BEYOND CREATION

Embassy of Italy
Accra

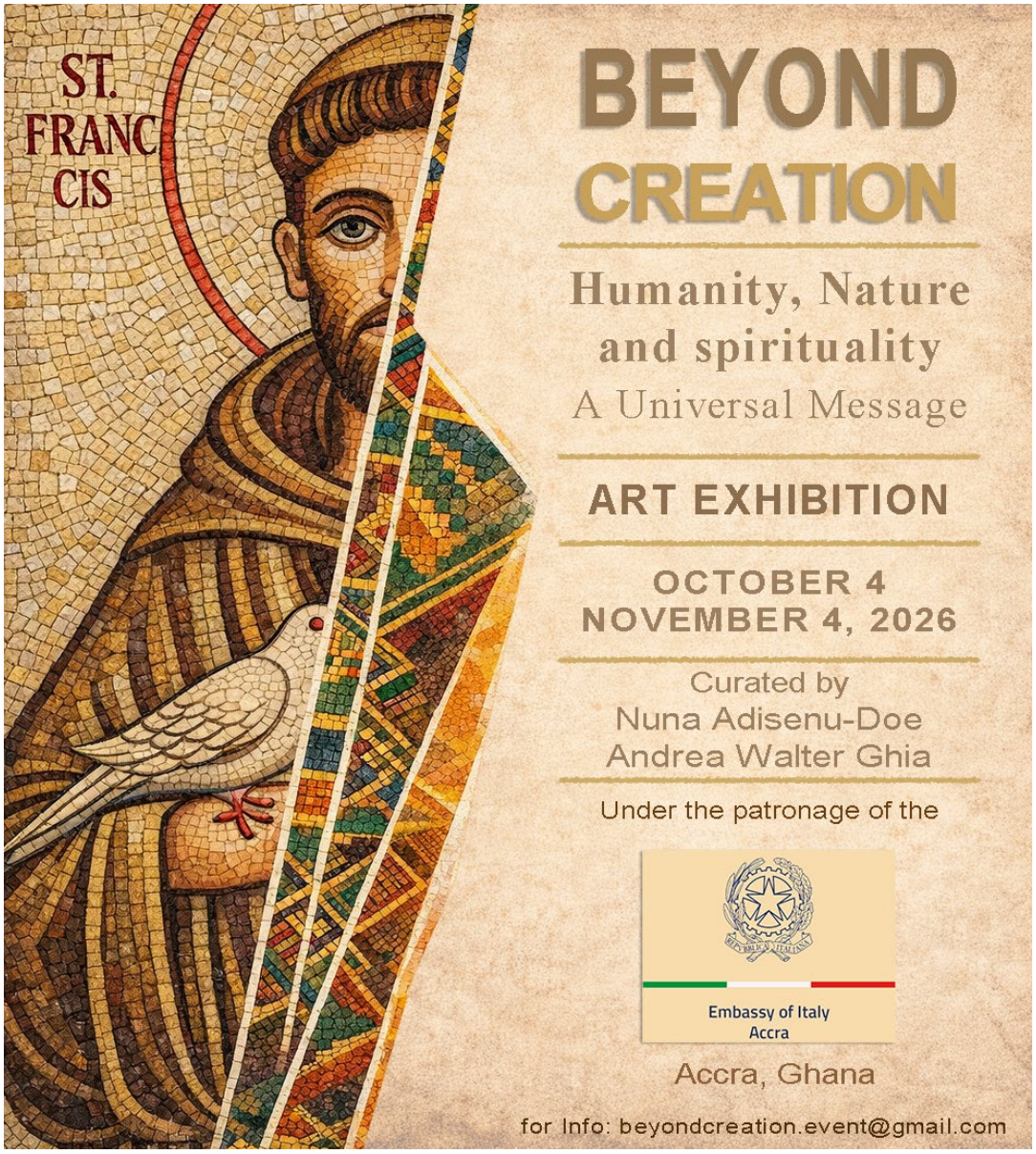
CONCEPT NOTE

"Beyond Creation: Humanity, Nature and Spirituality – A Universal Message"

On the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi

Art exhibition in Accra co-organised by the Embassy of Italy in Ghana and Togo

On the 800th Anniversary of Saint Francis of Assisi (1226–2026)



Email: beyondcreation.event@gmail.com

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Beyond Creation: Humanity, Nature and Spirituality – A Universal Message is a contemplative exhibition that explores the spiritual relationship between humans and the natural world, drawing connections between Christian mysticism embodied by Saint Francis of Assisi and African eco-spiritual traditions rooted in Ghana and extending across the continent and beyond.

