

# Biennale Arte 2017

## VIVA ARTE VIVA

*Introduction to the Exhibition*  
by Christine Macel



Today, faced with a world full of conflicts and shocks, art bears witness to the most precious part of what makes us human, at a time when humanism is precisely jeopardized. Art is the ultimate ground for reflection, individual expression, freedom, and for fundamental questions. Art is the favorite realm for dreams and utopias, a catalyst for human connections that roots us both to nature and the cosmos that elevates us to a spiritual dimension. In this, art is the last bastion, a garden to cultivate above and beyond trends and personal interests. It stands as an unequivocal alternative to individualism and indifference. It builds us up and edifies us. At a time of global disorder, art embraces life, even if doubt ensues inevitably.

The role, the voice and the responsibility of the artist are more crucial than ever, within the framework of contemporary debates. It is in and through these individual initiatives that the world of tomorrow, although surely uncertain, is often best intuited by artists than others.

*Viva Arte Viva* is thus an exclamation, a passionate outcry for art and the state of the artist. *Viva Arte Viva* is a Biennale designed with artists, by artists and for artists, about the forms they propose, the questions they ask, the practices they develop and the ways of life they choose.

Rather than broaching a single theme, the exhibition offers a route that molds the artists' works and a context that favors access and understanding, generating connections, resonances and thoughts. The journey unfolds over the course of nine chapters, or families of artists, beginning with two introductory realms in the Central Pavilion, followed by another seven across the Arsenale through the Giardino delle Vergini. Each chapter represents in itself a Pavilion or *Transpavilion*, as it is transnational by nature but echoes the Biennale's historical organization into pavilions, the number of which has never ceased to grow.

This semantic nod addresses the often debated relevance of the national pavilions, whilst going beyond it, as each chapter mingles artists from all generations and origins. There is however, no physical separation between the various pavilions which flow together like the chapters of a book. From the *Pavilion of Artists and Books* to the *Pavilion of Time and Infinity*, these nine episodes tell a story that is often discursive and at times paradoxical with detours that mirror the world's complexities, a multiplicity of approaches and a wide variety of practices.

The exhibition is intended as an experience, an extrovert movement from the self to the other, towards a common space beyond defined dimensions, and onwards to the idea of a potential neo-humanism. This movement of the self towards the unknown, where experience and speculation are at the forefront is in and of itself a response to a conservative environment, defying bias, distrust and indifference.

*Viva Arte Viva* also seeks to convey a positive and prospective energy, which whilst focusing on young artists, rediscovers those passed away too soon or those who are still largely unknown despite the importance of their work. These discoveries and rediscoveries give way, in each pavilion, to a communion of artists from several generations, offering perspectives on questions that were often broached as early as the 1960's or the 1970's. These issues are revisited today by artists in today's world of constant anthropological and societal change. The artists' interpretations hinge on forms that reflect the concerns of their civil society. After all, art may not have changed the world, but it remains the field where it can be reinvented.

### ***The Pavilion of Artists and Books***

Starting with the *Pavilion of Artists and Books*, the exhibition reveals its premise, a dialectic that involves the whole of contemporary society, beyond the artist himself, and addresses the organization of society and its values.

Art and artists are at the heart of the exhibition, which begins by examining their practices, the way they create art, between idleness and action, *otium* and *negotium*. The Roman *otium* and its Greek predecessor *scholè*, originally understood as a privileged moment, is nowadays improperly translated as *idleness* of pejorative connotation, or *leisure*, which is not far removed from *entertainment*. The word *otium*, in contrast with the business world or *negotium*, from which the artist can never really escape; implies a space for free time, for inactivity and availability, a space of productive idleness and mind work, of quietness and action, a space where the work of art comes to be. The decision to become an artist in itself requires taking a stance in society, one that is today broadly popular and widely acknowledged, but is perceived nevertheless as an act of calling into question work—and its by-product: money—as the absolute value in the modern world. Being an artist means differentiating between the private individual and the public individual, not as a person of media but as someone who is confronted with the *res publica*. Indeed, while the artist produces artworks that are meant to be commercialized, the modes of production at his or her disposal include an alternative within which the need for inactivity or rather non-productive action, for mind wandering and research, remain paramount. This position inevitably has consequences on the way in which free time is perceived by society: it is no longer a time to be spent or even consumed, but a time for oneself.

