

Press Release – Under Embargo until 25 February 2026

Haitian-Canadian Artist Manuel Mathieu Debuts at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia



Artist Manuel Mathieu, 2024 © Richard Bernardin.

Invited by Koyo Kouoh, Manuel Mathieu's work engages with historical violence, erasure, and cultural approaches to physicality, nature, and spiritual heritage, strongly resonating with the *In Minor Key* curatorial theme. Marking a major milestone in his career, he will make his debut at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, with new and existing works.

Informed by his upbringing in Haiti following the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship and his subsequent emigration to Canada at the age of 19, Manuel Mathieu's art delves into the shared struggles and connections that unite us across national borders. In an age overwhelmed by information, where images and data proliferate faster than comprehension, his work insists on slowness and distance. It asks the viewer to step back, to recognize patterns across time, and to confront the ways history repeats itself under different names.

These personal experiences deeply inform his multidisciplinary artistic language. Each medium carries its own expressive weight: paintings blend abstraction and figuration; sculptures form immersive installations with film; olfactory art introduces a spiritual dimension, shaping both the duration of the experience and the emotional resonance for viewers. His work further extends to ceramic ensembles, large-scale mosaics, and poetry, each piece offering a distinct avenue to explore the interplay between personal memory and collective history. At the Biennale Arte 2026, Mathieu will bring together this full spectrum of forms, presenting a selection of works that reflects the depth and diversity of his practice.

The friction between past and present, personal and political, is a recurring theme for the artist. He addresses Haiti's complex history, offering a laboratory in which to envision the bridges shaping our empathy. His approach often involves a phenomenological encounter where amorphous subjects vacillate and dissolve into boundless landscapes, encouraging viewers to re-imagine the limits of their own minds. Mathieu is on a quest to

materialise the fragility of forms and the poetry in our disappearance which is inherent to our existence.

“What resonated with me in Koyo Kouoh’s vision was her trust in our fragility. She believed that art does not need to scream in order to move us. The language of the soul is the whisper. Coming from a place with a history marked by continuous erasure, the most precious parts of our survival reside in our intimacy. This Biennale is a place where those quiet forms of resistance can finally be heard. Thought leaders like Koyo Kouoh guide us by reminding us that the perpetuation of dominant narratives produces a homogeneity, one that dulls our empathy and weakens our capacity to truly relate to others,” Manuel Mathieu, artist, says.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a significant year for the artist. Alongside the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, Mathieu will participate in international group and solo exhibitions in New York, Paris, and Montréal, affirming his presence on the global contemporary art scene.

About Manuel Mathieu | [Manuel Mathieu](#)

Manuel Mathieu is a leading figure in contemporary art on the global stage and is the first Haitian-Canadian artist to have his work acquired by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Beyond his artistic practice and international exhibitions, Mathieu is deeply committed to creating structural change within the cultural field. His work and initiatives aim to create opportunities for underrepresented voices and to bring visibility to histories that have long remained in the shadows. In collaboration with the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, he created the Marie-Solanges Apollon Fund for the acquisition of works by artists underrepresented in its collection. The artist has since funded a new program at AWARE (Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions), also in his grandmother’s name. The program aims to encourage research on the practices of artists in the Black Atlantic and the Global South. Mathieu is the executive producer of *The Fight for Haiti*, a documentary highlighting Haitian activists’ struggle against corruption and impunity.

His recent projects reflect an expansion toward large-scale, multisensory installations that blur the boundaries between visual, spatial, and sensory experience. These include *Le Mont habité* (2025), a permanent public commission of five monumental mosaics for Montréal’s Réseau express métropolitain (REM), and an immersive installation version of *Pendulum* presented at the Toronto Biennial of Art in 2024. Additionally, he opened five shows in 2025 at HdM (Beijing), Pilar Corrias (London), at PHI (Montreal), at MacKenzie Art Gallery (Regina), and at the Saint Louis Art Museum. In 2026, Mathieu will unveil a new body of work at Galerie Hugues Charbonneau in Montréal, followed by his first solo exhibition with Galerie Poggi in Paris.

Biennale Arte 2026

61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia - *In Minor Keys* by Koyo Kouoh
Saturday 9 May to Sunday 22 November 2026
Venice, Arsenale and Giardini

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