Saint Francis of Assisi, who saw God in all creatures and referred to the sun as “brother” and the moon as “sister,” remains one of the most profound spiritual voices advocating harmony between humanity and nature. His reverence for animals and the environment, epitomised in stories of preaching to birds and taming a wolf, led to his recognition as the patron saint of animals and ecology. On January 10, 2026, Pope Leo XIV inaugurated the Special Year of Saint Francis, marking the 800th anniversary of his death and positioning this Jubilee as a moment of global spiritual reflection and renewal.

In parallel, African spiritual systems, particularly within Ghana, have long understood nature not as a commodity, but as a living, sacred presence. Rivers, forests, hills, and animals are often believed to house spirits and ancestors; land is regarded as an ancestral gift whose protection is a moral and spiritual duty. Indigenous practices such as sacred groves, seasonal hunting restrictions, taboos against polluting water bodies, and the protection of specific trees function as early ecological conservation laws, preserving biodiversity while sustaining cultural memory.

This exhibition proposes a dialogue between these spiritual ecologies: Franciscan and African, revealing a shared cosmology where care for the earth is inseparable from care for the soul. Through contemporary artistic practices, the exhibition invites audiences to reflect on humanity’s ethical responsibility toward the natural world at a time of escalating ecological crisis.

The Exhibition positions spirituality as a universal language capable of re-imagining our relationship with the planet, moving beyond dominion and extraction toward reverence, reciprocity, and coexistence. In doing so, it offers a timely and cross-cultural meditation on ecology as both a spiritual inheritance and a collective future.

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ARTIST SELECTION

Participation in the exhibition will take place through an international open call addressed to emerging and established artists from Ghana, Togo, and Italy. The call will be disseminated through art platforms, cultural institutions, universities, and social media channels, and will require applicants to submit a portfolio, a short biography, a description of the proposed work, and a motivation related to the themes of the exhibition.

Applications will be evaluated by a Selection Committee composed of curators, experts, representatives of the Embassy of Italy, and art professionals. The Committee will assess each proposal based on the following criteria:

- consistency with the exhibition themes (nature, spirituality, cultural interconnection);
- artistic quality and originality;
- relevance of the concept and its capacity to engage in dialogue across traditions;
- technical feasibility of the proposed work.

At the end of the evaluation process, the Committee will select a defined number of artists who will be invited to participate in the exhibition. Some of them may also be involved in collaborative or site-specific projects, fostering creative exchange between Ghanaian and Italian/European artists.

The artists will provide their works free of charge and will be responsible for transportation and logistics costs. The organisation, in turn, will cover exhibition setup, promotional activities, and the production of the catalogue.

A dedicated email address has been created:

beyondcreation.event.gmail.com

The application can be uploaded by scanning this QR code:

Or using the following link: https://forms.gle/XbzPE2AorYq8bWqP6

Apply

ONLINE CATALOGUE

An online exhibition catalogue will be created to accompany the project, offering visitors and the broader public access to detailed information on the participating artists, their works, and the curatorial framework. The catalogue will include images, artist statements, and artwork descriptions, and will be made available in a downloadable digital format.

During the exhibition, visitors will be able to access the catalogue through a QR code displayed throughout the venue—on panels, labels, and communication materials. This solution ensures easy

and immediate access to all content, supports sustainability by reducing printed materials, and allows the catalogue to be updated as needed throughout the duration of the exhibition.

EXHIBITION FORMAT

- Visual artworks: painting, sculpture, installations, photography, new media.
- Artistic dialogues: pairs of Ghanaian and Italian/European artists invited to co-create site-specific works.
- Historical/Educational section: materials on Franciscan heritage and Ghanaian cosmologies developed with cultural and academic institutions.

PUBLIC PROGRAM:

- talks with Parish Fathers, scholars of art, theology, and anthropology;
- workshops for young artists;
- guided visits for schools and parishes
- performances poetry and multilingual readings of the Canticle of the Creatures (Italian, English, Ewe, Twi or Ga).