not as a decorative metaphor, but as:

- cultural continuity,
- vernacular intelligence,
- adaptive capacity,
- ecological knowledge,
- and the ability to reconstruct identity through space.

Your manifesto must articulate how fragility and resilience manifest in your nation, your environment, your cities, and your communities — and how your practice responds to these realities.

2.3 Positioning Your Practice Within the Biennale's Micro-Themes

You may address one or several of the following:

- **Materiality & resourcefulness**
- **Vernacular knowledge & indigenous technologies**
- **Memory, heritage & cultural survival**
- **Decolonisation & epistemic resistance**
- **Urban expansion, informality & contested geographies**
- **Environmental precarity & climate adaptation**
- **African futures & speculative imaginaries**

These micro-themes offer conceptual coordinates and intellectual provocations. Your task is not to reflect them, but to **interpret** them through your own lens.

3. FORMAT & LENGTH

- **Length:** Max 2 pages (approx. 800–1,000 words)
- **Format**: A4 PDF
- **Language:** English
- **File Name**: Country_OfficeName_Manifesto.pdf

You may include:

- sketches,
- drawings,
- process notations,
- contextual photographs,
- maps,
- or visual fragments.

These must support — not replace — your written position.

4. REQUIRED MATERIALS (MANDATORY)

Each participating practice must submit the following:

4. 1 The Manifesto (required)

A clear, critical, intellectually positioned text addressing the three pillars above.

4.2 Biographical material

- **Short bio** (100 words): concise, publication-ready.
- **Long bio** (250–300 words): situating your practice within broader discourse.

4.3 Portrait photography

- One high-resolution portrait of the lead architect or representative.
- One high-res group photo for collectives.

4.4 Projects: Two key works

Submit **two (2) projects** that most clearly represent your architectural thinking:

- 5–10 images each (photos, drawings, diagrams, models, etc.).
- These may be built, unbuilt, speculative, research-based, or community-centered. The purpose is not to showcase your portfolio — it is to contextualize your intellectual stance.

4.5 Contextual Photography (Mandatory)

Submit 10–20 high-resolution images of:

- your city,
- your landscapes,
- your neighborhoods,
- your architectural textures,
- your environmental conditions,
- your cultural and material context.

These images will shape:

- the Biennale's visual identity,
- scenography,
- communication strategy,
- publication aesthetics,
- and the global understanding of your environment.

These are not decorative. They locate your practice in place.

5. WHAT THIS WORK BECOMES

All manifestos will be included in the Biennale's first official publication; a global document circulated to:

- museums,
- universities,
- foundations,
- policymakers,
- and international media.

This publication will serve as:

- the intellectual backbone of the Biennale,
- the first multi-voiced textual articulation of contemporary African architectural thought
- a counter-archive to dominant narratives.

Your writing enters a historical record that will outlive this edition.

6. DEADLINES

First Draft: 15 January 2026
Final Submission: 15 February 2026

We encourage early submissions to allow curatorial feedback.

7. SUBMISSION

Send all materials to:
>> invitations@panafricanbiennale.org

For questions:
>> lise.katangulia@panafricanbiennale.org
Curatorial Coordinator

A Biennale Google Drive folder will be shared:
Organize materials in the following structure:

```
/Country_OfficeName
    /01_Manifesto
    /02_Bios
    /03_Portraits
    /04_Team_Photos
    /05_Projects
        /Project_01
        /Project_02
    /06_Contextual_Images
```

8. RIGHTS & PERMISSIONS

By submitting material, you grant the Pan-African Biennale the non-exclusive right to use your text and images for:

- exhibition,
- print and digital publication,
- press and global media,
- scenography and installation,
- communication and archival use.

Full credits will always be given.

9. ETHICAL & CURATORIAL VALUES

The Biennale is committed to:
- non-extractive representation,
- contextual integrity,
- respect for communities and knowledge systems,
- refusal of stereotypes,
- the dignity of lived experience,
- the diversity of Africa's intellectual traditions.

Your work should embody these commitments.

10. TONE & APPROACH

We encourage a writing tone that is:
- clear rather than ornamental,
- intellectually courageous rather than cautious,
- rooted rather than abstract,
- precise rather than broad.

This is not a space for neutrality.
This is a space for authorship.

11 CONNECTION TO PHASE 2

Phase 2 — the spatial installation — will be guided by the Exhibition Designers.
Your manifesto must contain the conceptual material that will later be translated into physical form.

The installation will extend, not illustrate, your written position.
Your manifesto is the **origin** of your built contribution.

12. FINAL CURATORIAL NOTE

This Biennale does not exist to supplement existing global narratives — it exists to reformulate them.

We are not assembling exhibitors.
We are assembling authors.

You are invited — and expected — to be:

- Radical,
- Provocative,
- Precise,
- Critical,
- unapologetically rooted in your context.

You are not asking permission.
Africa is not asking permission.
For too long, African architectural knowledge has been interpreted through external lenses.
This Biennale shifts the center of discourse back to the continent — to its plurality, its contradictions, its resilience, and its cultural intelligence.

Your manifesto is a declaration of this shift.
It will shape your installation, the publication, and the intellectual architecture of this inaugural edition.

Write with the ambition appropriate for this moment.
History will look back at this publication as the point at which Africa spoke on its own terms, not as a periphery of someone else's story.
But as a center of global architectural thought.

With anticipation and solidarity,
Omar Degan
Curator — Pan-African Biennale, Nairobi 2026