

DAY WITH(OUT) ART 2026
PRESENTED BY VISUAL AIDS

seeds in a dying colony

"It is necessary to analyze, patiently and lucidly, each one of the reactions of the colonized, and every time we do not understand, we must tell ourselves that we are at the heart of the drama—that of the impossibility of finding a meeting ground in any colonial situation…Specialists in basic health education should give careful thought to the new situations that develop in the course of a struggle for national liberation on the part of an "underdeveloped people." Once the body of the nation begins to live again in a coherent and dynamic way, everything becomes possible. The notions about "native psychology" or of the "basic personality" are shown to be vain. The people who take their destiny into their own hands assimilate the most modern forms of technology at an extraordinary rate."

- Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (1959)

When mid-20th-century French psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon published *A Dying Colonialism* over 60 years ago, he responded to the Algerian Revolution, using it as a case study to show how colonized peoples develop racialized consciousnesses before eventually moving toward liberation. In the chapter "Medicine and Colonialism," he detailed how medical institutions become intertwined with the colonizer's final agenda, even as they may offer benefits at select moments; the consequences ultimately resulting in distrust and misalignment with medical systems.

When Fanon published this work along with his other core writings on the psyches of the racialized and colonized, he, along with the entire world, had no idea that the HIV virus was already circulating. Many experts estimate that the virus was already doing so as early as 1910-1930, and the earliest confirmed evidence of HIV was identified in a blood plasma sample collected in 1959 (but tested decades later) from a man from Kinshasa, in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. Coincidentally, this took place the same year as *A Dying Colonialism*'s publication. Fanon, who was a leader of decolonial theory, was responding to the same conditions of extraction across the Global South that were simultaneously accelerating HIV in a newly globalized world. I wonder what insights Fanon might have had about a virus whose origin and global response strategies are deeply wrapped up in the horrors of colonialism, continuing to determine who receives care, under what conditions, and at whose expense.

In our current moment, we are experiencing renewed global precarity in HIV/AIDS medical care. From 2024 to 2025, the Trump administration cut international AIDS funding, most notably PEPFAR, by 18% across sub-Saharan Africa, as well as parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, the sharpest decline in 20 years. UNAIDS has warned that, without urgent action, the world could see 6.6 million additional HIV infections and 4.2 million additional AIDS-related deaths by 2029.

When I developed the video program for Day With(out) Art 2026, I wanted to commission a program that responded to the current realities of

HIV but also nested these concerns within and alongside longer histories of coloniality. I wanted a program that invited artists to explore the psychic and embodied consequences of these conditions for people living with HIV and considered how one cultivates self-preservation in a world that normalizes abandonment and death. The title of the 2026 Day With(out) Art video program, *seeds in a dying colony*, takes inspiration from Fanon's text as a metaphor for what might come after colonialism, what is possible in the new world that is on the horizon, and what that might mean for people living with HIV. Each film is both a mirror to our current world and a portal to the next.

Though the 2026 commission was framed through the relationship between colonialism and HIV, which some may have anticipated as a particularly emotionally weighted year, I see this year's program as the most hopeful set of films that Visual AIDS has commissioned. That hopefulness is reflected in the dance, movement, rituals, and joyous gatherings depicted across the program. Each year, the emotional register shifts in beautiful and unexpected ways, and, with the nature of a commission process, there's always some uncertainty about what the final program will look and *feel* like. This year, each film names the current stakes while also pointing to a liberated future. What that liberated future will look like may not always be clear, but the yearning and directionality for it is palpable. As one of the interviewees in Hudson's film remarks, "I believe seeds are planted without seeing the harvest." She says this as a careworker in the context of current challenges in HIV healthcare, but with a hope for the future.

As this is my final year shepherding this program, I have to acknowledge what an honor it has been to guide Day With(out) Art and work with so many incredible artists across my seven years at Visual AIDS. Over that time, I've come to understand this work as not only an act of remembrance, but also one of imagining what comes next. I hope that the films of *seeds in a dying colony* leave you with a lasting curiosity and desire to dream bigger and bolder.

— Blake Paskal, Visual AIDS Programs Director,
Producer of *seeds in a dying colony*

Throughout this guide for *seeds in dying colony*, you'll find interviews between each artist and Blake Paskal that provide supplementary knowledge and context to their films. The back cover provides a QR code to access the digital version of this guide.

This guide was written by Blake, with additional editing by Kyle Croft, Executive Director. It was designed by Isai Soto with cover graphics by Rush Jackson.

