

OFFish

Open Call

Parallel Programme of **Lagos Biennial 2026**

Application Deadline: **30 January 2026**

Exhibition Dates: 17 October – 18 December 2026

Venue: Àkéte Collection, Lagos, Nigeria

UNSEEN FUTURES:

AN ANAMORPHIC RESPONSE TO “THE MUSEUM OF THINGS UNSEEN”

The Àkéte Art Foundation invites art institutions to submit proposals for the Off programme of the Lagos Biennial, a responsive and dialogical initiative running parallel to the 5th edition, *The Museum of Things Unseen*. The Biennial unfolds as a multi-phase project across Lagos and its surrounding communities, involving residencies, field research, mentorship, public commissions, an exhibition, workshops, and a colloquium.

OFFish, conceived during the 2nd edition of the Lagos Biennial in 2019 as a parallel off-site space, extends the Biennial’s curatorial framework beyond its primary exhibition. For the 2026 Edition, the OFFish programme will be housed in pavilions overlooking the central Biennial exhibition, constituting the physical perimeter of the main exhibition space. While spatially adjacent to the central exhibition, OFFish conceptually maintains its independence as an anamorphic counterpoint which distorts, contorts, squashes and squeezes the primary curatorial frame to reveal what might otherwise remain peripheral or unseen

Context: Biennial & Collection as a Living Organism

The 5th edition of the Lagos Biennial explores the politics of visibility and the architectures of absence that shape our cultural, economic, and institutional worlds. Framed through the idea of *The Museum of Things Unseen*, this edition asks what is made visible, what is remembered, and what is erased. It reflects on how visibility is never neutral, but produced through laws and logistics, habits and hierarchies, curatorial frameworks and financial flows. The Biennial critically engages with the concept of the museum not as a fixed institution but as a mutable and contested site of power, knowledge, and cultural memory.

Proposals for the OFFish programme are invited to extend this concern with *The Museum of Things Unseen* by exhibiting artworks and objects from private and public collections which have never been publicly displayed. Submissions must clearly articulate why specific works demand visibility in Lagos and what history of circulation, erasure, or exclusion they illuminate within this particular context.

The conceptual framework for the OFFish programme addresses the following questions:

- Who defines what is seen or valued within the institutional museum context?
- What lies hidden in the shadows of our museum spaces, and why?
- Whose stories are silenced, whose voices are amplified? What memories are preserved, and which are systematically erased?
- If we were to build a museum unbounded by structural inequities, what form would it take?

Rather than proposing a single vision, the Biennial builds a polyphonic platform for rethinking museology. Through exhibitions, performances, field research, public dialogues, and a transdisciplinary colloquium, it brings together artists, cultural workers, and scholars to propose radical futures for the museum as a space of refusal, care, speculation, resistance, and collectivity.

A key highlight is the newly conceived Àkéte Collection, a temporary contemporary art space set to open in October 2026 in Ikoyi, Lagos. Designed by Tosin Oshinowo, the venue will act as the main hub for exhibitions, artist interventions, and community programming throughout the Biennial and beyond. It will feature works from previous Biennial editions alongside new commissions, long-term loans, and donations from artists, museums, and collectors.

More than a building, the Àkéte Collection operates as a living and evolving archive: artist-led, community-rooted, and globally engaged. It reflects the Biennial's long-term mission to challenge dominant cultural narratives, build sustainable infrastructures for contemporary art in Nigeria and the Global South, and provide ongoing space for critical practice, learning, and imagination.

The OFFish programme will unfold within and alongside this critical ecosystem, occupying spaces of intermission, rupture, intimacy, contradiction, and potential.

Eligibility: Who Can Apply?

We welcome applications from:

- Art institutions, organisations, museums, foundations, galleries and private collections
- Local and international applicants
- Contributors interested in working with the curatorial team and Àkété Art Foundation
- Proposals may include newly commissioned work, existing works, or loans
- Projects may be presented in in-person or hybrid formats

Contribution to Structural Costs

To participate in the *OFFish* programme, selected contributors are required to secure and contribute a financial commitment of USD 20,000 for 40ft containers and USD 15,000 for 20ft containers.

This contribution directly supports:

- The structural financing of the Lagos Biennial 2026
- The construction and customisation of the pavilion, including the purchasing and transformation of a 40ft container into a functional and publicly accessible art venue
- Solar energy installation
- Invigilation of artworks for a two-month period
- Technical and installation assistance
- Security

This self-funded model ensures the programme's independence and supports the Biennial's commitment to building sustainable infrastructure for contemporary art in Nigeria.

We encourage applicants to seek funding through grants, cultural institutions, embassies, private sponsors, or crowdfunding platforms. Letters of support can be provided upon request.

What We Offer

- Technical and installation assistance
- The organisation of a 40ft container for the presentation of your work
- Logistical support for local production
- Visibility within the extended Biennial programme
- Option to present your work during the opening week colloquium (discursive/performance/public formats)
- Inclusion in digital platforms and Biennial documentation
- Invigilation and security of artworks for a two-month period
- Climatisation of the pavilion for the duration of the exhibition
- Travel advice
-

Note: This is a low-resource programme. We encourage proposals that are scalable, adaptable, and sustainable.

How to Apply

Please send a single PDF (max. 10 MB) to: info@lagos-biennial.org

Subject line: OFFish 2026 – Submission

Include the following:

- Project Proposal (max. 1000 words)
- Concept and connection to the Biennial's curatorial framework
- Proposed medium and format (in-person and/or hybrid)
- Technical and spatial requirements
- Contributors Statement (max. 500 words)
- CV's or Short Bios
- Budget overview and proposed timeline

Key Dates

- Application Deadline: 30 January 2026
- Notification of Selected Projects: 15 February 2026
- Registration fee payment deadline: 25 April 2026
- Opening: 17 October 2026
- Exhibition Duration: 17 October – 18 December 2026

About the Àkété Art Foundation

The Àkété Art Foundation is a Lagos-based, artist-led nonprofit reimagining cultural work as a tool for social change. Officially registered as an NGO in 2025, the Foundation supports artistic practice and fosters dialogue through exhibitions, residencies, and learning spaces. Its flagship initiative—the Lagos Biennial, launched in 2017—builds sustainable, independent infrastructure for contemporary art in Nigeria and across the Global South. The Biennial receives no government funding and foregrounds bold, community-driven approaches to power, identity, and representation.

+++++

We invite you to use this space as a testing ground—a living proposal for interruption, care, proximity, dissent, collective imagination, and unseen futures. Join the anamorphic. Become *OFFish*.

info@lagos-biennial.org