



Statements by the Artistic Directors

Cecilia Alemani - Artistic Director of the Visual Arts Department

The exhibition *The Disquieted Muses* traces the interweaving pathways of La Biennale and the history of the 20th century. It presents documents, archival material, correspondence, photographs, films, and artwork which recount those crucial points where the history of La Biennale overlapped with the history of the past century. The visual arts, the first sector to be inaugurated at the Biennale in 1895, dialogue with the disciplines of cinema, theatre, music, architecture, and dance in a multifaceted and original conversation, retracing moments and artistic initiatives which recorded and responded to the most dramatic events of our society. The period between the two world wars, the cold war years, the revolutions of 1968, the changes brought about by the 1970s and globalization are just a few of the crucial points which form the backdrop of the Biennale's artistic narrative. The exhibition *The Disquieted Muses* was conceived during the present ongoing emergency and it looks at the Biennale's history to understand how history and the many cultural and social transformations impacted the Biennale during the twentieth century and how the Biennale was able to embrace and amplify the signals of the time, even during its most dramatic moments.

Alberto Barbera – Artistic Director of Cinema Department

Even without the *endorsement* of Lenin, who called it the most important of all the arts (Hitler and Mussolini got in step later on), nothing could have prevented cinema from becoming the mirror of the 1900s, the most reliable witness of the past century, the imperturbable eye which recorded the events, be they festive, tragic, everyday, or momentous, and fixed them forever on a light sensitive emulsion. Thus, it can be no surprise that cinema – which the Biennale welcomed and considered an equal of the Visual Arts, albeit a few decades later – has embraced the function of a prism to which chance, or perhaps destiny, has assigned the task of reflecting the short century's crucial turning points in world history, the watershed moments and those of rupture. Of all the stories which movies have recounted in their inexhaustible narrative vocation, this is by no means the least interesting and, today more than ever, it is worth contemplating.

Marie Chouinard – Artistic Director of Dance Department

Terpsichore at the Biennale

Dance only appeared as a department at La Biennale di Venezia in 1999, thanks to the initiative of its president, Paolo Baratta; Carolyn Carlson, who was already established in Venice, was its first director.

During the preceding century, Terpsichore was anxious: dance was only occasionally invited to the Biennale, either by the Music or the Theatre departments.

Only in 2017 did the Biennale Dance finally open its College to young choreographers; until then, and Terpsichore was still anxious, the college had only been dedicated to the training of young dancers.

I dreamed of offering you a retrospective - a completely imaginary one - of what dance could have been at the Biennale before 1999.

Terpsichore rejoiced.

I also thought of offering you an auditorium dedicated to the Judson Group, with the pretext of the participation of some of their choreographers at the Biennale during the 1960s and '70s.

Terpsichore and her sisters, the other muses, exulted at the rekindled memory of the *tabula rasa* created by those American women, one of whom was of the Italian Simone Forti.

I have also dreamed of an auditorium open to the public: as an invitation to dream about dance over the next few years in Italy...

Terpsichore, are you anxious?

You laughingly say no.

You are beyond their history

Ivan Fedele – Artistic Director of Music Department

The six sectors of La Biennale di Venezia are truly anxious muses; muses which, for over a century, have navigated with the attitude of a tireless explorer who is always poised to discover unknown worlds. Feverish destinies which interweave with time and space, drawing newly imaginative stories that are often controversial but always dedicated to the search for a real dimension. And truth in art is the most genuine testimony of individual and collective awareness, which meet and overlap in the singularity of the perceptible experience. The worlds of creativity show us the shared experiences of humanity as a whole, both the conciliatory and the confrontational experiences, filtered through the compelling uniqueness of artists who believe in the prophetic role of their thought and actions. Crossed destinies, new routes to chart.

Antonio Latella – Artistic Director of Theater Department

Is the purpose of theatre, or of acting, truly to hold up a mirror to nature? Are actors, to all effects, the compendium and the brief chronicles of time? Still today, Hamlet's questions resound with the same power, investing the theatrical art with the duty of bearing witness to what is still happening or has happened. By investigating the Biennale's 20th-century history, we find frequent moments of rupture, in which the very concept of performance or representation is at stake; the news takes the upper hand, the facts censure or obfuscate artistic sublimation. From Max Reinhardt to Carmelo Bene, from Brecht to Ronconi's Biennale experience, right from its inauguration, the Biennale Theatre Festival has recounted attempts at escape and exile, utopias which demolish conventions, as it clashed with government vetoes, protests, miscomprehension. A narration from the past which should, perhaps, question what we consider contemporary.

Hashim Sarkis – Artistic Director of Architecture Department

Architecture may not have officially started in the Biennale until 1980 but it has been present from the beginning as the container of the arts and as the expressive surface of the pavilions. Through their external expression, the pavilions competed as representations of empires and nations with styles and scales that demarcated the grounds of the Giardini for decades ahead of the arrival of architecture as a subject. In that sense, and until the 1970s when Vittorio Gregotti brought architecture into different venues in Venice (Magazzini del Sale at the Zattere, Ca' Pesaro, San Lorenzo Church, Cini Foundation, Museo Correr, Shipyard at the Giudecca), architecture played its conventional role towards the other arts: as framework. Ironically, architecture gained its ability to disquiet the muse, when it lost its proper place and its bearings and "descended" to be with the other arts, when it became the content not just the container. The Biennale compelled architecture to play, to experiment, to be at once as framework, content, representation and experience, opening up a whole palette of possibilities for the field. La Biennale brought architecture to life by unsettling it. What is unique about this archival exhibition is the way it puts the media next to each other to compete in their viability as expressive forms of (one) art but also to be present and represented in a non-hierarchical or classified way on the open grounds of the Giardini. Here they finally exchange ideas, forms, and contours, unified in the same space that has in the past given each its exclusive claims to expressiveness. La Biennale has become an open space of exchange among its many media. It has finally become one Biennale.