

## *55th International Art Exhibition - The Encyclopedic Palace La Biennale di Venezia*

Curated by Massimiliano Gioni

The 55th International Art Exhibition entitled *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico (The Encyclopedic Palace)*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni and organized by la Biennale di Venezia chaired by Paolo Baratta, will open to the public from Saturday, June 1 to Sunday, November 24, 2013 at the Giardini and at the Arsenale. The preview is on May 29, 30 and 31. The award ceremony and the inauguration will take place on Saturday, June 1.

88 National Participations will be exhibiting in the historical Pavilions at the Giardini, at the Arsenale and in the city of Venice. Among these 10 countries are participating in the Exhibition for the first time: Angola, Bahamas, Kingdom of Bahrain, Republic of Ivory Coast, Republic of Kosovo, Kuwait, Maldives, Paraguay and Tuvalu. The novelty is the participation of the Holy See with an exhibition at the Sale d'Armi. *In Principio* is the title chosen by Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi (President of the Pontifical Council for Culture) for the Pavilion, which is curated by Antonio Paolucci (Director of the Vatican Museums). The Holy See, Argentina, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates will exhibit in the renovated pavilions of la Biennale at the Sale d'Armi in the Arsenale.

This year's Italian Pavilion at the Arsenale is organized by the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, with PaBAAC General Direction for the Landscape, Fine Arts, Architecture and Contemporary Art, and is curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi. The title of the Exhibition is "*vice versa*".

47 Collateral Events, approved by the curator of the International Exhibition and promoted by non profit national and international institutions, take place in several locations in Venice.

A collaboration between la Biennale di Venezia and il Teatro la Fenice features the Special Project *Madama Butterfly*. Conceived with the intention to reveal the vitality and modernity of grand opera, the project presents a new Japanese production of the famous work of Italian composer Giacomo Puccini. Japanese artist Mariko Mori has designed the sets and costumes, and the opera will be directed by Àlex Rigola (Spain), director of Theatre Biennale since 2010 (Teatro la Fenice June 21 > 30 and October 12 > 31, 2013).

- The International Exhibition

The Exhibition *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico (The Encyclopedic Palace)* will be laid out in the Central Pavilion (Giardini) and in the Arsenale forming a single itinerary, with works spanning over the past century alongside several new commissions, including over 150 artists from 38 countries.

"Over the years - President Paolo Baratta explains - in representing the contemporary, our curators have shown an increasing desire to place artists in a historical perspective or in a context of mutual affinities, by highlighting ties and relations both with the past and with other artists of the present. At the same time, in contrast with the avant-garde period, attention has increasingly been focused on the intensity of the relationship between the work of art and the viewer who, though shaken by artistic gestures and provocations, ultimately seeks in art the emotion of dialoguing with the work, which ought to cause hermeneutical tension, a desire to go beyond. This is what is expected from art."

"The current Biennale - adds Baratta - takes a decisive step in this direction, and gives life to a great exhibition-research. With *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico (The Encyclopedic Palace)*, Massimiliano Gioni, much more than presenting us with a list of contemporary artists, wishes to reflect on their creative urges and seems to push the question even further: what is the artists' world? The prospective interest goes so far as to search for relations with different worlds; thus the Exhibition presents works by contemporary artists, but also historical works, different references, and works that do not claim to be works of art but which are nonetheless compose the stimuli that allow us to imagine and dream beyond reality, dream another reality. That is, the visions that in the classical period helped arouse artists'

“aspirations,” and in modern times are the “obsessions” of the same; and to give tangible form to both, down to the present time when there is a real reversal. Today, as Gioni’s exhibition suggests, reality lays a plethora of images and visions on a lavishly decked out table; all these images strike us and, though we are unable to escape them, it is perhaps the artist who, if anyone, might pass through them unharmed, as Moses did in the Red Sea.”

The Exhibition draws inspiration from the model of a utopian dream by Marino Auriti who filed a design with the U.S. Patent office in 1955, depicting his Palazzo Enciclopedico (The Encyclopedic Palace), an imaginary museum that was meant to house all worldly knowledge. Auriti created a model of a 136-story building to be built in Washington D.C., which would stand seven hundred meters tall and take up over sixteen square city blocks.

“Auriti’s plan was never carried out, of course - says Massimiliano Gioni - but the dream of a universal, all-embracing knowledge crops up throughout the history of art and humanity, as one that eccentrics like Auriti share with many other artists, writers, scientists, and self-proclaimed prophets who have tried – often in vain – to fashion an image of the world that will capture its infinite variety and richness. Today, as we grapple with a constant flood of information, such attempts seem even more necessary and even more desperate.”

“Blurring the line between professional artists and amateurs, outsiders and insiders, the exhibition takes an anthropological approach to the study of images, focusing in particular on the realms of the imaginary and the functions of the imagination. What room is left for internal images – for dreams, hallucinations and visions – in an era besieged by external ones? And what is the point of creating an image of the world when the world itself has become increasingly like an image?”

*Il Palazzo Enciclopedico (The Encyclopedic Palace)* investigates the desire to see and know everything: it is a show about obsessions and about the transformative power of the imagination. The exhibition opens in the Central Pavilion with a presentation of Carl Gustav Jung’s *Red Book*. “In the vast hall of the Arsenale - redesigned for this occasion in collaboration with architect Annabelle Selldorf - the exhibition sketches a progression from natural forms to studies of the human body, to the artifice of the digital age, loosely following the typical layout of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cabinets of curiosities. Through the many examples of artworks and figurative expressions on view, including films, photographs, videos, bestiaries, labyrinths, performances and installations, *The Encyclopedic Palace* emerges as an elaborate but fragile construction, a mental architecture that is as fantastical as it is delirious.”

“*The Encyclopedic Palace* - concludes Gioni - is a show that illustrate a condition we all share: we ourselves are *media*, channeling images, or at times even finding ourselves possessed by images.”