

PROGRAM

International Forum Citizenship through Aesthetics

São Miguel •

Azores •

16-18

October 2025

From 16 to 18 October 2025, the island of São Miguel will host the first edition of the International Forum Citizenship through Aesthetics — a new space for gathering, reflection, and action at the intersection of art, politics, imagination, and community.

The International Forum Citizenship through Aesthetics is an international gathering that brings together artists, scholars, curators, journalists, museum directors, programmers, and cultural and civic agents, with the purpose of exploring the relationship between aesthetics and active critical citizenship.

The proposal stems from the idea that the aesthetic field is not only a domain of symbolic representation or disinterested enjoyment, but also a space of political inscription and meaning-making. Within this framework, artistic practices that emerge from cultural belonging, collective memory, or gestures of resistance also become acts of citizenship.

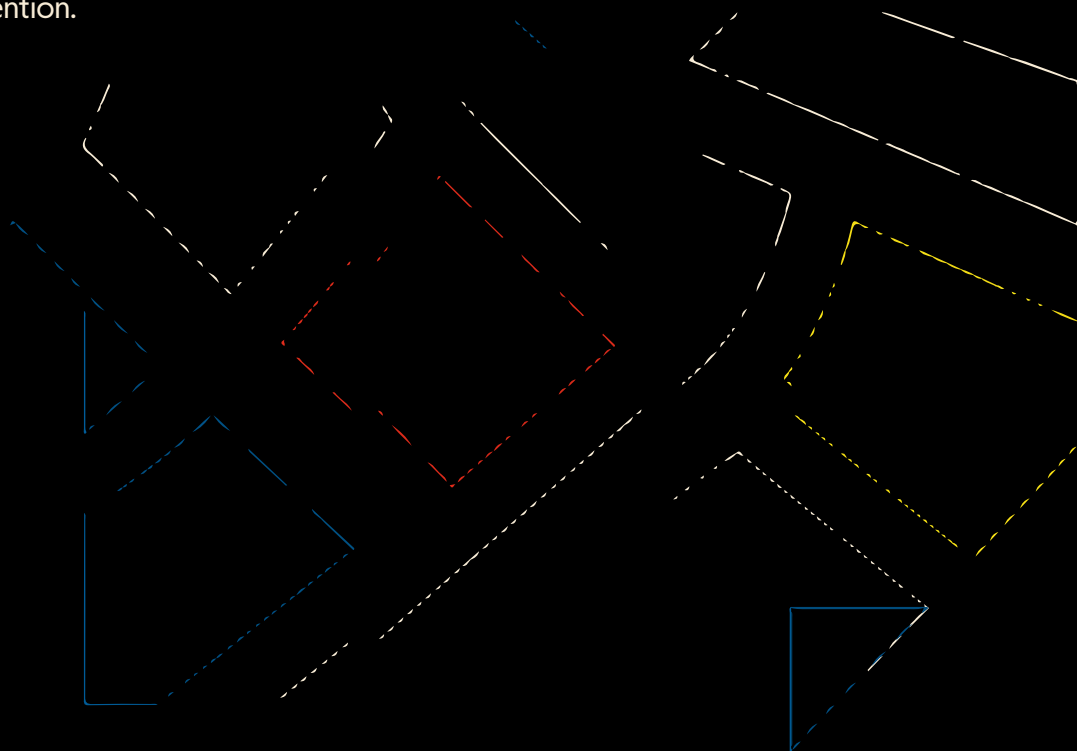
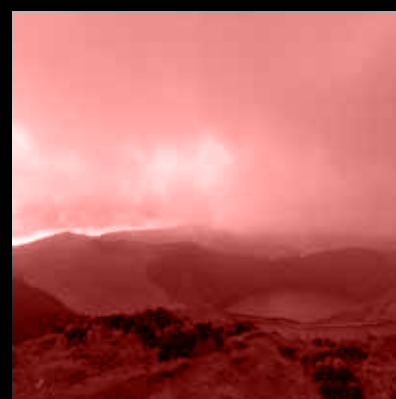


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The creation of this Forum reflects the will to question artistic creation processes and their relationship with the public; to expand formats of participatory artistic practice; to challenge preconceived notions about community-based projects; and to broaden the meaning of community art initiatives.

More broadly, it seeks to sustain an active and critical perspective on aesthetic production and its relationship with processes of citizenship. The appropriation and expansion of the concept of Aesthetic Citizenship, coined by Emine Fisek, is here extended to encompass the whole of aesthetic production and a concept of citizenship understood less as a legal bond than as an ongoing process — a collective construction aimed at the gradual realisation of a more just and solidaristic society.

The Azores, through their geography, history, and culture, become a privileged space of encounter and contemplation — a true beacon in the middle of the Atlantic, inspiring those who look at us from afar in time and space. The isolation of the islands is understood here as an opportunity: for listening, sharing, depth, and reinvention.



Invited guests

Andrew Hewitt — Andrew Hewitt (UK) is an artist, researcher, and lecturer at the University of Northampton. Co-founder of the Free Art Collective and the Partisan Social Club, his work shifts art into the public sphere as a site for debate and civic participation.

