



**CALL
FOR
ARTISTS**



**BIENNALE
DEL
GRAN SASSO**

**Arte contemporanea
nel cuore dell'Appennino**

OPEN CALL - BIENNALE DEL GRAN SASSO 2026

Edition Zero | 1–20 September 2026

Open call for artist residencies and the creation of site-specific works – Cammino del Gran Sasso
Application deadline: 21 June 2026

THE CONTEXT

The territory of the Gran Sasso d'Italia, the highest mountain massif in the Apennines and in peninsular Italy, is one of the most significant landscapes in Central Italy in terms of environmental, historical and anthropological value.

Within this setting lies the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park: a complex system of natural environments and historic settlements, characterised by small towns and villages, deeply rooted traditions and a strong relationship between local communities and the landscape.

Despite this heritage, the area faces many of the critical issues typical of Italy's inland regions: progressive depopulation, a reduction in cultural services and discontinuity in educational provision. At the same time, growing interest in sustainable and experiential forms of tourism highlights the need to develop projects capable of connecting cultural, social and territorial dimensions.

The Cammino del Gran Sasso

It is within this context that the Cammino del Gran Sasso takes shape: a circular route of approximately 60 km crossing the territory and bringing natural landscapes and inhabited centres into relation with one another. The route unfolds through high-altitude environments and historic towns, connecting some of the area's most representative places: from the Campo Imperatore plateau to the towns of the Baronia area — Castel del Monte, Calascio with Rocca Calascio, Santo Stefano di Sessanio and Barisciano — all the way to Fonte Cerreto. Beyond its hiking dimension, the Cammino is conceived as a widespread cultural infrastructure: a device for crossing and storytelling that connects places, memories and communities, opening up space for contemporary practices of research and experimentation..

THE GRAN SASSO BIENNALE

The Gran Sasso Biennale was born from the collaboration between Frequenze dal Gran Sasso, Il Cammino del Gran Sasso and the Giorgio de Marchis Bonanni d'Ocre Foundation, with the shared aim of activating a dialogue between contemporary art, landscape and local communities.

The initiative involves the active participation of the Academies of Fine Arts of L'Aquila and Rome and the Superintendency of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the provinces of L'Aquila and Teramo, with the operational support of the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park and the support of the CarispAQ Foundation and the Municipalities of Castel del Monte, Calascio, Santo Stefano di Sessanio and Barisciano.

The first edition will take place in 2026, on the occasion of L'Aquila's designation as Italian Capital of Culture, within a context of particular importance for the cultural enhancement of the territory. The project includes the creation of site-specific interventions, participatory projects and educational activities distributed along the Cammino del Gran Sasso, transforming towns, mountain huts and trails into a widespread space for artistic production and experimentation.

Aims and objectives

The Gran Sasso Biennale is conceived as a cultural device capable of bringing together contemporary artistic production, community activation and the enhancement of the landscape. Its aim is to initiate a process of culture-led territorial regeneration, helping to increase the social capital of local communities and to strengthen the identity of the Gran Sasso as an open-air creative laboratory.

From this perspective, the project seeks to enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage through artistic practices capable of generating new forms of experience and storytelling, while at the same time developing a model of regeneration that extends along the Cammino.

Particular attention is given to processes of active participation by local communities, with the aim of strengthening social cohesion, a sense of belonging and practices of care for the territory.

Through a distributed and continuous cultural programme, the project also aims to contribute to the deseasonalisation of tourist flows, encouraging a more balanced and sustainable presence throughout the year.

THEMATIC GUIDELINE

Artists are invited to develop a proposal for a work connected to the theme chosen by the Artistic Committee: "The Threshold".

The threshold is the limit that marks the beginning or the end of a phenomenon, a transitional space between two states, conditions or environments. In architecture, it both separates and connects, defining a passage; in a figurative sense, it represents the moment in which one enters a new phase, such as the transition to adulthood or an existential change.

From another point of view, the threshold indicates the minimum value required for a stimulus to be perceived: it is the point at which something emerges, becomes visible or perceptible. In geography, it may appear as a difference in elevation or as a passage between territories; in common language, as a boundary, an entrance, a limit, and it can define dynamics of relationship, inclusion and exclusion.

It is an ambiguous and visceral space: it does not fully belong to what comes before, nor to what comes after. It is a place of crossing and transformation, where one is suspended between two realities.