Special gratitude to Elena Guzman and J Triangular, who helped coordinate the 100+ international screenings of *seeds in a dying colony*, and to the four film mentors of the program, Amil Shivji, Ésery Mondesir, Hiura Fernandes, and J Triangular, who selected and supported the participating artists.

Edgar Hudson, *There is an Elephant in the Room*



A young person flees home after a life-altering discovery, carrying the weight of things that cannot be said out loud. He encounters an activist and a care worker sustaining others through daily acts of survival. Through dance and movement, the film offers a quiet story of survival, exile, and return, asking what it takes to face the elephant that everyone knows is there.

Blake: Why did it feel important to create this film right now in Tanzania? How did stigma affect the conversations you had, particularly around healthcare and access to services?

Edgar: I think it came from a period of introspection and wanting to understand what people are experiencing, particularly those who face stigma. In Tanzania, people don't always talk about sexuality and HIV directly. Stigma and shame become internalized. They affect not only the people seeking help, but also the providers. In Tanzania, queer people still experience stigma as a lingering effect of outdated colonial laws. It isn't simply a question of whether a service exists. It's also about whether someone trusts the people providing it and whether they can be honest about what they need.

It was quite difficult finding people willing to participate. I would approach people, and they might initially seem interested, but then they would decline or postpone meeting. I ended up conducting some interviews over the phone because people weren't comfortable meeting in person. That showed me how sensitive the subject was. I had to think carefully about what people understood they were participating in and how much they felt safe sharing.

Blake: Music and dance are so central to the film. How did you approach the music?

Edgar: My friend David made the music. At first, I imagined something more orchestral, perhaps a European classical sound, because I was thinking about contemporary dance and how that kind of music is often used. But as I thought more about the film and where it was being made, I realized that wasn't the right direction. I wanted something that felt more African and more connected to the place. The music feels optimistic, but there's also tension underneath. I liked that combination because the film deals with difficult realities, yet I didn't want it to feel entirely hopeless.

Blake: Can you tell me about the locations? The spaces seem to hold a lot of meaning.

Edgar: The apartment is a friend's place, so it represents a home, an intimate space. The beach is Rungwe Beach, near Kunduchi. There used to be a beach club there, but now it's in ruins. You have the ocean, the remains of the buildings, and a fishing village nearby. Local fishermen helped us with a boat, which was important for filming.

Working there wasn't always easy. The wind was strong, and it created challenges during the shoot. But the location had a quality I wanted. The ruins and the ocean exist together, and I was interested in that contrast.

For me, the ocean also represents freedom and possibility. It feels expansive, as if there is more beyond what we can currently see or imagine. For me, there is a spiritual dimension to it, a connection to God. The ocean can make you feel small, but it can also make you feel that something larger is possible.

Blake: The healthcare worker at the end talks about planting seeds for the future. In what way is this film a seed?

Edgar: I hope the film grows and reaches people. I keep thinking about what it might have meant if I'd seen something like this when I was 15. It would have warmed my heart and given me optimism, helping me feel less alone. If the film can offer that feeling to someone else, then I think that matters.

Edgar Hudson (he/him) is a Tanzanian filmmaker and creative storyteller using art to spark dialogue on climate, identity, and social transformation. An alumnus of the MultiChoice Talent Factory and the Earthshot Youth Programme, he blends cinematic storytelling with advocacy, championing youth-led climate action and cultural consciousness across Africa. His work explores resilience, community, and the urgent need to reimagine our collective future through a more sustainable lens.

@edgarhudson_

Sido Lansari, *ON A BRIGHT DAY (C'ÉTAIT UN JOUR LUMINEUX)*



ON A BRIGHT DAY (C'ÉTAIT UN JOUR LUMINEUX) weaves archival echoes and poetic fragments of Arab queer lives touched by HIV with the story of Souhail, a young activist from Tangier, Morocco. Through the voices of the dead and the living, the film transforms silenced histories into a collective act of remembrance and resistance.

Blake: How did you first become aware of Souhail's story, and what drew you to it?

Sido: I used to live in Tangier, Morocco, where I ran a cinema space. Souhail came to the café and cinema often, and one day I discovered his activities on TikTok and Instagram. I was immediately struck by the energy he brought to everything he shared and by how powerful and courageous he was talking about HIV, particularly in the context of Tangier.

Blake: The film opens with a reading of Nordine Zaimi's poetry. Midway through, we hear archival audio from a French radio show. Why were they important to include alongside Souhail's story?

