

BIO27 SUPER
VERNAKULARNO
VERNACULARS
27TH BIENNIAL OF
DESIGN, LJUBLJANA
26.5–29.9 2022

BIO27 Super Vernaculars Design for a Regenerative Future

Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO),
Ljubljana, Slovenia | 26 May–29 September
Opening: 26 May 2022

March 2022

The 27th edition of **BIO Ljubljana (BIO27)**, the oldest and one of the leading design biennials in the world, opening on 26 May under the curatorship of **Jane Withers**, brings together forward-thinking and environmentally conscious designers, architects, thinkers and researchers from around the globe.

The theme for **BIO27, Super Vernaculars**, explores a growing and ambitious movement that takes inspiration from vernacular architecture and design intelligence to shape a more resilient and equitable future.

Super Vernaculars reveals how designers and architects are taking note of vernacular traditions and value systems largely ignored in the modern era to create imaginative responses to contemporary challenges such as water scarcity, waste and declining biodiversity.

The projects featured in **BIO27** foreground localism, connection to nature and ecological resilience. **Super Vernaculars** approaches include a city-wide nature-based water management system, low-energy alternatives to air conditioning, zero-waste food systems and design that supports local communities and landscape regeneration.

Curated by leading independent curator, design consultant and writer, **Jane Withers**, with assistant curator **Ria Hawthorn** (UK), **Super Vernaculars** is envisaged as a collection of stories told through case studies that show how these ideas serve as a springboard for contemporary innovation.

Based at the **Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO)** and created in cooperation with, the **Centre for Creativity Slovenia (CzK)**, the Biennial comprises the **Super Vernaculars exhibition**; a presentation of the five **production platform commissions**; and a vibrant programme of talks, workshops and engaging events. A city-wide **satellite programme** of exhibits and events will be announced in April.

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THE EXHIBITION

Introduction to the Super Vernaculars theme

The introductory section of the BIO27 exhibition is staged as a *Wunderkammer* of objects and ideas that illuminate the beliefs underpinning this contemporary movement. Drawing on works from Slovenian national heritage and beyond, it shows how vernacular practices inspired designers throughout the 20th century and were often an unacknowledged element of modern design. Setting the scene are works by **Enzo Mari** (Italy)*, alongside **Marjetica Potrč** (Slovenia), and **Adam Štěch** (Czech Republic).

*The section includes 5 works curated by Marco Sammiceli, Director of the Museo del Design Italiano of Triennale Milano, demonstrating how the vernacular has influenced 20th century Italian masters such as Enzo Mari, as well as designers working today.

Negotiating Traditions

Through the works of **Carolien Niebling** (the Netherlands), **Ant Studio** (India), **Alicja Bielawska + Centrala** (Poland), **Francesca Sarti** of Arabeschi di Latte (Italy), and others, Biennial visitors have an opportunity to explore how contemporary designers are reimagining, adapting and subverting traditional ideas and deep-rooted practices to address contemporary needs and challenges.

Reimagining systems and infrastructures

Super Vernaculars' third exhibition section showcases various design processes and systems proposed as alternatives to the centralised infrastructures that accommodate our modern lives and, in many cases, are no longer able to sustainably support the requirements of growing populations in a time of climate change. Projects such as **Marjan van Aubel's** (the Netherlands) solar panels, new material research by **Atelier LUMA** (France), and water systems by **Ooze Architects** (the Netherlands) reveal hidden local-scale processes and rethink them in terms of circular, nature-based systems.

Catalysing Community

Exhibiting at **BIO27** are the NGO project **Isla Urbana** (Mexico), **Girjegumpi Sami Library** (Norway), **Kamikatsu Zero Waste Village and Centre** (Japan) and **INDUS by Bio-ID Lab** at the Bartlett School of Architecture (UK), all of whom present human- and community-centric research and projects that foster social justice and healthy, flourishing communities.

COMMISSIONED PROJECTS – BIO27 PRODUCTION PLATFORM

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BIO27 Super Vernaculars' production platform produced in cooperation with **CzK**, features five Slovenian interdisciplinary teams mentored by internationally acclaimed mentors to tackle compelling problems of local communities and the environment. **CzK** programmes are built on international production projects by **MAO**, among which **BIO** is of key importance. **BIO** has shown that an experimental interdisciplinary process is conducive to creative research and innovation, making social or entrepreneurial progress possible. This is why **CzK** is the co-producer of this element of the Biennial.

1. **Forbidden Vernaculars**

Design collective **Krater** in dialogue with **Atelier LUMA** (France) and **BC Materials** (Belgium) is developing ongoing research into rammed earth architecture to create a teahouse that is situated on the crater-like construction site in the heart of Ljubljana occupied by **Krater**. More at [@kratercollective](https://www.kratercollective.com)

2. **Grains for Brains**

Delving into the 'world of grains', team **Robida.plus** based in remote Alpine village Topolò and mentored by designer and food futurist **Carolien Niebling** (the Netherlands) is drawing on Slovenia's rich cultural, agricultural and culinary heritage to redesign the Slovenian tradition of buckwheat use. More at [@r o b i d a](https://www.robida.plus).

3. **Water - Designing a BioVernacular**

Pjorkkala, the team mentored by **Shneel Malik** (India), an architect, biodesign researcher and social entrepreneur, is addressing the problem of pollution in natural water sources in Slovenia by creating prototypes for local, nature-based solutions. More at [@pjorkkala](https://www.pjorkkala.com).

4. **Communicating Modern Architecture**

Adam Štěch, an architectural historian and co-founder of the creative group **OKOLO** (Czech Republic) is mentoring **Garnitura** to communicate the architectural legacy of the renowned Slovenian architect **Jože Plečnik** to new audiences by drawing on the architect's profoundly human vision for the city of Ljubljana. More at [@garnitura](https://www.garnitura.com).