Even in the absence of a physical door, cities and social spaces continue to be organised through invisible boundaries that regulate access and produce feelings of belonging or estrangement.

It is precisely in this condition of passage that its potential lies: the threshold is not only a limit, but also a possibility for change. In standing between two states, a renewed closeness to the territory, its rhythms and its inhabitants can emerge.

It is also the place where one may feel like a stranger only a few metres away. The threshold does not merely divide: it is the fragile point at which a community may come to recognise itself again.

The towns crossed by the Cammino represent the physical and symbolic access point to the landscape and cultural context of the Gran Sasso: a threshold on which the Gran Sasso Biennale intends to work together with artists and the community

PARTICIPATION AND OBJECTIVES

Participation is open to artists residing in Italy or abroad, aged 18 or over, who are interested in developing an original site-specific work within the framework of the Gran Sasso Biennale 2026 – Edition Zero, which will take place from 18 to 20 September 2026.

The works will be produced following an artist residency in the towns crossed by the Cammino del Gran Sasso, from 1 to 17 September 2026.

Within this context, artists are invited to contribute actively to the objectives of the Biennale through practices capable of establishing a deep relationship with the territory.

Projects must interpret and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Gran Sasso, generating new forms of storytelling and experience of the landscape. They must also become part of a widespread cultural infrastructure extending across towns, trails and mountain huts, making art accessible to local communities, walkers and visitors.

It will also be essential to activate processes of community engagement and to develop interdisciplinary research paths in dialogue with the themes of ecology, memory and artistic innovation, while contributing to a broader, more distributed and sustainable cultural experience over time.

During the residency period, artists will be required to walk part of the Cammino del Gran Sasso, accompanied by mid-mountain guides from the Collegio delle Guide Alpine, as an integral part of the research and development process for their works.

In the event of mobility difficulties, access to an alternative route will be guaranteed in order to ensure a complete experience.

WORKS AND MEDIA

The submitted works must be original site-specific creations, in the form of permanent or temporary interventions designed to engage with the natural or urban landscapes along the Cammino del Gran Sasso.

Proposals may fall within the following disciplines:

- installations and multimedia works involving sound, image, storytelling and participatory processes
- environmental works and land art
- visual and plastic arts
- performances to be carried out along the route or in the participating towns, provided that they involve the use of sound materials, objects or original costumes created for the staging, which will constitute a tangible trace of the work.

All works must be designed and installed along the Cammino del Gran Sasso and in the participating towns, entering into relation with the outdoor and natural environment that hosts them.

Artists are therefore invited to adopt a conscious and responsible approach to the site. During the selection process, preference will be given to works that integrate criteria of ecological sustainability into their conception, from the choice of materials to the methods of installation, in respect of the environment in which they are placed.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

Applications must be submitted by **11:59 p.m. on 21 June 2026** to the following email address:
direzione@biennaledelgransasso.it

The subject line must read:

Application for the Gran Sasso Biennale 2026

Only applications including all the required documentation will be considered.

Emails larger than **25 MB** will be rejected by the system. For additional materials, applicants may include a link via digital file-transfer services, such as WeTransfer.

Selection will be carried out at the sole discretion of the Artistic Direction of the Gran Sasso Biennale, under the supervision of curator **Maurizio Coccia**.

Up to a maximum of **5 projects** will be selected to become part of the programme of the **Gran Sasso Biennale 2026 – Edition Zero**.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Technical support will be provided during the artist residency and during the installation or staging of the works.

Below is some technical information regarding the use of materials and the types of spaces available.

Materials

The use of materials, forms and installation structures that reflect a sustainable conception of the work is strongly encouraged, as is the integration of the work in harmony with the ecosystem and the specific context in which it is located.

Types of spaces available for interventions

- natural spaces, particularly mid- and high-mountain landscapes in the Gran Sasso National Park, Abruzzo
- urban spaces, specifically small towns and villages located within the Park and along the Cammino, characterised by local limestone architecture, clustered houses, narrow alleys and carved stone portals.

For the purposes of selection, the following documents are required:

- Annex A, duly completed and signed
- an updated artistic CV
- a portfolio — video, via Vimeo or YouTube link, or dossier — and an artist statement representative of the applicant's artistic practice
- the artistic project to be submitted, including sketches, project drafts or any other material useful for understanding the proposal
- a provisional technical sheet of the work
- one photograph of the artist for promotional purposes
- a cover letter
- a copy of a valid identity document

DEADLINES, STAGES AND LOCATIONS

Open call timeline:

Application deadline

11:59 p.m. on 21 June 2026

Artist residency period

1–17 September 2026

Biennale opening and presentation of the works

18–20 September 2026

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Participation in the project includes a gross flat-rate fee of **€1,500** for each artist.