Sido: In my artistic work, I try to bring attention to invisible archives and stories. I discovered the radio show by accident, and through it I also discovered Nordine Zaimi, a writer who grew up in Algiers before moving to France. I was surprised that so few people knew his work. Despite publishing two books, he had remained almost anonymous. I believe he was probably the first Arab man in France to speak about AIDS in the early 1990s.

The radio show *Surviving AIDS*, focused on immigrant communities and families affected by HIV. In its early years, it mostly featured straight perspectives and information about AIDS; gay guests were invited only a handful of times. The voices we hear in the film, Karim and Kamel, belong to people whose identities remain uncertain. Nordine's work was actually read on the program once, which is how I discovered him.

Sido: I wanted to bring these forgotten narratives back into view and connect them to contemporary stories. Souhail is not alone, and his experience doesn't begin with him or with the internet. I wanted to place his story within a larger family and history, making it something more universal.

Blake: Souhail describes himself as the first person to undertake this kind of visible activism from inside Morocco. What does his visibility make possible?

Sido: People reach out to him because they recognize themselves in his content. He understands that his visibility can make something meaningful possible for others. He's always sharing and advocating for people. In a way, this film is one of the few moments he's allowed himself to do something specifically for himself, to be the first to claim this space. That really moved me. He knew early on that it was the right thing to do.

I decided early on to film inside Souhail's beautiful apartment. I was concerned that showing him in this intimate space might make it seem as though he was alone. Protecting his privacy and safety during the shoot was also important. I filmed the images myself because I wanted to preserve that intimacy between us. It was a challenge to communicate that he wasn't alone, but I think the film ultimately shows he's not.

Blake: Can you speak about the film's various stylistic visual choices?

Sido: I wanted something beautiful without being overly aestheticized, something that felt both new and old. We use at least three kinds of images: Souhail's TikTok videos, digital footage I shot, and Super 8. I wanted to move back and forth between these different visual languages. This mixture reflects both who Souhail is and my own relationship with images.

I also deliberately incorporated different shades of blue. I was thinking about Derek Jarman's Blue, and wanted to connect Souhail and this film to the much larger history of HIV/AIDS cinema. That visual reference was important to me.

Blake: How does the film reflect differences/similarities in expressions of queerness between the Western and Arab world?

Sido: It's a very specific story rooted in North Africa and the Arab world. I think about Souhail's insistence on dancing and pursuing a style of dance associated with women, even professionally, when that possibility feels almost unimaginable in Morocco.

At the same time, my generation grew up with television and internet, so we're constantly moving between cultures. I love that the film begins with Christina Aguilera. Very quickly, Souhail brings in this diva imaginary that queer people around the world recognize, even while he insists he's not a fan of hers. Then the film moves into very specific cultural references through his grandmother and family. I love how he travels between these worlds. Even though he says he wants to see the world, I feel he already carries so much of it within him.

Sido Lansari (he/him), born 1988, Casablanca, is a multidisciplinary artist living between Paris and Tangier. A laureate of the École des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, he directed the Cinémathèque de Tanger from 2019 to 2022. His practice explores identity, gender, and sexuality through embroidery, photography, and film, delving into the silences and erasures of memory. In 2019, his short film *The Last Paradise* received the Grand Prize at the Festival Chéries-Chéris in Paris. His work has been shown internationally, including at the Institut du Monde Arabe (Paris), the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (Turin), and the Medelhavsmuseet (Stockholm).

@siido | sidolansari.com

Bruna Kury and Matheus Mello, *VENGANZA TRAVESTY (TRAVESTY REVENGE)*



A visual manifesto that transforms the HIV virus into a mirror of empire, where data, propaganda, and flesh collide. Through a frenetic digital collage, the film exposes the biopolitical machinery that controls the body and weaponizes borders against life itself.

Blake: Conversations about HIV are often reduced to individual experiences, but we don't always discuss the epidemic in relation to broader issues like war, political repression, and colonialism. Why was it important to approach HIV through these interconnected issues?

Bruna: We tried to think about HIV in a broader way, connecting it to social structures and holistic health, something Western medicine often fails to address. In a way, the virus can function as a metaphor for the police, the State, the church, or the nuclear family, all structures within a larger system of oppression.

Even before my diagnosis, I believe I was already seen as someone living with HIV because I'm trans, Black, and marked by other aspects of my identity. HIV became another layer of a body that already contains many layers. Coloniality tries to sanitize the world by imposing dichotomies: good and evil, healthy and sick. But these things are constantly in dialogue. Our bodies are also made up of many different communities, including bacteria and other microorganisms. The film challenges limited ways of thinking about how people live and proposes a different perspective rooted in our own experiences.

