

**La Biennale di Venezia /
Presents the new home of the Historical Archive
International Centre for Research
On Contemporary Arts
at the Arsenale**

Project funded by the Italian Ministry of Culture
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of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)
"Great Cultural Heritage Attractors" programme

**Performances and Lectures 1st and 2nd June
Open Day 3rd June**

Curated by the Artistic Directors of La Biennale
**Alberto Barbera, Caterina Barbieri, Willem Dafoe, Wayne McGregor,
Wang Shu e Lu Wenyu**
and by the artists
Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons e Kamaal Malak

Arsenale di Venezia
(Campo della Tana 2169/F)

Venice, 1 June 2026 – **The new home of the Historical Archive – International Centre for Research on Contemporary Arts at the Arsenale was presented today.** For the occasion, a special three-day programme has been developed by the Artistic Directors of the various departments of La Biennale, who also serve as curators of the Archive. On 1 and 2 June, the programme will feature **three performances in theatre, dance and art, an architecture lecture, a conversation on cinema and a concert**; on 3 June, the space will be open to the public for visits. Within this framework, the Archive takes shape as a dynamic space of memory dedicated to the languages of contemporary arts.

Over the past four years, La Biennale di Venezia has strengthened the activities of its Archive in preparation for its relocation from VEGA – Parco Scientifico Tecnologico in Marghera, where it is currently housed, to its new venue at the Arsenale. Within this context, the **International Centre for Research on Contemporary Arts** was established in 2021 as a reference point for relations, collaborations and shared projects with students, scholars, cultural institutions and national and international research bodies. The materials preserved in the Archive generate new research, experimentation and production, also offering the Artistic Directors of the various departments the opportunity to engage directly with the documentary heritage and to develop exhibition paths and special projects based on archival materials.

For this purpose, a complex of historic buildings in the Arsenale, adjacent to the Corderie, has been identified as the new headquarters of the Historical Archive, **a space of approximately 8,000 square meters**. The works, **which began in March 2024 and were completed in accordance with the project timeline**, involved a total investment of over 38 million euros provided by the Ministry of Culture: 20 million from the “Great Cultural Heritage Projects” funds allocated in 2019, and an additional 18 million from the National Complementary Plan to the PNRR under the “Great Cultural Heritage Attractors” programme in 2021.

Pietrangelo Buttafuoco, President of La Biennale di Venezia stated that “Running parallel to La Biennale di Venezia is its Archive, and it has been doing so for 131 years. The foresight of the founders ensured that from the very outset the institution would be endowed with its own memory, one that over a century later has rightfully become the largest Archive of Contemporary Arts in the world. That parallel course now takes form as architecture, as place, situated at the very heart of one of La Biennale – and Venice’s – venues, the Arsenale. What in the past was a building given over to the Iron Warehouses is now, thanks to a meticulous renovation made possible by the decisive intervention of the Ministry of Culture, the new home of ASAC, an archive but also a centre of production. From now on, the paper and multimedia documents that day by day build the history of La Biennale will be stored and preserved here. Here, students and scholars, as well the young protagonists of the College programmes, selected by the artistic directors of each department, will find a point of reference for their scientific research. This is also where the Special Projects take root, among them the Magazine and *The Wind Makes the Sky*, which followed in the footsteps of Marco Polo. At long last, ASAC has a permanent home within the perpetual and vital hotbed that is Venice. I wish therefore to thank my predecessors, Paolo Baratta and Roberto Cicutto, all my colleagues at La Biennale, and the person who is the custodian and driving force behind the Historical Archive, Debora Rossi.

“Placing ASAC’s holdings and collections in the new Arsenale venue,” explained **Debora Rossi, Head of the Historical Archive**, “means bringing the Institution’s memory into the heart of its activities, creating a continuous osmosis between past, present and future, as has been the case with the Library in the Central Pavilion since 2008. This place fully brings together the dual nature of La Biennale Archive: on the one hand, a heritage to be preserved, protected and enhanced; on the other, a space for activities that engage, from multiple perspectives, with La Biennale six Departments and its history, offering new generations of students, researchers, artists and curators opportunities for reflection, research and production.”

THE PROJECT

The project forms part of the broader programme for the development and strengthening of the activities of La Biennale di Venezia, comprising 22 works involving buildings and areas owned by the Municipality of Venice and located in the Giardini della Biennale, at the Arsenale, on the Lido di Venezia, at Forte Marghera and in Parco Albanese (Bissuola). The interventions are being carried out by La Biennale di Venezia and the Municipality of Venice, in close collaboration with the Superintendency of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the Metropolitan City of Venice, with the aim of enhancing and strengthening the cultural infrastructures dedicated to La Biennale activities.

