

**The Pavilion of the Holy See presents *Opera Aperta*,
a living practice of restoration and collective care at the Santa Maria Ausiliatrice
Complex**

**19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia
10 May – 23 November 2025**

The **Dicastery for Culture and Education** takes part in the 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia with *Opera Aperta*, a project that proposes architecture as an act of care and shared responsibility, capable of addressing contemporary social and ecological challenges. It coincides with the tenth anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis's *Laudato si'* Encyclical Letter—an essential text that has helped shape an increasing awareness of our shared responsibility as inhabitants of a common home.

Curated by architect, curator, and researcher **Marina Otero Verzier** and **Giovanna Zabotti**, Artistic Director of Fondaco Italia and former curator of the Venice Pavilion, *Opera Aperta* transforms the **Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex in Castello** into a living laboratory of collective repair. The artistic direction and architectural design are entrusted to **Tatiana Bilbao ESTUDIO** (Tatiana Bilbao, Alba Cortés, Isaac Solis Rosas, Helene Schauer) and **MAIO Architects** (Anna Puigjaner, Guillermo López, Maria Charneco, Alfredo Lérída), two international studios known for their experimental, sustainable, and socially engaged approaches to architecture.

Over the next six months, the project will breathe new life into the Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex, located in the Castello district, covering approximately 500 square meters and featuring numerous elements of artistic and cultural significance. The building dates back to 1171, when it was founded as a hospice for pilgrims; it later became the oldest hospital in the historic center and was converted in the 18th century to house a nursery, a school, and a boarding facility. In 2001, the City of Venice allocated it for cultural use. Today, and for the next four years, it will be managed by the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See, which is overseeing its restoration as a lasting legacy for the city and its community.

Specifically, *Opera Aperta* aims to **enhance** what already exists, to **restore** rather than replace, and to rethink cracks—not as flaws to be eliminated but as openings to new meanings. Throughout the exhibition period, the Holy See Pavilion will be a space in **constant transformation**, hosting collective work alongside that of architectural studios,

associations, and vibrant Venetian organizations, all invited to contribute their skills and expertise to create a **project open to the whole community**—offering a **hopeful vision** for the future of architecture that values the existing world and those who inhabit it.

The **restoration works**, open to the public from Tuesday to Friday, are carried out by local artisans and specialized restorers with expertise in recovering stone, marble, terracotta, mural and canvas painting, stucco, wood, and metal artworks.

Inside the Complex, fabrics hanging from the walls gently wrap the building's surfaces, leaving openings that allow movement and offer glimpses of the ongoing restoration. The mobile scaffolding, used to support the works, also functions as furniture, providing space for equipment and subdividing the interior, creating multiple configurations.

In parallel, the **UIA–International University of Art** is conducting a series of restoration and rehabilitation **workshops** twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, to pass on traditional techniques to new generations, ensure the continuity of these crafts, and reinforce a long-term commitment to their preservation.

Beyond restoration, the project also incorporates **moments of encounter and cultural exchange**: a large **communal table**, managed by the cooperative *nonsoloverde*, welcomes neighbours and visitors every Tuesday and Friday, creating a space for dialogue and sharing. *Opera Aperta* also involves local universities through collaboration with **Ca' Foscari University of Venice**, whose students will engage in public mediation, and **IUSVE** (Salesian University Institute of Venice), whose students will contribute to communication efforts.

In collaboration with the **Benedetto Marcello Conservatory of Music in Venice**, spaces and instruments (grand piano, upright piano, and harpsichord) will be available for musical rehearsals from Tuesday to Sunday, and can be booked online through the Coopculture platform (www.coopculture.it).

Opera Aperta is not a finished work, but a place of ongoing exchange, engagement, and participation, deeply rooted in the community.

The Holy See's presence at this edition of the Biennale Architettura 2025—and the upcoming Biennale Arte 2026—once again receives the support of **Intesa Sanpaolo** as main partner, which has chosen to accompany the Dicastery for Culture and Education on this artistic and human journey. The project is also supported by **dst group**, a Portuguese company active in the engineering and construction sectors.

General information:

Holy See Pavilion at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Venue: Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex, Fondamenta S. Gioacchin, 450

Dates: 10 May – 23 November 2025

Press Breakfast: 8–9 May, 9:30–11:30

Opening: 9 May 2025, 18:30 (by invitation)

Opening Hours: 11:00–19:00 (10 May–28 Sept), 10:00–18:00 (30 Sept–23 Nov), closed Mondays

Catalogue: Allemandi Editore

Colophon**Holy See Pavilion at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia**

Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex, Fondamenta S. Gioacchin, 450

Title: *Opera Aperta*

Commissioner: Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See

Curators: Marina Otero Verzier and Giovanna Zabotti

Exhibitors: Tatiana Bilbao ESTUDIO (Tatiana Bilbao, Alba Cortés, Isaac Solis Rosas, Helene Schauer), MAIO Architects (Anna Puigjaner, Guillermo López, Maria Charneco, Alfredo Lérica)

Graphic Design: Estudio Herrera (Maricris Herrera)

Lighting Design: cube.bz

Organization: Giubileo Cultura Educazione Committee, for the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See, His Eminence Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, His Excellency Monsignor Paul Tighe, Monsignor Davide Milani, Nicola Tomasoni, Cristiano Grisogoni

Executive Production: COR arquitectos (Roberto Cremascoli, Edison Okumura, Marta Rodrigues)

Production Coordination: Erika Pisciotta and Camilla Donantoni

Local Coordination: Raul Betti

Local Design Studio: Valentina Vettori

Architectural Design Assistance: Paco Tébuli

Construction Management: Mattia Marzaro and Nicola Picco (restoration)

Safety Plan: Davide Cassandro

Electrical Design: Fabio Cappellato

Main Partner

Intesa Sanpaolo



**19. Mostra
Internazionale
di Architettura**
Partecipazioni Nazionali

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Special thanks to:

City of Venice

Department of Heritage, Toponymy, Universities, and Territorial Promotion

Patriarchate of Venice

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