Matheus: I've been living with HIV since 2017, and my diagnosis was never an isolated event. Its meaning was shaped by access to treatment, the law, my passport, and the country I was living in. I was in Cuba when I received my diagnosis, but despite being a resident and student, I had to return to Brazil to begin treatment. As a migrant, I experienced how bodies are valued differently depending on which border you cross and which healthcare system receives you.

Initially, we started with thinking about the issue of borders, but we ultimately shifted the focus toward the trans women who have been at the forefront of the fight against HIV and AIDS. We owe so much to trans women and women more broadly.

Bruna: We also need to question who has control over our bodies. Western medicine is often binary, colonial, and cisgender. It treats trans bodies as deviations while assuming cisgender identity is the natural starting point. Medicine is necessary for survival, but we must also decolonize it and recognize that the person experiencing pain should have authority in describing that pain.

Blake: Why did you use AI for the film, and what is your relationship to it as Black, trans, and queer artists from the Global South?

Bruna: We were interested in whether this technology could benefit people experiencing oppression rather than those doing the oppressing. AI reproduces racism, transphobia, and coloniality, often presenting itself as neutral or objective. Understanding how it works became a challenge: how could I navigate it, even outsmart it, and make a human perspective prevail? I'm also interested in the concentration of power behind these technologies and the possibility of self-managed AI guided by different ethics. My position is ultimately in favor of Indigenous peoples, water, and the land. Our bodies are part of nature, and we must recognize our relationship to the world around us.

Matheus: For this film, AI also offered a way to work with limited resources and collaborate with other artists. We've tried to remain attentive to alternatives, including open-source initiatives and people like Trava Hacker, who approaches AI in Brazil through democracy and collective access. We're living as hostages to Big Tech, but there are efforts to create different tools and possibilities. The question is how we reclaim these technologies and build alternatives together.

Blake: What are you most looking forward to in a liberated world?

Matheus: A liberated world would mean recognizing the histories erased by colonialism. The dominant historical narrative presents itself as universal, but knowledge in mathematics, science, and so many other fields comes from people whose contributions have been stolen or forgotten.

How many times will we continue burying our chance to be happy? I'm tired of hate. I want us to live together in peace. That might sound utopian, but the question is how we build that world collectively and avoid repeating cycles of violence.

Bruna: I think first about destroying what I know doesn't work, the things that kill, hurt, and oppress. I'm interested in imagining what could emerge once we dismantle those structures. Trans people often have a different way of interpreting the world because we're forced to imagine possibilities beyond what society considers possible. That radical imagination can help us cultivate a different way of life.

Bruna Kury (she/her) is an anarcho-transfeminist filmmaker, performer, and multidisciplinary artist whose work confronts structures of gender, class, and racial oppression. Her cinema challenges the dominant cis-heteronormative system through radical poetic resistance and collective creation. In 2025, she released the film *Scorpionikas – Counter-Manifesto* with MigrantaFilms, a transcontinental journey amplifying the voices of trans/travesti women, sex workers, and racialized communities through militant and experimental cinema.

@bruna_kury | brunakury.weebly.com | visualaids.org/artists/bruna-dos-santos-kury

Matheus Mello (they/them) is a filmmaker working between Brazil and Spain, whose work explores identity and migration. They have produced short films, a documentary, and video installations presented at major festivals including Tallinn Black Nights, Raindance, Sitges, IDFA, Rotterdam, and Zinebi. Mello co-founded Migranta Films to create authentic, globally resonant stories across continents.

@matheuspmello | migranta.film | visualaids.org/artists/matheus-mello

Micaela Cyrino, *How to project your voice without causing an earthquake*



Carolina lives alone in an apartment on the outskirts of São Paulo. Every morning she faces the city's frenetic pace during the long commute from her home to work. In her thoughts, her grandmother's wisdom always returns; in her headphones, it's always the same rap. In her bag, she carries the book of recipes, baths, and blessings she inherited from her grandmother and the desire to end the day well.

For this interview, Blake was joined by J Triangular, film mentor for Micaela and Day With(out) Screeninag Coordinator.

Blake: I want to start by asking, how do the two halves of the film relate for you?

Micaela: They are both parts of me, inseparable and connected. There is the physical realm and the spiritual realm. There's also ancestral knowledge, which has been part of my life since childhood. I learned that medicine can be found in our own backyards, in plants that support the body and mind. At the same time, living with HIV means understanding that the medications I take are necessary. An elder who lived with me also taught me to embrace life and imagine the possibility of growing old. My body needs to be connected physically, spiritually, and ancestrally until everything converges into one energy.