This redevelopment constituted the main intervention within the overall €169 million funding provided by the Ministry of Culture for the sites and spaces owned by the Municipality of Venice and designated for the activities of La Biennale di Venezia. **The project included the recovery, conservative restoration, and enhancement of five historic buildings merged into a single complex, part of the southern Arsenale, extending for over 200 meters parallel to the Corderie.** The new headquarters forms an integrated infrastructure that will be open to the public 365 days a year, offering innovative access to the contents of the Historical Archive – International Research Centre for Contemporary Arts.

Multifunctional areas are planned, dedicated to consultation, College activities and research, workshops, exhibitions, and the production of special projects, as well as spaces for storage, cataloguing, and conservation. In particular, the conservation area will house multi-level compact shelving systems, restoration laboratories, cataloguing rooms, and climate-controlled storage units capable of ensuring appropriate temperature and humidity conditions for the protection of the archival heritage. The project also includes the **enhancement of the digitisation of the collections** – audio, video, and photographic archives – and the **expansion of storage capacity**, reaching approximately **8,000 linear metres compared to the current 5,000** at the VEGA site in Marghera.

The intervention was overseen by the offices of La Biennale di Venezia through the Special Projects department, directed by architect **Arianna Laurenzi**, with engineer **Cristiano Frizzele**, Head of the Technical and Logistics Services Office, serving as Sole Project Manager and the functional project lead for the Archive being lawyer **Debora Rossi**, Head of the Historical Archive of Contemporary Arts.

The project of La Biennale di Venezia was developed, for the final and executive design phases, by a temporary grouping of professionals composed for the architectural and restoration design by **TA Torsello Architettura | Alberto Torsello and Studio SERES**, by the architect **Ottavio di Blasi & Partners** for the architectural design, by **Studio Milan Ingegneria** for the structural design, and by the company **TFE Ingegneria** for systems design and fire prevention. Construction supervision was entrusted to **TA Torsello Architettura | Alberto Torsello**. The contractor responsible for the works was **Setten Genesis S.p.A.**

The Historical Archive of Contemporary Arts of La Biennale di Venezia (ASAC) documents the activity of the Foundation from the first International Art Exhibition in 1895, preserving materials relating to the artists, works and various disciplines that have shaped its history. An extraordinary heritage, a true contemporary Wunderkammer in the spirit of Aby Warburg, it is organised into the **Library**, located in the Central Pavilion at the Giardini, and the **Historical Fund**, preserved at VEGA in Porto Marghera. The Library, specialised in contemporary arts, contains all the catalogues of La

Biennale's activities and holds more than 164,000 volumes and 3,200 periodicals. Historical Fund, the core of the Archive, include more than 10,000 files, alongside an extremely rich photo library, media library, Artistic Fund, posters, press reviews and heterogeneous materials, including photographs, correspondence, audiovisual materials, scores, works of art and vinyl records.

With the relocation from VEGA in Porto Marghera to the new home at the Arsenale, the Historical Archive fully enters the system of La Biennale's exhibition spaces, between the Arsenale and the Giardini, strengthening the relationship between memory, research and contemporary production.

Following the three days of presentation, the installation works and the transfer of the Historical Archive of Contemporary Arts from VEGA in Marghera to the new home at the Arsenale will continue.

THE PROGRAMME – 1, 2, 3 JUNE

On Monday 1 June, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., the performance programme includes: *Body as Archive*, a Biennale Danza project curated by **Wayne McGregor** developed with AISOMA, a choreographic tool powered by machine learning; by and with **Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons** e **Kamaal Malak**, artists participating in Biennale Arte 2026; *We Were Together, I Forget the Rest*, a Biennale Teatro performance, curated by **Willem Dafoe**, dedicated to the theme of memory and developed from materials held in the Historical Archive.

On Tuesday 2 June the programme will open at 11:00 a.m with a lecture by **Wang Shu** e **Lu Wenyu**, Directors of Biennale Architettura 2027, dedicated to their research and design vision as the founding architects of Amateur Architecture Studio. In the afternoon, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., the performances *Body as Archive*, *WATERMARKS* and *We Were Together, I Forget the Rest* will be presented again. At 5:30 p.m. **Alberto Barbera** will take part in a conversation with five young cinema scholars on significant aspects of the Venice International Film Festival, of which he is Artistic Director. The programme will conclude at 9:30 p.m. with *Yet Darkness Held No Seraphim* a concert by **Caterina Barbieri**, Director of Biennale Musica, conceived specifically for the Archive's new spaces.

On Wednesday 3 June, the restored spaces will be open to the public for an **open day** dedicated to discovering the new home of the Historical Archive. Visits will take place from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Last admission at 6:30 p.m.

LINK TO THE IMAGES: <https://we.tl/t-iwaWw2EVb4QhfVmk>

For further information

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