For this reason, the exhibition opens with the piece *Artist at Work* by Mladen Stilinović, who regrettably passed away this year and who preached laziness as a necessary condition of being an artist. In 1978, he depicted himself sleeping on his own bed and later, in 2011, on the bench of one of his exhibitions. This notion of *otium* was also crucial for an artist such as Franz West. In Vienna, in 1973, the photographer Friedl Kubelka captured him on film lying on his childhood bed next to a wall decorated with his first pencil drawings. Throughout his life, he had photos taken of himself lying on sofas or recliners he had invented for thinking, conversing, reading or listening to classical music. From Vorobyev and Vorobyeva in Kazakhstan in the 1990's, to Frances Stark on the West coast of America in recent years, artists do not hesitate to use the very process of their art as subject, beginning with this position of relaxation conducive to thought. Raymond Hains was a precursor to this family of hyperactive idlers and compulsive readers, and he occupies an historical and central place within this group. His Breton private bed encompassing his "mental database" and evocative of a hypnagogic state of sleep, presides in the center of the room, surrounded by his famous Airbus suitcases full of annotated books, arranged by reading themes. The art world itself is the object of his sarcastic humor, as he tore several Biennale posters in 1964 and 1966 and defaced those of the national pavilions in 1968 or of an American Express card in 1987 in an allusion to the art market. Likewise, in his series of "macintoshages" the New York dealer Leo Castelli stands next to the Castelli garden center in Nice on the Cote d'Azur (1999). John Waters' five panels titled *Study Art (for Profit or Hobby)* shown in the Central Pavilion are inspired by the anonymous sculpture that greeted art students at the Baltimore School for the Arts, and develop in the same tone all the bad reasons for "making art" today. The artist's studio also becomes the subject and object of the artwork, in a continuation of the dialectic between action and inaction. Like Frances Stark, Dawn Kasper introduces her sofa into her work, but shifts from representation to action by moving her own studio to the Chini room for six months, working, performing and interacting with the spectators. This logic of action, this decision to mix the private with the public and to turn a workshop into an uninterrupted artwork, reflects the position of artists working in real time, as Philippe Parreno and Pierre Joseph have been doing since the beginning of the 1990's. Artists no longer show a private way of living, but render accessible and

alive an often mythologized studio when it increasingly resembles an office, a warehouse (like the programmatic artwork of the Emirate artist Hassan Sharif) or a collective work site.

The notion of the collective at the heart of art practices emerges particularly from the project proposal *Green light—An artistic workshop* by Olafur Eliasson. Both an artistic studio and a place of apprenticeship, proposing the assembly and production of modular lamps, *Green light* consists of a collaborative artwork conceived firstly for migrants and refugees living today in Venice or Venetia, as well as for students and the public. More generally, studios are no longer only places for introspective and solitary research.

Some have become full-scale laboratories that bring together multiple skills and also question the notion of hierarchy. No longer “factories” but rather workshops built around a communal life with shared qualifications and a horizontal, interconnected organization, both in work but also in everyday life. This is demonstrated by the communal meals taken in the kitchen which is conceived as part of the his studio’s thinking space. The thirty or so people grouped around Olafur Eliasson are thus involved in an artistic, political, ethical and aesthetic enterprise.

The studio is already open to the public sphere, like an agora or a parliament, according to the artist’s words. The artist is also active on a strictly sociopolitical level, through numerous activities linked to Africa, sustainable development or even the issue of migrants and their integration within the social body. Eliasson, then, is in the opposite position of Edi Rama who, from being an artist, has become a leading politician as Albania’s Prime Minister. Today his artistic activity takes place in the gaps between work time, as opposed to in his free time, as he transforms the doodles he makes during meetings into colored wallpaper which reaffirm the joyous release of scribbling on paper. Political questions relating to the artistic position sometimes emerge in a veiled manner.

