

La Biennale di Venezia

60th International Art Exhibition

Statement by **Roberto Cicutto**
President of La Biennale di Venezia



The press conference to present the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Adriano Pedrosa, coincides with the end of my tenure as President.

The first act of this past four-year term was the organization of the exhibition *The Disquieted Muses. La Biennale di Venezia Meets History*, curated by the six sitting artistic directors (Alberto Barbera, Cinema; Marie Chouinard, Dance; Ivan Fedele, Music; Antonio Latella, Theatre; Hashim Sarkis, Architecture) coordinated by Cecilia Alemani (artistic director of Biennale Arte 2022). It presented materials from the Historic Archive in the Central Pavilion of the Giardini, which was empty due to the postponement in 2021 of the International Architecture Exhibition, caused by the Covid pandemic.

That title turned out to be prophetic in its own way, given the many historic and unfortunately tragic events that have occurred over the past four years, and which we would never have expected to see again: the pandemic, the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7th 2023 and the tragic consequences in the Gaza Strip.

La Biennale's international nature makes it a privileged vantage point from which to observe the state of the world through the transformation and evolution of the arts.

No curator, in choosing the theme of their exhibition, seeks directly to engage in hot topic discussion, and, through the interpretation given by visitors, professionals and the press, he himself is able to grasp the changing perception of the exhibition.

But it is first and foremost the real presence of the National Pavilions (the historic pavilions in the Giardini, and more recently the ones that have been added at the Arsenale and in other venues around the city), that this year reached 90 participating countries and 30 Collateral Events, that make La Biennale a unique meeting ground between the arts and the changes in society.

The autonomy of the artistic directors is the strongest guarantee that La Biennale di Venezia formula continue to work and produce sometimes surprising effects, even on the diplomatic and political level.

The dialogue with the Countries, which with equal dignity and the freedom to choose their own curators take on the challenge of our contemporary age, expressing themselves freely on both the artistic and social level, makes the difference with respect to any other cultural institution in the world.

These are the themes that the new International Center for Research on Contemporary Arts and the Historic Archive have begun to explore with scholars, students, educators and researchers, in meetings and activities organized in Venice throughout the year.

And this is the legacy that those who preceded him leave to Adriano Pedrosa, the first curator of Biennale Arte from South America, and his Exhibition titled *Foreigners Everywhere*, a universal and transverse theme of burning relevance observed from the Global South.

I would like to thank Adriano for accepting to conduct, for the second time following Cecilia Alemani, the Biennale College Arte dedicated to young artists under the age of 30, which for this

and all the other arts of La Biennale has become a unique and powerful tool with which to offer them an opportunity to break into the international world of art.

We have just finished celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Luigi Nono, not only with the new production of *Prometeo. La tragedia dell'ascolto* forty years after its premiere performance in the Church of San Lorenzo, but also with a one-day seminar dedicated to the great Venetian composer.

I would also like to mention that for the first time, Venetians living on the mainland have enjoyed stunning lighting installations created for the Christmas season at Forte Marghera, and the circus theatre performances held at the Teatro del Parco in Mestre.

I would like to conclude by saying that tomorrow is the opening day of the 15th International Kids' Carnival (1-11 February) which will offer its traditional workshops and encounters for schools and families. This year's edition will be enriched with an original programme of dance performances on ice in Mestre, a preview of Biennale Danza 2024 directed by Wayne McGregor.

These are some of the activities of the Historical Archive of Contemporary Arts carried out with the aim of bringing different audiences closer to our institution.

We would like to thank all participating Countries and new National Participations.

We thank **Ministero della Cultura**, the **local Institutions** that support La Biennale in various ways, the **City of Venice**, the **Veneto Region**, the **Soprintendenza Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio per il Comune di Venezia e Laguna**, and the **Italian Navy**.

Our thanks also go to the event's Partner **Swatch**, to the Main Sponsor **illycaffè**, and to the Sponsors **American Express**, **Bloomberg Philantropies** and **Vela-Venezia Unica**.

Our thanks go to **Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP**.

Rai is **Media Partner** of the 60th International Art Exhibition and will follow the event with a dedicated offer on TV, radio and on the web.

We thank the important **international Donors, organisations and institutions** who have contributed to the success of the Biennale Arte 2024.

Our warmest thanks go to **Adriano Pedrosa** and his entire team.

Finally, we would also like to thank **everyone at La Biennale for the great professionalism** and dedication they have demonstrated in the realisation and administration of the Exhibition.

Roberto Cicutto