An HIV diagnosis can make us imagine that life will be shorter or less purposeful, especially for people born with HIV, like myself. Ancestry reminds me that many possibilities remain open. I want to live fully in the present while allowing myself to imagine a future.

Blake: Why is healing the spiritual body necessary for our overall health?

Micaela: Caring for my spiritual self gives me the strength to care for my physical body. For a long time, I thought death would come quickly. Through spirituality, I began

to desire growing old, a possibility that society hadn't offered me, partly because of misinformation. I learned to have faith in myself, in life, and in the purpose within me.

In my Candomblé tradition, I've learned to respect different forms of faith. In Brazil, faith is powerful and visible, even though it often emerges from scarcity and a lack of rights. It gives people strength to imagine other possibilities, navigate challenges, and keep moving forward.

Blake: Can you talk about the symbols in the film and how they connect to spirituality, ancestry, and wellness?

Micaela: The film brings together the symbols that have accompanied me throughout my life. At the beginning, my ancestor appears, a presence rooted in care, in always being there. Blue invokes Ogum and the strength to fight, while I also honor Oxum, the queen of the waters. As a daughter of Oxum and Iroko in Candomblé, I am a child of water and time. I carry the protection of my grandmothers, aunts, and mother, who continue to guide me even though they are no longer physically here.

Saint Benedict is another important presence. I received an image of him as a gift, and every Monday I talk to him and offer him black coffee without sugar. I ask my Old Black Man to bless me and guide me on my path; syncretism is part of my life. Behind him is an award I received for my contributions to the AIDS movement in Brazil. There is also the presence of a mirror and the act of taking medication, a routine that accompanies me and will continue to do so for some time. All these elements are interconnected. They help me remember my purpose and find the strength to continue.

J: What was the filmmaking process like, particularly overcoming your doubts about acting?

Micaela: It was an important experience. J, you helped me recognize the creative possibilities of writing a script, designing costumes, directing, and acting. Writing was difficult because I initially imagined the film linearly, but I discovered that it didn't need to follow conventional structures. I also assumed someone else would play the lead, until I realized I needed to tell my own story. Directing turned out to be a pleasure. It taught me that filmmaking is about observation, time, and collaboration. I worked with people close to me who understood my life, and together we brought the vision to life.

J: Now that you've completed your first film, would you like to continue?

Micaela: Absolutely. I see cinema as a form of painting, a medium that can embrace magic, fiction, and horror. I want to be more daring and explore its possibilities. I've also been thinking about the recent arrival of Lenacapavir, an injectable HIV medication that can reduce treatment to a shot every six months. People born with HIV have been excluded from certain research trials and may not have access to it. I'm imagining how cinema might express the desire to obtain technologies that remain out of reach. At the end of the film, the character leaving on the bus evokes being clandestine, of seeking alternatives. These scenarios may be fictional, but the desires behind them are real.

Micaela Cyrino (she/her) is a multidisciplinary artist from Grajaú, São Paulo, Brazil. A painter, embroiderer, and performer, she holds a degree in Visual Arts from Santa Marcelina College. Her work explores the Black female body, memory, and ancestry, developing the idea of "drinkable memories." HIV-positive since birth, Cyrino uses art to confront stigma and prejudice. She is a member of Trovoa and works as an art educator and consultant.

@micaelacyrino | visualaids.org/artists/micaela-cyrino

DAY WITH(OUT) ART

In 1989, Visual AIDS presented the first Day Without Art, organizing museums nationwide to cover up their artwork, darken their galleries, or even close their doors as part of a day of action and mourning against the AIDS crisis. In 2026, we reignited this call for public action responding to the current erosion of HIV prevention, treatment, and research infrastructure. These actions on December 1/ World AIDS Day intend to make visible what is being systematically ignored, and to create space for collective recognition, mourning, and response. One form of participation, since 2014, includes the screening of newly commissioned films by artists and filmmakers responding to the ongoing crisis. The 50+ videos that we have commissioned are available to view at video.VisualAIDS.org.

VISUAL AIDS

Founded in 1988, Visual AIDS is the only contemporary arts organization fully committed to using art to fight AIDS, while assisting artists living with HIV and preserving the legacy and artistic contributions of those lost to AIDS.

Visual AIDS

526 West 26th Street #309
New York, NY 10001
VisualAIDS.org
info@VisualAIDS.org

VisualAIDS
@Visual_AIDS
VisualAIDSnyc