

Medina Triennial

The Medina Triennial, a new contemporary art triennial in Western New York, launches its inaugural edition in 2026

The free, village-wide triennial will feature more than 50 works including site-responsive commissions by local, national and international artists presented at approximately 12 venues in Medina, New York



View of the Medina Triennial Hub and the Erie Canal, Medina, NY. Photo Hakan Topal. Courtesy Medina Triennial.

Medina, NY, June 25, 2025 – **The Medina Triennial**, a new contemporary art triennial centered in the Western New York Village of Medina along the Erie Canal, is pleased to announce its inaugural edition, taking place from **June 6–September 7, 2026**. The Triennial aims to become a cultural touchstone for Western New York, offering a dynamic platform for supporting and advancing the contemporary arts landscape in the region and drawing an expected 50,000 visitors every three years. **Initiated by the New York Power Authority and the New York State Canal Corporation as part of a broader effort to revitalize the canal and highlight its contemporary significance**, the ambitious Triennial will feature new commissions by local, national, and international artists and collectives, to create a free, village-wide exhibition. Grounded in place and shaped through deep community engagement, the Triennial will merge the hyper-local with global ideas, establishing a new model for site-specificity in the United States.

Visitors will experience art across approximately **12 indoor and outdoor sites** highlighting Medina's dynamic natural environment and industrial history. These sites

range from post-industrial buildings, vibrant public spaces, and key locations along the iconic Erie Canal, with a central hub located in a former sandstone hotel building. The resulting Triennial will be locally embedded and relevant to broader conversations of contemporary art. **Commissioned artists will be invited to respond to Western New York's communities and ecosystems, often working in collaboration with local residents to create work rooted in context.**

Opening in September of 2025, **the Medina Triennial Hub** will host public programs and events realized in collaboration with art institutions across Western New York. Upon its opening, the Hub will host programming centering on themes of community, ecology, and place, which will act as a formal launch for the Triennial's public engagement ahead of its opening in 2026.

The Medina Triennial will be organized by **Co-Artistic Directors Kari Conte** and **Karin Laansoo**, esteemed curators and institutional leaders who bring their decades-long careers in the arts toward realizing this exciting new initiative.

In addition to her work in Medina, Conte is an independent curator and writer based in New York City and Türkiye, who holds roles with the International Studio & Curatorial Program, City as Living Laboratory, and Kai Art Center. Laansoo is Founding Director of the Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center (ECADC) and Artistic Director of Kai Art Center in Tallinn, Estonia, one of the preeminent contemporary art institutions in the Baltic States. Laansoo also splits her time between Tallinn and Rochester, New York, giving her a personal connection to Western New York.

"The Medina Triennial will converge transformative artistic positions within a village marked by history and possibility," says Conte. "It will offer an inclusive space where global perspectives and local sensibilities meet, with numerous works that are grounded in Medina with far-reaching perspectives. We are honored to collaborate with the communities of Western New York to realize the artist's ideas and we are looking forward to the Triennial Hub opening this fall and to the Triennial next summer."

"Western New York is a location of personal significance to me, as it's a place I've called my home for a number of years," says Laansoo. "Medina is a hidden gem in this region in many ways. A triennial of this scope has never been organized in the US in a community of this size, making this an unprecedented opportunity. It's an exciting chance for us to build new regional cultural infrastructures, give local ideas global resonance, and position Medina as an emerging destination for the arts."

The Triennial was launched to create lasting cultural and economic impact across Western New York. To shape this vision, the Power Authority and Canal Corporation team worked over two years in collaboration with key partners in Rochester, Buffalo, Medina, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), local arts organizations, and community patrons. Recognizing the unique opportunity to expand access to contemporary art beyond major urban centers, they developed a comprehensive framework and project brief focused on broad participation and nurturing of regional artistic communities.

The curatorial project and team were selected by a Steering Committee to bring this vision to life with creativity, ambition and a deep commitment to community engagement. The triennial team works in dialogue with the Steering Committee, which includes leadership from the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, the Burchfield Penney Art Center, the Corning Museum of Glass, Memorial Art Gallery, and the University at Buffalo.

