

The Historical Archive of La Biennale di Venezia (ASAC)

The Historical Archive of La Biennale di Venezia (ASAC) not only gathers the documents and the collections relative to the activities of the Institution from 1895 to the present, it also represents an International Centre for Research on Contemporary, where the documents become living material for new research and experimentation. This takes place through the actions of La Biennale itself, of the Artistic Directors of the different departments (Art and Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Music and Theater), of the students and researchers from all over the world, and in the collaborations with Universities and cultural Institutions.

COMPOSITION

The **Historical Archive** is organized into the **Archive** proper and the **Library**.

The **Archive** - which is expected to move to its new offices at the Arsenale **in 2026**, where the buildings known as Magazzini del Ferro and Magazzini delle Officine, **covering more than 8,000 square meters**, are currently under restoration - has been located since 2008 in the spaces of the VEGA Scientific Park of Porto Marghera. Appropriately equipped to host archives and collections, the spaces of Marghera guarantee optimal microclimatic conditions for conservation on one hand, and access to scholars for the consultation of materials on the other. The Archive preserves documents related to the activities of the Biennale Foundation as well as materials related to the arts since the end of the XIX century. The Archive is distinguished by the heterogeneity of its materials, which include press articles, photographs, documents, audiovisuals, music scores, works of art, vinyl records, posters. It has also acquired the following archives: *Archivio Luca Ronconi*, *Fondo Palazzo Grassi/Fiat (1984-2005)*, *Archivio Premio Architettura città di Oderzo*, *Archivio Lorenzo Capellini*, *Archivio Luca Massimo Barbero*, *Archivio Nuova Icona*, *Archivio Enzo di Martino*, *Archivio Tullio Kezich*, *Archivio Gian Piero Brunetta*, *Archivio Paolo Valmarana*, *Archivio Sergio Asti*, *Archivio Sergio Fantoni*.

The **Library**, which is an integral part of the Central Pavilion at the Giardini since 2009, specializes in contemporary art, with a special focus on the documentation and study of the Foundation's areas of activity. It preserves all the catalogues of La Biennale's activities and collects bibliographic material relevant to the disciplines of the visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, photography, music and theatre. Thanks to its heritage of more than 170,000 books and 3,200 periodicals, it is one of the leading libraries of contemporary art in Italy.

A selection of works from the artistic fonds are now on display at La Biennale's headquarters in Ca' Giustinian.

DOCUMENTATION PROJECTS

Since 2022, the Archive together with the artistic directors of the Visual Arts and Architecture, Dance, Music and Theatre departments has been carrying out **four parallel projects** for a granular and professional **documentation** of the artistic events underway, to implement video and photographic materials of the Art and Architecture Exhibitions, of the Dance, Music,

Theatre and Cinema festivals, establishing a platform to collect the materials produced by the Biennale offices.

Each artistic director is called upon to design and curate small exhibitions using the Archive materials, which are thus further enhanced. Since 2010, the following exhibitions have been held in the Portego of the Biennale headquarters at Ca' Giustinian:

La Biennale di Venezia 1979-1980. The Theatre of the World "singular building". Tribute to Aldo Rossi, curated by Maurizio Scaparro; Italy: 150 / Biennale: 116. The posters of 116 years of life; Video Medium Intermedium - emerging video art in Europe in the early 1970s; The "Archi" by Aldo Rossi for the 3rd International Architecture Exhibition 1985; 20 years of Masks and Costumes - an exhibition from the collection of the theatrical sketches of the ASAC; AMARCORD. Fragments of memory - Featuring materials from the Historical Archives of La Biennale; Riapparizioni. Corpi, gesti, sguardi dai palcoscenici della Biennale. Album 1934-1976; The Idea of the Body: Merce Cunningham, Steve Paxton, Julian Beck, Meredith Monk, and Simone Forti from La Biennale Archives 1960/1976. Exhibition of photos, videos, posters; 1999 - re-launch of the Biennale Art Exhibition entitled dAPERTutto (48th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia) curated by Harald Szeemann; Exhibition Biennale Arte 2001 - Platea dell'Umanità: the archival version of the 49th International Art Exhibition, titled Plateau of Humankind and curated by Harald Szeemann; Registe alla Biennale Teatro 1934 – 2016; Il Cinema in Mostra. Volti e immagini dalla Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica 1932 – 2018; La Biennale per i giovani. College ed Educational 2008-2018; Le muse inquiete (The Disquieted Muses). When La Biennale di Venezia Meets History; Archèus. Labirinto Mozart, an immersive installation by Ophicina and Damiano Michieletto, a special project by the Historical Archives of La Biennale for the 1600th anniversary of the foundation of Venice. Carnival breaks through the fog: Venice, Scaparro, La Biennale 1980, 1981, 1982, 2006 from the Archives of La Biennale di Venezia 1932: The first Venice International Film Festival from the Archive of La Biennale di Venezia; B74-78. Lorenzo Capellini. Un racconto fotografico. Luca Massimo Barbero. Un Diavolo Amico; Iconoclasts. Women Rule Breakers at Biennale Danza.

