

Le muse inquiete (*The Disquieted Muses*)

When La Biennale di Venezia Meets History



La Biennale di Venezia

Arte
Architettura
Cinema
Danza
Musica
Teatro
Archivio Storico

125

The exhibition *Le muse inquiete* (*The Disquieted Muses*) takes us on a journey through the archive of La Biennale di Venezia, focusing on key moments when the wars, upheavals, generational conflicts and profound cultural transformations of the twentieth century reshaped the boundaries of this Venetian institution. In a period of global instability that over the course of just a few months has brought a succession of environmental disasters, new pandemics, and social revolutions, La Biennale di Venezia serves as a wellspring and channel for the most innovative currents in the artistic disciplines of our era—but also continues to bear witness to the many shifts and crises that have supervened from the late nineteenth century to the present, like a seismometer recording the tremors of history.

Over its 125 years of activity, La Biennale di Venezia has celebrated the careers of innumerable artists, filmmakers, choreographers, and composers, and has showcased some of the most important artistic movements of the last century, heralding sea changes in the visual arts, cinema, architecture, theatre, music, and dance. But now and then, La Biennale has also come face to face with history, in some of its most dramatic incarnations. As an arena for diplomatic maneuvers and political alliances in the first half of the twentieth century, La Biennale was visited by monarchs, dictators, heads of state, and revolutionaries, but also by protests and celebrations where the arts echoed cultural paradigm shifts and changing mores. In 1920 and 1948 La Biennale rose from the ashes of two devastating world wars, standing as a beacon of hope for the rebirth of civil society in Italy and other nations. In the 1960s and '70s the Venetian institution was rocked by a wave of social and political transformations that redefined the relationship between the individual and the masses, as well as the power dynamics of the East, West, and Global South. In the '90s, after the collapse of the Cold War blocs, La Biennale adopted new artistic languages that ushered in a more global outlook and opened its doors to new geopolitical influences. Decade by decade, La Biennale also reflected changes in taste and in the bounds of propriety, amid scandals, episodes of censorship, and new mappings of desire.

Today, amid the extraordinary events of the past few months that have led to an almost unprecedented rescheduling of La Biennale's exhibition calendar, *Le muse inquiete* (*The Disquieted Muses*) will be presenting a series of documents, archival materials, rare footage, artworks, and research, to examine the many times when the history of La Biennale has overlapped with the history of the world—revealing or generating institutional rifts and political and ethical crises, but also new creative languages.

Le muse inquiete (*The Disquieted Muses*) is the first exhibition in La Biennale's history to be conceived at the intersection of the six disciplines that are its main fields of inquiry: the visual arts, cinema, music, theatre, architecture and dance. Drawing on a wealth of materials from all six sectors, the show will highlight the links between events and episodes in the institution's own history and in the history of the twentieth century, testifying to the vital role that it has played even at the most critical junctures.

For the first time ever, the six artistic directors of the various sections have worked together, using the one-of-a-kind sources in La Biennale archives (the famous ASAC) and other precious archives and collections, to retrace those key moments when La Biennale crossed paths with history in Venice.