This is the case of the paintings by the Afro-American artist McArthur Binion who turns his birth certificate into an abstract pattern, repeating the coded references to create a motif.

Whereas Sam Gilliam, whose painting detaches itself from the frame to become a sculpture reminiscent of Color Field Painting, affirms the link between his artistic work and the Black American movement. Abdoulaye Konate’s commitment to his home country Mali, both in his own work and as the creator of the Bamako Photography Encounters and director of the Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers Multimedia, endorses the artist’s sense of social responsibility.

In his work *Otium*, Franz West’s doodles scribble out the meaning of words and initiate thus a dialogue with writing that is both admiring and critical. This ambiguous relationship between the artist and the book, with text and in a wider sense with knowledge, is the theme of several works which shed light on the notion of the artist today. In an era described as post-Internet, the relationship between artists and the written word does not appear to have been damaged, but rather enriched with new meanings. The work of John Latham on the subject of the book, begun in the 1960’s and continued with the *Clusters* of the 1990’s, is seen as the embodiment of a radical and inspiring position similar to Raymond Hains. The book is depicted as an object of desire and of sculpture, where destructive urges find an outlet. The ambivalence of the artist in regards to the written word and especially to meaning, which the artist literally lacerates, transforming it into possibilities of color and movement or into spheres pierced by fragmented books, seems to forecast a period of deep transformation in terms of language, knowledge, the means to access knowledge and its place in society.

Even before Umberto Eco challenged the internet, Raymond Hains called himself a web artist, as if his memory replaced all search engines. Indeed, in the years 2000, he created works superposing images of open computer windows in order to create a dialogue between them. The duo Nunez and Rodriguez, young artists in their mid-twenties working together in the Philippines, are working in a similar direction, making books from fabric and placing them on tables for the public to handle like an ode to the knowledge they feel is vanishing from their generation. Geng Jianyi with his books of colors, Liu Ye with his paintings of book covers like miniatures, are both part of a

Chinese cultural era which reflects upon their own traditions and their dialogue with the West, from Mondrian to Nabakov. For Abdullah Al Saadi who works far from Emirate urban centers and studied painting in Japan, the book goes back to the tradition of scrolls and tells an intimate story. It is no longer an instrument of knowledge but rather an everyday companion, as illustrated also by Geng Jianyi. As for Irma Blank, she patiently inscribes and transcribes books covered in minute signs, creating a parallel world, a kind of personal diary which allows her to fill the cultural distance she experienced upon her move from Germany to Italy. Writing is thus detached from meaning and becomes a way of being beyond the limitations of language. This frugal and refined work combines a criticism of excess information with both a fascination for, and a rejection of, knowledge. Beyond her relationship with knowledge, which we will come back to later in an analysis of her project *Unpacking my Library*, the artist also defines herself always and forever in terms of art history itself. Because the idea of a contemporary art that eternally breaks with the past has lost its ideological pertinence since the 1980's, and indeed has been revisited by many, especially today. Cerith Wyn Evans, whose work links leisure with the dialogue of 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectual figures from Georges Bataille to Guy Debord, glorifies in the artist's all-consuming inner fire in *Pasolini Ostia Remix*. This romantic conception of the creative process is expressed in a sentence that is taken from Pasolini's screenplay of Oedipus Rex and reproduced in the form of fireworks, exploding on the same beach where the author was killed in 1975. A similar nostalgia, although here for historical contemporary art, is expressed in a video by Agnieszka Polska which attempts to reconstitute a performance that took place in 1968 by the Polish artist Włodzimierz Borowski. Ciprian Mureșan scrambles the masterpieces of art history from Masaccio to Giorgio Morandi in his patiently made palimpsests, until they are reduced to relics. On the facade of the Central Pavilion, Sam Gilliam creates a new *Drape* in tribute to Yves Klein and his famous IKB blue, whilst the Mondrian Fan Club, created by David Medalla and Adam Nankervis in 1991, pays homage to Piet Mondrian with their *Moveable Mondrian Pavilion* in a performance during the opening.