5. **Regenerative Cultural Production**

Futuring is undertaking an environmental audit of the **Super Vernaculars** biennial and is guiding the reduction of its environmental impact. Mentored by designer and sustainability expert **Sophie Thomas** (UK), **Futuring** is developing an open source toolkit to help **BIO27's** design teams to raise their awareness and reduce the impact of their work. The pioneering toolkit will be published and available to designers and cultural institutions globally, sharing the Biennial's sustainability study for others to build upon.

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OTHER COMMISSIONED PROJECTS

KW BIO27 – a new open-source font

London-based graphic design studio **Kellenberger-White** was commissioned to create the logo for BIO27 and develop a freely available font that could be used by other participants in the Biennial. Here the letterforms of the upper-case typeface were inspired by the skilfully hand-drawn texts on architect **Jože Plečnik**'s drawings. The translation from the hand-drawn to the digital creates a contemporary vernacular, accessible to all. Part of the design brief was to consider sustainability and the typeface is purposefully lightweight to reduce ink and energy use.

When International Style Went Local – Vernacular Modernism in Croatia and Slovenia

Adam Štěch has also been commissioned to document Vernacular Modernism architecture in Croatia and Slovenia through a new series of photographs which reveal how the vernacular was an often hidden and unacknowledged element of Modernism from the 1930s onwards.

Slovenian Sausage of the Future

Caroline Niebling's Sausage of the Future project reinvents the sausage for more climate friendly eating, and activates the existing production system of independent butchers to produce local recipes for plant-based sausages. For BIO27 Niebling has been commissioned to create a Slovenian Sausage of the Future. Working with chef **Igor Jagodic** of Strelec restaurant from Ljubljana and butcher **Marko Butalič**, the new recipe is inspired by local food culture, and includes key ingredients such as buckwheat, wild garlic and mushrooms.

BIO27 – TRANSFORMING INTO A SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL PRODUCER

As the environmental impact of hosting international cultural events becomes clear, **BIO**'s mission embeds sustainability as a guiding principle. In response to this, **Jane Withers** has dedicated one of the Biennial's production platforms to exploring 'Regenerative Cultural Production' and assessing **BIO**'s environmental footprint. **BIO27** is taking active steps to reduce its impact across its activities and aims to demonstrate and communicate innovative approaches to sustainable cultural production.

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27th Biennial of Design Key Dates

BIO27 Exhibition 26 May–29 September 2022

BIO27 Opening: 26 May 2022

BIO27 Catalogue: published June 2022

Curatorial Statement

Global expansion and pursuit of profit at the expense of the planet have precipitated the climate catastrophe and accelerated a massive imbalance between humanity and the natural world. **Super Vernaculars**, the theme for **BIO27**, explores a growing and ambitious movement that takes inspiration from vernacular and indigenous architecture and design traditions around the world to shape a radical vision for a more resilient and responsive future.

In contrast to our extractive ‘take make waste’ economy, these practices are rooted in regenerative systems and cultures that live with the earth rather than from it. Vernacular is generally associated with traditional architecture and design practices, but the Super Vernaculars approach is not reactionary or regressive. For **BIO27**, **Super Vernaculars** will bring together designers and thinkers who are exploring alternative narratives to the industrial and technocentric as inspiration for 21-st century innovation. In the midst of the pandemic, and a period of seismic change and improvisation, this call to explore cultures and wisdom traditions largely ignored in the modern industrial era as a catalyst to designing a more equitable future is more relevant than ever.

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About Jane Withers

Jane Withers is a leading design curator, writer and consultant based in London. Her studio works on curation, programming and design-led strategies with institutions and global brands, bringing imaginative design thinking to address social, cultural, and environmental challenges. She has curated critically acclaimed exhibitions and programmes at the V&A Museum and Royal Academy of Arts among many others. She is curatorial advisor to the London Design Festival and initiated the Brompton Design District as a platform for experimental design, as well as collaborating with pioneering brands such as Kvadrat and Therme Group.

Withers has a long record of exploring the role of design in tackling environmental issues with a particular focus on water, initiating a series of influential projects that bring together perspectives from different regions and fields of expertise to provide the knowledge, networks, and opportunities for designers to investigate and respond to the water crisis. She speaks and teaches internationally including at ECAL and the RCA in 2022. She has served on numerous juries and advisory boards, and was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the University of Westminster for her services to the environment, along with Milan's Design Prize for Experimentation. More at janewithers.com and [@janewithers.london](https://www.instagram.com/janewithers.london)

About BIO

The Biennial of Design (BIO Ljubljana), established in 1963, is the oldest and one of the most preeminent international design events in Europe. BIO is a cultural event that seeks innovative intersections that are ripe for development between architecture and the industrial and academic sectors. BIO's chosen theme serves as an international platform for new approaches to design that address current burning issues in local and global environments. It is a laboratory and test track where design is viewed as a tool for examining and readdressing everyday life through a multidisciplinary and humanistic lens that reaches through the systems, services, studies, and production apparatuses that run our lives, as well as the unexpected conditions involved in effecting any solutions within our living environments. More at bio.si.

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About CzK

The Centre for Creativity (CzK) is Slovenia's first national business development accelerator for professionals working in the creative and cultural sectors. The platform is run by the Museum of Architecture and Design, and together with open calls of the Ministry of Culture it forms the support framework for the development of the creative sector in Slovenia. The Centre's programmes are aimed at strengthening the social and economic value of the sector while forging stronger ties with other sectors and the economy in general. More at czk.si.

Follow the Journey and Get Involved!

bio27.si

Instagram: [@bio_ljubljana](https://www.instagram.com/bio_ljubljana)

#bio27 #bio27supervernaculars

Contacts & Press

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