

The Historical Archive of La Biennale di Venezia (ASAC)

The **Historical Archive (ASAC) of La Biennale di Venezia** gathers the documents and collections relative to the activities of the Institution from 1895 to the present. In addition to its conservation work, cataloguing, inventorying and research, the Historical Archive offers free access to their fonds to students and researchers from all over the world. Each artistic director of La Biennale's different departments (Art and Architecture, Cinema, Dance, Music and Theater) is called upon to plan and curate small exhibitions relying on the materials from the archive, which are thus further enhanced.*

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

Since 2008 the **Archive** has been located in the spaces of the VEGA Scientific Park of Porto Marghera, appropriately equipped to host archives and collections, guaranteeing optimal microclimatic conditions for conservation and access to scholars for the consultation of materials. The Archive preserves documents related to the activities of the Biennale Foundation and materials related to the arts since the end of the XIX century. The Archive is distinguished by the heterogeneity of its materials, including press articles, photographs, documents, audiovisuals, music scores, works of art, vinyl records, posters. The following archives have also been acquired: **Luca Ronconi Fonds, Palazzo Grassi/Fiat (1894-2005) Fonds, Premio Architettura città di Oderzo Fonds, Lorenzo Capellini Fonds**.

Since 2009 the **Library** is an integral part of the Central Pavilion at the Giardini. The Library 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 activities and collects bibliographic material related to the disciplines of the visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, photography, music and theater. Thanks to its heritage of more than 164,000 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.

Over the past two-year period, 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 a **new International Centre for Research on Contemporary Art** 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 2023, 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, IUAV, Università La Sapienza in Rome, IULM, Accademia di Belle Arti and the Conservatory of Music Benedetto Marcello in Venice. The next step that the 90 students are preparing to take during this second phase, in which nine study groups will rotate through the end of 2024, is to dedicate their work to implementing the database, and writing scientific articles focusing on a specific case study. The goal of this phase 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.

As a further complementary course of study, the outcomes of the research into the geopolitical mapping of the artists will be the basis for a series of workshops to be titled "**Laboratorio Archivio**", to be held in addition to the continuing **College ASAC writing in residence**, now in its seventh edition in 2024, which involves young scholars hosted in residence to attend the various festivals and events, accompanied by their mentors. They will then be oriented in seminars to explore the themes developed in the programmes of activities. One of the crucial steps for them will be to consult and study the materials from the Archive, which thus becomes a residency for future critics.

The aim of these new research experiences is to write a final paper that will be published by the Foundation, but also to apply the work to practical outcomes, such as installations, conferences, workshops or small exhibitions. A further aim is to involve the participants in the very activities of the Foundation, as was the case with the participants in the writing College who helped to conduct the encounters that followed the performances of the Dance and Music festivals, and in the latter case participated in the production of the catalogue of activities 2024.

The "**Laboratorio Archivio**", more specifically, will develop interdisciplinary research programmes that will involve recent university graduates and 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.

The Historic Archive's Research Centre will renew the following activities for the year 2024:

- A monthly calendar of **conferences, book presentations, lectures about artists** who have participated in the Biennale from its foundation to the present day, curated by ASAC in collaboration with key figures in the world of the arts, including critics, journalists, university professors, current and past artistic directors and professional artists, for an audience of students and researchers. The aim is two-fold: to foster knowledge about artists, living or of the past, creating dialogues and reflections about their contemporary

significance, to trigger the desire to visit archives, places and exhibitions associated with them, to stimulate curiosity and the impulse to further explore the materials in the archives of La Biennale di Venezia itself, and lastly to create a loyal audience not only of users but of visitors to the Archive and its Library. The next event on the calendar is the two-day seminar scheduled for February 15th and 16th 2024, dedicated to the theme of Archival Codes and accompanied by a multimedia project based on the Disquieted Muses. Furthermore, an editorial project is currently underway to publish the proceedings of the conferences held in 2023.

- An additional commitment is the **support and development of special art projects** that dialogue with the historical archive, such as the new production of the opera "Prometeo" in collaboration with the Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono and the DMT Department of La Biennale, staged on January 26th through 29th this year in the Church of San Lorenzo.
- There will also be **exhibitions** curated directly by the Artistic Directors of each department. In 2020, an exhibition titled "The Disquieted Muses. When La Biennale di Venezia Meets History" was curated for the first time by all six artistic directors*.
- in 2022, the ASAC together with the artistic directors of the Art, Dance, Music and Theatre departments activated **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.

* The Artistic Directors have realized the following exhibitions since 2010:

- *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.*