Board and lodging will be provided for the entire duration of the artist residency and the Biennale, from **1 to 20 September 2026**.

A flat-rate reimbursement for travel expenses, to be agreed with the Direction, is also provided.

In addition, a maximum gross budget of **€800** will be made available for production costs, the purchase of materials and the installation of each selected work.

A necessary requirement for selection is the artist's availability to be present in the area where the Gran Sasso Biennale takes place for the entire residency and presentation period, namely from **1 to 20 September 2026**.

THE JURY

The jury will be composed of representatives of the associations **Frequenze dal Gran Sasso ETS** and **Il Cammino del Gran Sasso**, members of **Fondazione De Marchis**, members of **ABAP – the L'Aquila Superintendency**, and curator **Maurizio Coccia**.

CONTACTS

direzione@biennaledelgransasso.it

info@biennaledelgransasso.it



ANNEX A

Application Form

The undersigned, having read the call for applications for artist residencies and the creation of site-specific works as part of the Gran Sasso Biennial 2026 — Edition Zero, hereby submits their application and declares the following.

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

First name and surname *

Date of birth *

Place of birth *

Nationality *

Tax ID *

Address (street, house number) *

Postcode *

Town *

County / Region

Country *

Email address *

Phone number *

Website / Online portfolio

Social media profiles (Instagram, Vimeo, YouTube or other)

2. PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

Main artistic discipline(s) *

Short artistic biography (max 500 characters) *

3. ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

The undersigned declares that the following documentation is attached to this application:

- Updated artistic CV
- Portfolio and statement (video via Vimeo/YouTube link, or dossier in PDF format)
- Artistic project (including sketches, drafts or other material useful for understanding the proposal)
- Technical specifications of the work (provisional)
- Cover letter
- 1 photograph/image of the artist (for promotional purposes)
- Copy of a valid identity document

4. DECLARATIONS AND TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

The undersigned declares that:

- Have read and fully understood the terms of the Open Call — Gran Sasso Biennale 2026, Edition Zero, and to accept all its conditions.
- Be resident in Italy or abroad and be over 18 years of age.
- Be available to guarantee your presence in the Gran Sasso Biennale area for the entire duration of the residency and presentation period, from 1 to 20 September 2026, as a necessary requirement for selection.
- Be able to take part in the hiking route along the Cammino del Gran Sasso, accompanied by mountain guides, as an integral part of the creative process. In the event of mobility difficulties, please note that an alternative route is available.

- Be the sole author of the works and materials submitted, which must be original and free from third-party rights, and hold all necessary rights for their dissemination and use within the context of the Biennale.
- Acknowledge that the selection of projects is the sole responsibility and at the sole discretion of the Artistic Direction of the Gran Sasso Biennale, under the supervision of curator Maurizio Coccia, and that up to a maximum of 5 projects will be selected.
- I authorise the Gran Sasso Biennale and the organising bodies to use my name, image and the materials submitted for promotional and communication purposes related to the project.

5. PRIVACY NOTICE AND CONSENT TO THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

In accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and Legislative Decree 196/2003, as amended, the personal data provided with this application will be processed by Frequenze dal Gran Sasso ETS, as the data controller, exclusively for purposes related to the management of this Open Call and the activities of the Gran Sasso Biennale.

The data collected will be processed using both electronic and paper-based methods, retained for the time strictly necessary to achieve the purposes for which it was collected, and will not be disclosed to third parties except for purposes strictly related to the organisation of the project.

The undersigned has the right to access their personal data, request its rectification, erasure, restriction of processing, and to object to its processing, by writing to: info@biennaledelgransasso.it

- I declare that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the processing of my data for purposes related to the management of this Open Call. *
- I consent to the processing of my personal data for promotional and communication purposes related to the Gran Sasso Biennale (optional).

6. SIGNATURE

I, the undersigned, declare that all the information provided in this application is true and complete, and I accept full responsibility for the contents of this declaration.

Place and date

Signature

** Mandatory fields*

Please send this completed and signed form to: direzione@biennaledelgransasso.it Subject: Application for the Gran Sasso Biennale 2026 | Deadline: 21 June 2026, 23:59