*"At the New York Power Authority, we are proud to invest in initiatives like the Medina Triennial that aim to revitalize the power of our waterways and infrastructure as catalysts for creativity, economic growth, and community vitality," said New York Power Authority President and CEO **Justin E. Driscoll**. "We are committed to launching this first edition and are confident it will set the foundation for an arts initiative that will remain relevant, compelling and transformative for generations to come."*

For more information on the Triennial and to sign up for the official newsletter, please visit

“As we commemorate the Erie Canal Bicentennial this year, our team has been deeply engaged in strategizing new ways to invest in more canal-side communities,” said New York State Canal Corporation Director **Brian U. Stratton**. “The Medina Triennial project represents an extraordinary opportunity for cultural enrichment, and we are proud to support the creative vision of the curatorial team in their vision at this transformative moment.”

medinatriennial.org

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About Kari Conte

Kari Conte is the Co-Artistic Director of the Medina Triennial and a curator, writer, and cultural leader whose practice focuses on global contemporary art and ecological and feminist perspectives. Based in New York and Türkiye, she has curated more than forty exhibitions and collaborated with leading institutions worldwide. Her artist-centered work spans exhibitions, new commissions, publishing, and residencies, forging long-term institutional partnerships and advancing socially and politically engaged practices. She currently holds curatorial roles at City as Living Laboratory (CALL) in New York and Kai Art Center in Tallinn. Additionally, she is Senior Advisor at the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP), where she previously worked as Director of Programs and Exhibitions for nearly a decade.

Conte has curated solo exhibitions by Flo Kasearu, Fatma Bucak, Alban Muja, Sonia Leimer, Chiara Fumai, Hikaru Fujii, Jennifer Tee, Eva Kot'átková, and Richard Ibghy & Marilou Lemmens, among others. Her research-based group exhibitions include *Aqueous Earth*, examining humanity's impact on water and biodiversity, and *Concrete Truth*, a survey of lens-based practices at the intersection of art and documentary. She has been involved in biennials for over a decade—as an advisor for the Helsinki Biennial and guest curator for the Aichi Triennale and Performa Biennial. She was a Fulbright Senior Research Scholar in Istanbul and has held fellowships at Tokyo Arts and Space and the Getty Leadership Institute. She teaches at Parsons School of Design and has also taught at the School of Visual Arts.

Her writing has been published by Mousse Publishing, JRP|Ringier, Printed Matter, Sternberg Press, and the Sharjah Art Foundation. She has edited over twenty books and catalogs, including *Bringing Worlds Together: A Rethinking Residencies Reader* and *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Seven Work Ballets*. Earlier in her career, she held roles at Whitechapel Gallery, the New Museum, and Artists Space, and earned an M.A. in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art in London.

About Karin Laansoo

Karin Laansoo lives in Rochester, New York, and Tallinn, Estonia and is Co-Artistic Director of the Medina Triennial as well as the Founding Director of the Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center (ECADC) and Artistic Director of Kai Art Center. After seven years as a nomadic organization operating in New York City and Tallinn, in 2019 ECADC opened Kai Art Center in a renovated submarine factory in Tallinn, Estonia and is now headquartered there, where it has grown into one of the preeminent contemporary art institutions in the Baltic States. Laansoo has substantial experience in contemporary art leadership roles, with 15 years of international experience fundraising, programming, and curating for art institutions and nonprofits, as well as fostering collaborations, projects, and networks between the private and public sectors in the US and internationally. Her recent curatorial projects include organizing exhibitions with Shezad Dawood, Merike Estna, Patricia Piccinini, Hranfildur Arnardóttir, Tuomas A. Laitinen & Kristina Õllek, and performance with Kris Lemsalu & Kitty Florentine for the Performa Biennial in 2023 among others. She has an MA in Art History from the Estonian

Academy of Arts as well as PhD All But Dissertation (ABD), and completed the Business of Culture Aalto Executive Education program in 2021.

About New York Power Authority

NYPA is the largest state public power organization in the nation, operating 17 generating facilities and more than 1,550 circuit-miles of transmission lines. More than 80 percent of the electricity NYPA produces is clean renewable hydropower.

About New York State Canal Corporation

New York's Canal system includes four canals: the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. The canals connect hundreds of unique communities within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The New York State Canal Corporation is a subsidiary of the New York Power Authority.