Esther Leslie — Esther Leslie (UK) is Professor of Political Aesthetics at Birkbeck, University of London, Fellow of the British Academy, and author of influential works on Benjamin, Adorno, and critical theory, exploring intersections between aesthetics, politics, science, and technology.

Gregory Sholette — Gregory Sholette (US) is an artist, writer, and Professor at Queens College (CUNY), where he co-directs Social Practice CUNY. He is the author of *Dark Matter* and *Delirium and Resistance*, key references on socially engaged art, citizenship, and cultural resistance.

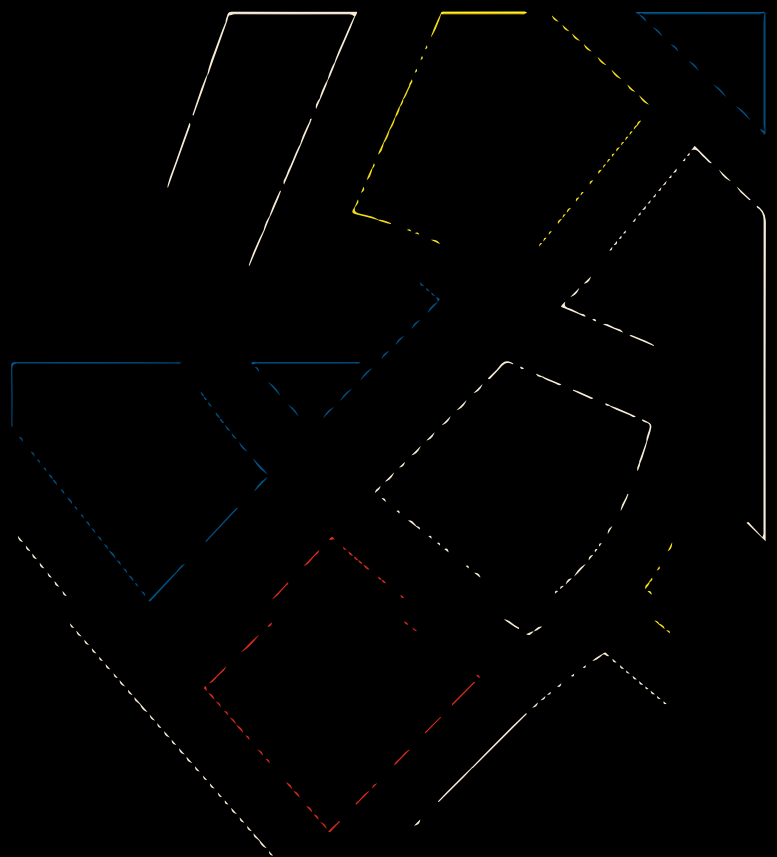
João Paulo Constância — João Paulo Constância (PT) is a biologist and museologist, Director of the Carlos Machado Museum since 2021. He holds a degree in Biology from the University of Porto and a postgraduate in Museology, and has been part of the museum since 1991, linking science, heritage and art with the Azorean community.

Mel Jordan — Mel Jordan (UK) is an artist and Professor of Art and the Public Sphere at Coventry University, where she directs the Centre for Postdigital Cultures. Co-founder of the Free Art Collective, she researches how art can reimagine citizenship and democratic participation.

Olga Kopenkina — Olga Kopenkina (US) Olga Kopenkina is a Belarus-born, New York-based independent curator and art critic, who organized exhibitions and programs in U.S. and internationally. She is a contributor to publications such as *Art Journal*, *Moscow Art Magazine*, *ArtMargins*, *Manifesta Journal*, *Modern Painters*, *Afterimage*, and others. She teaches at the Department of Media, Culture and Communication, in Steinhardt School at New York University.

Raquel Ermida — Raquel Ermida (PT) is a researcher and lecturer, PhD in Art Theory at NOVA FCSH/IHA (Lisbon). Her research addresses contemporary art practices, collectives, and micro-politics, combining theory, artistic experimentation, and civic engagement.

Ricardo Alexandre — Ricardo Alexandre (PT) is a journalist, writer, and cultural programmer. He was Deputy Director of TSF Radio (2018–2023) and is currently International Affairs Editor. He is also the founder/programmer of the Noites Ritual festival (Porto, 1992–2012) and the author of *“Esta Vida de Marinheiro”*, a biography of João Aguardela.





Program

PUBLIC SPEECH ACTS

17:00 16th OCT

Rua dos Mercadores, Ponta Delgada

OPEN DEBATE at a local tasca

(traditional Portuguese tavern)

moderated by Ricardo Alexandre (TSF)

17:00 17th OCT

Café Royal, Ponta Delgada

ART AND RESISTANCE

Community and Utopia

10:00 18th OCT

**Cloister of Santo António Convent
Lagoa**

AESTHETICS AND POWER

Community is Utopia

17:00 18th OCT

**Mercado da Graça — Public Market
Ponta Delgada**

+ Info: www.aestheticivitas.org

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