

Mérida to Host First Edition of Bienal de Yucatán



Downtown Mérida. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

The Bienal de Yucatán, the first large-scale international contemporary art biennial in Mexico, is set to open in Mérida, the capital of the Yucatán state, this November.

Artistic director Abraham Cruzvillegas has made language and all forms of communication the focus of this first edition. Titled “Vocal,” it will bring together seventy-six artists and other participants—including linguists, filmmakers, poets, musicians, and dancers—from twenty countries. Participating visual artists include Oscar Murillo, Minerva Cuevas, Yoko Ono, Wael Shawky, Jimmie Durham, Lawrence Weiner, Cecilia Vicuña, and Rirkrit Tiravanija.

“This international exhibition will focus primarily on tongue, languages, idioms, the written, the spoken, and what needs to be said,” Cruzvillegas said in a press release. “The works and individual participating in this renewed version of the Bienal de Yucatán will make it one of inclusion and diversity, of languages and idioms that engage in dialogue and contradict one another.”

The principal venue is the Casa de la Cultura del Mayab, a sixteenth-century former convent in Mérida’s Centro Histórico. The fourteen other sites include the Centro de Artes Visuales, the Biblioteca Yucatanense, the Museo de la Ciudad, and the Museo Pinacoteca Juan Gamboa Guzmán. The Bienal will run from November 26, 2026, to February 28, 2027.

The bienale was founded by the art historian and collector Catherine Petitgras, who is based between London and Mérida. She noted the city’s lack of local exhibition opportunities—exacerbated by the closing of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Ateneo de Yucatán in 2021—despite its vibrant contemporary art scene. “Since then,” she said, “I began dreaming of a biennial which would strengthen and draw visibility for contemporary art in the region.”