Paulo Bruscky, a major figure of conceptual and mail art in Brazil, creates in front of the façade a work imagined in 1973 entitled *ARTE SE EMBALA COMO SE QUER* which questions the "museification" of art in a characteristically subversive and dissenting spirit.

Philippe Parreno's *Puppets* created with Rirkrit Tiravanija in 2009, already announced an anthropological change. Artists become puppets which come alive with the help of a ventriloquist, ghosts not from the past, but from the present itself, where the idea of self falters. This empire of doubt and uncertainty which affects the self, even though neuroscience has smashed its very notion to smithereens, appears in the second chapter of the exhibition. Opening with the artist's wandering thoughts, with his studio, his earthly and spiritual food, with his material and mental work space; the exhibition develops organically in a series of pavilions, rooms or *stanze*, offering an experience to the visitors like a journey from interiority to infinity. A gradation takes place, beginning with the subject or the artist-individual and moving on to the relationship with others, with the environment, up to the most unresolved questions, whether scientific or metaphysical.

### ***The Pavilion of Joys and Fears***

The *Pavilion of Joys and Fears* thus explores the relationship between the individual and his or her own existence, his emotions and feelings or the ones he or she tries to generate. In a world shaken by conflicts, wars and increasing inequality that lead to populism and anti-elitism, subjective emotions resurface now more than ever. This forces us to reconsider the human being, not only as a reasonable being capable of building a new, free and fraternal world, but also how he grapples with his impulses and emotions, including the less noble ones of fear, anxiety or aggression. A vulnerable and fragile self comes to light. Hajra Waheed's work subtly combines these new feelings of alienation due to forced migrations or mass surveillance. With works by Tibor Hajas,

Marwan, Luboš Plný and Sebastian Diaz Morales, feelings of oblivion, distortion and suspension are evoked with all the more violence. Tibor Hajas, a legendary art figure in Hungary and defender of the Fluxus inspired anti-art movement, made impressive self-portraits at the end of the 1970's. In *Surface Torture*, the altered film negatives create a whitened face which seems to break off into layers. A similar feeling of disintegration permeates work by Marwan who, originally from Damas, moved to Germany in 1957. From the 1960's to 2010, his occasionally Christ like self-portraits painted in oils trace a process that is both pictorial and ontological of a self that slowly decomposes, twists, stretches and disappears into flat, coloured fragments. The Czech artist Luboš Plný constitutes a case apart from this family of artists where medium and affect are joined. His drawings obsessively dissect and examine bodies and organs, covering his works with collages and notes where faces become human or animal masks. Seated in a kind of shelter facing a video of a man suspended in a vast cosmos, the visitor is invited to a meditation session by Sebastian Diaz Morales. This floating individual in an immensity which he cannot control is the metaphor with which the Central Giardini Pavilion comes to a close, before the third chapter begins in the Arsenale. At the same time, several artists think of the individual in its most private dimensions, delving into their own relationships with their close ones. Kiki Smith's installation of ink drawings on Nepalese paper or on stained glass, brings together several masculine and feminine figures, in pairs or on their own, often sitting down, without for all that actually establishing any real dialogue as each is concentrated on his or her interiority. The complex architectural, video and audio arrangement imagined by Sung Hwan Kim, questions the relationship between a girl and her mother, his own niece as it happens, and who participates in his film in progress. He questions the different notions of attachment to his native country transmitted from generation to generation by his parents in Korea, whilst drawing from romantic operas where love is often linked to death. The paintings and works on paper of Firenze Lai similarly evoke disproportionately formed individuals, who are often isolated and sometimes close, in claustrophobic configurations such as in *Security System* or *Autism* which create a poignant feeling of incommunicability.

