

La Biennale di Venezia

17th International Architecture Exhibition



Declaration by Paolo Baratta
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After years of continuity, the Architecture Exhibition has come of age.

Retracing the various editions of the past, their reading strikes us even more clearly today. Each curator placed himself at a precise observation point and, with scrutinizing eye, tried to bring into focus the reflections arising from their observation point of choice.

Sometimes, they concentrated more closely on topics inherent to the discipline. They noted its existence and vitality at times when, as was said, there seemed to be many creative architects but increasingly less Architecture.

At other times - I'd say, more frequently - their gaze went to the relationship between Architecture and civil society, embracing an expanded idea of the discipline's sphere, which is called on to provide solutions for various individual and collective needs.

In this regard, we have often reflected on the ability of civil society to formulate questions and express these needs, and on the obstacles which hinder Architecture's more widespread presence and how to overcome them.

There has been a constant theme over the years: the social advantages which Architecture can catalyze. As we have often said, Architecture makes us more aware individuals; it helps us become citizens, not just consumers; it stimulates us to consider the indirect effects of our actions; it helps us understand more fully the importance of public goods and of free goods. It helps us develop a more all-around vision of welfare. Of the many past editions, I would like to recall the one curated by the president of the jury of this year's Exhibition, Kazuyo Sejima (remember "People meet in Architecture," Biennale Architettura 2010). And lastly, Architecture helps us to conserve resources and to give ourselves a modicum of happiness.

In its broad-ranging gaze, the Exhibition curated by Hashim Sarkis captures the structural problems of contemporary society. He observes – and we with him – that, in every corner of the world, phenomena of intense change are underway; they all differ but what they share is a need for important "adjustments" in living conditions.

Thus, the gaze of the curator and the Exhibition ranges even further afield. Architecture becomes the reference point of a vast interdisciplinary commitment and of a vast cultural and political commitment. A sort of call to arms for Architecture, a call this discipline transmits to the others. We must transmit a state of urgency, in both the developed and the developing worlds. The ongoing changes call for new vision and projects (for individual homes, cities, the countryside, nature, and entire territories). These adjustments ask us to consider the human and the social being as an existence "in relation to..." (*living together*); confirmation that this must be the starting point in order to appropriately address the changes.

We live in a time characterized by a potential feeling of no longer being assured of an increasingly widespread progress but, instead, of being victims of the changes it entails. This is a time in which many could take advantage of the ensuing fears, worries, and changes to promote ultra-defensive campaigns. We find it useful if a Biennale can remind everyone that the identity of a society or a community lies in the quality of the projects it formulates for its future, to correct distortions and

valorize resources. And, as can be seen by the many phenomena that are impacting the world just now, these projects can only arise from extensive awareness and widespread collaboration.

And we, once again, wonder about the goals of an Exhibition like the Biennale. Whom does it address?

We have often said that the Exhibition strives to be an instrument of knowledge and dialogue for insiders of the world of architecture. But an exhibition is also a “call” to the public. A call to become visitors, to become attentive visitors, to become direct witnesses, eye witnesses. An exhibition asks its visitors to be willing to broaden their gaze; it asks its curator to become both scientist and dramaturg. It's not enough to propagate knowledge; we must contribute to fostering awareness; it's not enough to reveal problems, we must nourish a desire for Architecture through examples of proposals, projects, and achievements.

Paolo Baratta, *President of La Biennale di Venezia*

63 Countries will participate at the Exhibition, three of which will be present at the Biennale Architettura for the first time: Grenada, Iraq, and Uzbekistan.

We would like to thank the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo, the regional Institutions that each in their own way support La Biennale, the City of Venice, the Regione Veneto, the Soprintendenza Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio per il Comune di Venezia e Laguna, the Marina Militare.

Our thanks to our Partner, Rolex.

We also thank the sponsors who support and help us, as well as our donors, which are essential to the creation of the 17th International Architecture Exhibition.

In particular, our thanks go to Hashim Sarkis and to all his team.

And finally we would like to thank the highly professional staff of La Biennale, who work with such great dedication on the organization and management of the Exhibition for the six months of its duration.