



Beyond the Biennale: 21 Top Shows to See Around Venice

MAY 3RD, 2015 3:00 PM



The 56th Venice Biennale opens May 9th, filling the floating city to the brim with work by 136 artists representing 53 countries—and that’s just in the main exhibition. Curated by Okwui Enwezor, the Biennale will remain open for over six months, giving visitors plenty of time to investigate the abundant collateral events and exhibitions scattered throughout the city’s elegant palazzi and along its canals.

Contributing to the art frenzy, local museums will present a series of solo and group shows, several focusing on American artists. At the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, “Jackson Pollock’s ‘Mural’: Energy Made Visible” showcases Pollock’s largest painting ever, Mural (1943)—restored to its full force after an 18-month cleaning effort at the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles—and examines the influence of action photographers like Barbara Morgan on the artist’s iconic drip paintings. Museo Correr, along with the Written Art Foundation, presents Jenny Holzer’s silkscreen and oil paintings inspired by top-secret government documents in “War Paintings,” created over the last decade; while at Ca’ Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art, over 60 paintings by Cy Twombly are featured in the monographic exhibition “Paradise.”

More painting can be seen at the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, located in the Palazzetto Tito, where new works by Peter Doig are on view in the artist’s first solo exhibition in Italy. The Pinault Foundation contributes two exhibitions to the Biennale season, with a survey of works by Martial Raysse in “Futurologia, 2015–1958 / 1958–2015” at the Palazzo Grassi, and a group show, “Slip of the Tongue,” curated by artist Danh Vo in collaboration with Caroline Bourgeois, at the Punta della Dogana—which is already generating buzz in art-world circles. The Fondazione Prada (which opens its new Rem Koolhaas-designed headquarters in Milan the same day the Biennale launches), takes a more historical approach with “Portable Classic” at its Venice outpost, housed in Ca’ Corner della Regina. The show examines the miniature reproductions of classical works prevalent during the Renaissance.

For a larger group show, stop by the Museo di Palazzo Grimani for “Frontiers Reimagined,” bringing together 44 artists working across multiple mediums in an exhibition curated by Sundaram Tagore and Marius Kwint that considers the effects of globalization. A multisensory experience can be found in “The Sound of Creation: Sound Paintings by Beezy Bailey and Brian Eno,” presented in the Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello by ArsCulture, a nonprofit arts initiative based in Venice. Fellow local nonprofit Zuecca Project Space has organized three exhibits and events, including “The Internet Saga,” a look at contemporary online culture through the film work of Jonas Mekas, and “Heartbreak Hotel,” a group show mounted in collaboration with the Vanhaerents Art Collection, with work from Bruce Nauman, Cindy Sherman, and Bill Viola, among others. And to celebrate the start of the Biennale, on May 7th Zuecca Project Space (along with OnFair and ARTUNER) hosts a night of music by Haroon Mirza on the terrace of the Bauer Il Palazzo Hotel.

With the Biennale also comes a flood of satellite exhibitions organized by international institutions, from England to Russia to the United Arab Emirates. England’s Yorkshire Sculpture Park imports six large-scale sculptures by Ursula von Rydingsvard to Giardino della Marinaressa, a public park not far from the main pavilion grounds of the Biennale. From farther afield comes “The Question of Beings,” a solo show of work by Taiwanese artist Yahon Chang presented by MOCA Taipei at the Istituto Santa Maria della Pietà. The State Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg brings to Venice “Glasstress 2015 Gotika,” a joint exhibition with Berengo Studio (of Murano glass fame) that examines Gothic art and its legacy; the exhibit will appear in both the Palazzo Franchetti and in an old glass furnace at the Berengo Foundation in Murano.

Nestled between Switzerland and Austria, the microstate of Liechtenstein’s Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein assembles a selection of art in the Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi from emerging artists in other European microstates (including Montenegro and Luxembourg) in “The Silver Lining,” which engages with this Biennale’s expansive themes of history and time. Also in the Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi, “Salon Suisse: S.O.S. Dada—The World Is a Mess,” presented by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, explores the radical, boundary-pushing legacy of Dadaism, questioning whether it can rescue art in today’s chaotic world.

In a historically charged exhibition, India and Pakistan exhibit together for the first time on the occasion of the Biennale in “My East is Your West,” presented by the Gujral Foundation; work by Indian artist Shilpa Gupta and Pakistani artist Rashid Rana will be shown together in the Palazzo Benzon. The Emirati arts and culture organization Alserkal Avenue fills the waterways and airwaves of Venice with the Safina Radio Project, setting sail on a boat transformed into a recording studio where artists and passengers engage in dialogue about divergent experiences of the world; you can listen to broadcasts and track the boat’s movement online. Back on land in the Palazzo Nani Mocenigo, Flemish exhibition “The Revenge of the Common Place,” coordinated by Vrije Universiteit Brussel, also takes as subject matter the cultural disconnect between East and West, with work by Francis Alÿs, Song Dong, and Rinus van de Velde. In the Chiesa di San Gallo, New York’s The Brooklyn Rail presents Shrine for Girls, an installation created by Patricia Cronin to honor the women and girls who fall victim to violence; hundreds of clothing items from girls around the world are piled on three altars as a memorial to their suffering, taking on the form of relics of their martyrhood.



Patricia Cronin
Hijabs, 2015
 ‘Patricia Cronin - Shrine for Girls’ at Brooklyn Rail Curatorial Projects



Patricia Cronin
Chibok Student #2, 2015
 ‘Patricia Cronin - Shrine for Girls’ at Brooklyn Rail Curatorial Projects

Finally, Berna Reale, one of the three participating artists in the Brazilian pavilion, brings her art out of the exhibition space and into the streets of Venice in her project “Eccoci!” or “Here we are!” The videos and photographs captured in Reale’s hometown, Belém, are imbued with political and social content that challenges the inequality and abuses of power within society; they will be screened against the façades of buildings in the Cannaregio District on May 7th–9th, from 9 to 10 p.m., and in the San Polo District on November 19th–22nd, from 6 to 7 p.m.

- By Kate Haveles