Andy Hope 1930 and Rachel Rose resort to fantasy, science fiction and cartoon-like imagery to explore this theme. The installation imagined by Andy Hope, an artist who voluntarily changed his birth date to 1930, creates a kind of trip through time, exploring the future with a video placed at the center of a group of paintings, drawings and sculptures. The video is situated after the future and shows a science fiction character Fran Athens whose encounters on Earth provoke different feelings of strangeness, melancholy and alienation. In the animated film *Lake Valley*, Rachel Rose explores the world of childhood in a poetic fashion, following the wanderings of a puppy that has left his home and his young mistress. These artists re-appropriate the self, its body and emotions, just as neuro science pushes us to do today, ruling in favor of Spinoza as opposed to Descartes. Human emotions usually so frowned upon in the hope that they can be suppressed, appear on the contrary for current science as the very driving force of survival and human evolution<sup>1</sup>. As the too-often forgotten source and home for our thoughts, they demand a reinvention of humanism grounded on reason which, far from being isolated, is connected to the reality of emotion.

### *The Pavilion of the Common*

Next on our journey, the *Pavilion of the Common* greets us in the Arsenale around the work of artists exploring the notion of the common world and the way to build a community as a means of

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Damasio, *L'Erreur de Descartes*, Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1995, and *Spinoza avait raison*, Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 2003.

countering individualism and self-interests, which represent a worrisome threat in today's troubling climate. This topic was particularly vibrant in the history of contemporary art from the late 1960's through the 1970's, and remains just as relevant to this day, although tarnished by the failings and disillusion of utopian dreams. The anthropological aspect is particularly important here, with historical works by Juan Downey or Maria Lai. At the end of the 1970's, Downey made a circular installation of television monitors, *The Circles of Fire*, around which a group of films is formed, produced during his explorations in the Yanomani territory in the Federal Reserve of Amazonia. As an artist living in New York, what can he possibly have in common with these tribes and their culture? This encounter, where he films and gives his camera to the Indians, reveals the desire not only of an ethologist artist, but of an artist questioning the issue of the common world, where conceptions of the world appear very different. This work is particularly meaningful today, as an echo of the thoughts of Viveiros de Castro in his *Métaphysiques cannibales*.<sup>2</sup> In a similarly anthropological vein, Maria Lai continually connects with her land and her community, sometimes in a literal sense by proposing territories, performances and stories where the use of a ribbon as a woven thread is a metaphor for this connection. In the small town of Ulassai where she was born in the heart of Sardinia, she invited residents from all generations to stretch the blue ribbon over several miles, as far as the mountain overlooking the town. Here, the common world created by *Legarsi alla montagna* (1981) is no longer about the encounter between an artwork and the spectator but rather, without any ideological pretension, between an entire country, its population and its land. From its poetry revealed to her by her teacher Salvatore Cambosu, author of the famous "Miele Amaro," to its implication in her community, Maria Lai's approach continues to create oral and material ways of establishing connections. Several artists have even embraced the participatory approach as a recurrent *modus operandi* that they implement with varying scales. The group formed by Miralda, Selz, Rabascall and Xifra at the beginning of the 1970's fell in line with the same enthusiastic and generous approach of free giving and festive sharing, revisiting their colorful rituals and meals for the Biennale. In the 1980's, Anna Halprin continued her *Planetary Dance* with different groups formed at each reactivation, where dance and spirituality combine. Since 1981, further to her *Circle the Earth* dance inspired by a shaman, Anna Halprin, a leader of women's civil rights, of peace and anti-racism, re-performs her planetary dance every year across the world, such as on the Mount Tamalpais in San Francisco where she began her career with a communal social action. David Medalla reactivates his major work from the end of the 1960's, *A Stitch in Time*, inviting visitors to endlessly re-stitch the work in a kind of spiritual fraternity with a certain Lee Mingwei who today mends torn clothes, as if this mending was a way of stitching together a common world.