The project **"Writing in Residence"** includes calls open to young graduates under 30 who are studying the disciplines of La Biennale. The selected participants have the opportunity to carry out research focused on the themes of the Exhibitions and Festivals, not only by participating in the current events but also by exploring those themes within the Biennale's Historical Archive. Followed by a tutor, they then dedicate their work to writing texts that are collected in a publication.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON CONTEMPORARY ART

MAPPING

Over the past three years, La Biennale di Venezia has worked to reinforce the activities of its Historic Archive, which is currently restoring additional spaces within the Arsenale, with the purpose of developing the **International Centre for Research on the Contemporary Arts** around the Archive, a permanent hub inaugurated in 2021 the mission of which is to build relationships and projects with students, researchers, cultural Institutions and national and international Research Institutes.

In 2024, a research project was consolidated to draft a **geopolitical map of the artists who have participated in the activities of all the Biennale Departments over the past 20 years**, developed in collaboration with the students of Ca' Foscari, Università IUAV di Venezia, Università La Sapienza in Rome, IULM, Accademia di Belle Arti and the Conservatory of Music Benedetto Marcello in Venice.

The next step involving the 60 students who participated in this second phase, with nine study groups rotating through the end of 2024, was to dedicate their efforts to implementing the data base and writing scientific articles focusing on a specific case study.

The goal is to gather a collection of case studies of artists for publication, building on the quantitative research conducted during the first cycle and splicing in qualitative contributions for a three-dimensional reflection on contemporary art and its social context.

The aim of these new research projects is to write a final paper, but also to subsequently apply the research in practical outcomes, such as installations, conferences, workshops or small exhibitions, and to involve the participants themselves in the activities of the Biennale. This was the case with the participants in the Writing College, who helped to host the encounters that followed the performances of the Dance and Music festivals, and in the latter case were also involved in the making of the 2024 catalogue of activities.

The “Laboratorio Archivio” will develop interdisciplinary research programmes that involve recent university graduates under the age of 30, selected through a call by La Biennale di Venezia, and guided by a mentor to discuss issues, key words and events that have characterized the life of La Biennale and that emerge from the results of the mapping project. The young people will participate in a specific programme of encounters and study sessions, a six-month process that will conclude with the writing of scientific papers and the presentation of the results of their study. These outcomes will in turn become available to be developed for specific applications: installations, exhibitions and performances.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

The Archive curates a programme of **conferences, book presentations and editorial initiatives, and lectures on the artists** who have participated in the Biennale from its foundation to the present day, in collaboration with personalities from the world of the arts, including critics, journalists, university professors, current and past artistic directors, artists and professionals. The meetings are aimed at an audience of students and researchers with the dual purpose of fostering a better understanding of the contemporary arts and its protagonists, and inspiring the public to visit the archives, venues and exhibitions associated with them.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Historic Archive supports and develops **special artistic projects** that dialogue with the Archive itself. These include:

