

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 documenting the Institution's activities from 1895 to the present, it also serves an **International Centre for Research on Contemporary Arts**, where archival materials become living resources for new research and experimentation. This occurs through the actions of La Biennale itself, the Artistic Directors of the different departments (Art and Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Music and Theatre), of the students and researchers from all over the world as well as through 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. Set up 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 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 review, photographs, documents, audiovisuals, music scores, works of art, vinyl records, manifestos. 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*, *Archivio Luciano e Maud Giaccari*, *Archivio Lucia Ronchetti*, *Archivio Roberto Mazzucco*.

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 **library holdings 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 art works from the **Fondo Artistico** is 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, Cinema 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 which collects 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; 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); Exhibition Biennale Arte 2001 - Platea dell'Umanità: the archival version of the 49th International Art Exhibition, titled Plateau of Humankind; 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; Man Ray, l'immagine ritrovata.

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 four years, La Biennale di Venezia has strengthened and expanded the activities of its Historical Archive in preparation for its relocation to the new headquarters within the Arsenale di Venezia. This process was aimed at the creation and development of the **International Centre for Research on the Contemporary Arts**, a permanent centre inaugurated in 2021, conceived as a space for fostering relationships, collaborations, and shared projects with students, researchers, cultural institutions, and research bodies, both nationally and internationally.

In September 2025, the third cycle of activities was inaugurated for the research project dedicated to the **Geopolitical map of the artists who, over the past twenty years, have taken part in the**

activities of all the Biennale's Departments. The project has been developed in collaboration with students from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, IUAV University of Venice, Sapienza University of Rome, IULM University of Communication and Languages, the Academy of Fine Arts of Venice, and the Benedetto Marcello Conservatory of Music in Venice, and, beginning with this cycle, now further enriched by the contribution of the University of Bologna.

The next step involving the 70 students who participated in this third phase, with eight study groups which remain engaged until the end of July 2026, dedicating 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, building on the quantitative research conducted during the previous editions and enriching it with qualitative insights 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 La 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 supported by a mentor. The participants are invited to discuss issues, key words and events that have marked the life of La Biennale, emerging from the results of the mapping project. Young participants take part in a structured programme of in-depth seminars, leading to the drafting of scholarly papers and the public presentation of the research findings. The outcomes produced, in turn, serve as a foundation for further project applications – including installations, exhibitions, and performances – thus fostering a dynamic dialogue between research, the archive, and contemporary artistic practices.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

The Archive curates a programme of **conferences, book presentations and editorial initiatives, and lectures dedicated to artists** who have participated in the Biennale from its founding to the present day, in collaboration with distinguished figures from the art world – including critics, journalists, university professors, current and former artistic directors, artists, and other industry 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 at the same time to inspire the public to visit the archives, venues and exhibitions associated with them, strengthening the connection between research, memory, and cultural engagement.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Historical 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 took place in Istanbul, at **Artİstanbul Feshane**, with the travelling installation *Amfibio Sound Days* (2–5 October 2025), organized in collaboration with the **Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV)**. The fourth stage was held in **New Delhi**, at **Bikaner House**, with the exhibition *Indian Interior* (2–28 December 2025), in collaboration with the **Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA)**.
- *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**.
- **Biennale della Parola Le guerre e la pace (Wars and Peace)** is an encounter focused on the theme of conflict in European thought. On **6 November 2025** at the Sala delle Colonne, Ca' Giustinian, the philosopher **Massimo Cacciari** held a *Lectio Magistralis* titled *The death of jus belli*, inspired by two fundamental writings: *Zum ewigen Frieden* (Perpetual Peace) by Immanuel Kant and *Der Friede* (The Peace: A word to the youth of Europe: A word to the youth of the world) by Ernst Jünger.
- **Arcipelago Battiato** is a tribute to the composer and philosopher **Franco Battiato** (1945-2021) in collaboration with the publishing company **SZ Sugar** on the eightieth anniversary of his birth, that was performed on **17 and 18 November 2025** at the **Teatro alle Tese** in the Arsenale. Conceived as a musical narrative that unfurls among island-stages distributed throughout the sixteenth-century spaces of the Teatro alle Tese at the Arsenale, *Arcipelago Battiato* presents the musician's materials in a new form, with transcriptions, arrangements, and elaborations by the composers **Leonardo Marino** and **Michele Tadini**, who is also responsible for the electronic texture and the sound projection with **Thierry Coduys**. On stage: **Malika Ayane**, author and performer with the vocal versatility to range across genres, is accompanied by Leonardo Marino on the piano and keyboards, **Flavio Virzi** on the guitar, **Simone Beneventi** on percussion, **Silvia Mandolini** on the violin, *Elide Sulsenti* on the cello, with the multi-instrumentalist **Diego Ronzio**. The sets and direction are by **Antonello Pocetti** and **Antonino Viola**.

- **Coro** is the masterpiece composed *by Luciano Berio* between 1974 and 1976, which premiered in Italy at the Biennale Teatro e Musica directed by Luca Ronconi in 1976. **Coro** was presented on **6 and 7 December 2025** at the **Teatro La Fenice** in a new production that featured original choreographies *by Sir Wayne McGregor*. A tribute dedicated by La Biennale di Venezia to the great composer on the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, in collaboration with the Fondazione Teatro La Fenice and with the contribution of the Ministry of Culture.

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, guided by one key 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.

In 2025, four issues were released:

- The issue 1/25 titled *La forma del caos / The Shape of Chaos* was published in February 2025.
- The issue 2/25, titled *Anteguerra / Things to Come* was published in May 2025.
- The issue 3/25, titled *Materia prima / Raw Material* was published in September 2025.
- The issue 4/25, titled *Applicazioni/Applications* was published in December 2025.