- *Archèus. Labirinto Mozart*, an immersive installation in **Forte Marghera**, by **Ophicina and Damiano Michieletto**, in collaboration with the **Teatro La Fenice** in Venice for the **1600th anniversary of the foundation of Venice**.
- *Prometeo. Tragedia dell'ascolto* by **Luigi Nono**, an opera produced by **Biennale Musica in 1984**, and staged again in **January 2024** in the same venue in which it premiered, the **Church of San Lorenzo, now Ocean Space/TBA21–Academy**. The **special Project** for the new production of the opera involved a joint effort between the **Biennale Archive** and the **Luigi Nono Archive**, which reached an agreement with **La Biennale** to transfer its materials to the **International Centre for Research on the Contemporary Arts** and together organize a dedicated **one-day seminar**.
- *The Wind Makes the Sky. La Biennale di Venezia on the traces of Marco Polo*, a Special Project to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the death of Marco Polo (1324 – 2024) curated by **Luigia Lonardelli**. The first stage was held at the Art Museum of the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou (Zhejiang, People's Republic of China), with the collective exhibition *The*

Perfect Path. Hangzhou, Marco Polo's "city of heaven" (November 10th 2024 - January 10th 2025), a sign of the first collaboration arising from the three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) recently signed by La Biennale di Venezia and the China Academy of Art (CAA), with the intent to promote a cultural and artistic dialogue between Italy and China. The second stage was held in Venice at the Biennale headquarters with the exhibition *Gulnur Mukazhanova. Memory of Hope* (December 10th 2024 - February 28th 2025). The third stage will take place in Istanbul in the fall of 2025.

- *Expositio Sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem (Commentary on John's Gospel)* by **Johannes Eckhart** (1260 - 1328 ca.), the Dominican theologian and mystic known as Meister Eckhart. From **Wednesday March 5th to Sunday March 9th** and in a repeat performance from **Tuesday March 11th to Saturday March 15th**. The project stages the *Commentary on John's Gospel* in the **Portego delle Colonne** of the **Scuola Grande di San Marco**, the atrium of the monumental sixteenth-century complex known today as the **Ospedale Civile SS. Giovanni e Paolo** with actors **Federica Fracassi, Leda Kreider, Dario Aita** together with the **Coro della Cappella Marciana** led by Maestro **Marco Gemmani**. The dramaturgy and direction are by **Antonello Pocetti** and the stage concept by **Antonino Viola**, video images by **Andrew Quinn** and the sound diffusion by **Thierry Coduys**.

MAGAZINE LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

The rebirth of the La Biennale di Venezia Magazine is embedded in the activity of the Archive. The magazine, whose launch issue was released in July 1950 and which remained active until 1971, publishing 68 issues, was reborn with the same spirit and nature that had characterised it since the first edition, governed by a guiding word, *research*.

Conceived and produced as a printed edition, and featuring a significant iconographic apparatus that draws largely from the Historical Archive of La Biennale and from national and international photographic research, the magazine will be published quarterly. Each issue will have a monographic focus, establishing a dialogue between the disciplines characteristic of La Biennale di Venezia – visual arts, architecture, dance, music, theatre, cinema – as well as the sciences and literature. Like the original magazine, fashion is also included among its areas of interest, by reason of the relation of its creative processes with art, archives, experimentation.

Each issue will contain original and exclusive articles, testimonies, interviews, dialogues and contribution by artists, scholars, leading Italian and international figures in the world of culture and civil society. There will be a range of expressive modes, giving space to graphic design and the cross-fertilisation between languages.

The editor-in-chief of the magazine is **Debora Rossi**. The director is journalist and author **Luigi Mascheroni**. **The Editorial team** consists of the Office of Editorial Activities, the Press Offices and a team of professionals from the various Departments of La Biennale. The graphic design is by **Tomo Tomo**, a communication design firm founded in Milan by Davide Di Gennaro and Luca Pitoni.

The magazine is on sale in the Biennale's online store

<https://www.labiennale.org/en/buy-online> and in major bookstores.

The issue 1/24 titled *Diluvi prossimi venturi / The Coming Floods* was published in October 2024. The issue 1/25 titled *La forma del caos / The Shape of Chaos* will be released on February 25th.