Yorgos Sapountzis builds colored tents, shelters where people come together, whilst he activates common moments around performances that associate the Norwegian musician Oyvind Torvund. In a minimal and processual tradition, Franz Erhard Walter and Rasheed Araeen offer modes of activating their works where the form extends to, or is recomposed by, the visitor's presence. In his steel performative works from the 1970's, or his *Wallformation* from the 1980's, Franz Erhard Walter offers works where the spectator's body embraces sculpture, to be activated over and over again. At the same period, Rasheed Araeen, a Pakistani artist living in London since 1964, a major voice of black culture and what has been called the Third World, founder in 1978 of the activist review Black Phoenix and then Third Text in 1987, author of the seminal exhibition "The Other Story" which definitively changed perspectives on African and Asian art, invents a participatory,

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<sup>2</sup> Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Métaphysiques cannibales*, Métaphysiques Paris: PUF, 2009. Observing that anthropology can no longer simply pretend to reconstitute foreign cultures objectively, because it encounters cosmologies that exclude the division of nature and culture, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro proposes to see it as a site of metaphysical experimentation where the "others" are not objects but witnesses to an alternative way of thinking.

minimal art, which refuses composition, symmetry or hierarchy. The common world proposed by the installation *Zero to Infinity*, made of one hundred hollow and colored cubes that the spectator can redistribute across the space, here takes on a political resonance, steeped in the artist's commitment in a postcolonial rereading of the arts. Marcos Avila Forero and Martin Cordiano bring this Pavilion to a close with more ambivalent works where the loss of the common combines with a sense of longing, or a feeling of having reached a dead end. In his video *Atrato* and in echo of Juan Downey's work, Marcos Avila Forero attempts to recreate the ancient African practice of Tamboleo with a group of Afro- Columbians. This practice consists of hitting the surface of a river with the hands in order to produce music. This return to forgotten roots in a country riven by civil war, thanks to the energy of a few individuals united in the joyful revival of tradition, does not prevent us from hearing the noise of surrounding guerilla gunfire. Martin Cordiano, exiled according to his own words from Argentina and living in Great Britain, builds *Common Places*, rooms isolated from each other of which only the lower part of the walls has been kept and containing coloured balls that bump into each other, both separately and in groups. How do you build something in common in a world that has failed to realize all its projects of equality and fraternity, other than by attempting to recreate, here and there, at the micropolitical level, conditions for new possibilities?

### *The Pavilion of the Earth*

Likewise the *Pavilion of the Earth* is centered on environmental, animal and planetary utopias, observations and dreams. From communitarian utopias, reminiscent of the ecological and esoteric ideas of the OHO group in Slovenia of the 1970's, to Sam Lewitt's current theories about the ties between climate and capitalist strategies, as well as the individual fictions of Petrit Halilaj; all conjure both a sense of melancholy and a profound joy. This is precisely the feeling created by the impressive soundvideo installation by Charles Atlas which projects images of a sunset filmed in Florida to the sound of bagpipes. This elegy to nature is accompanied by the voice of the iconic New York drag queen The Lady Bunny, reciting a list of political issues, before exploding into a disco song about a broken relationship. A second projection, placed in front of the screen, shows the ticking numbers of an electronic clock as it counts through time. This masterful Vanitas takes us back to the beginnings of ecology and places the work of art within an extended scope that reaches through the environment and life itself. Several works thus testify to an activist spirit linked to a conception of art as a total experience connected to life itself. For example, green waters coloration was created for the first time in Venice in 1968 and then again in 1970, by the Argentinian artist Uriburu, before he developed it to include several rivers across the world in condemnation of the destruction of land in Latin America and Bonnie Ora Sherk's actions in her city of San Francisco that she has continued to develop since the 1970's. After her experiences with *The Farm* (1974-2005), a farm situated at the heart of the city, Bonnie Ora Sherk, continues her research on an art that opens onto the environment with *The Living Library*.

For the OHO group in Slovenia, every day and collective life was also the driving force behind their actions in a natural space, combining conceptualism and ecological feeling by introducing the artistic community into rural space. After the group broke up, each member followed his own approach whilst Marko Pogačnik, UNESCO artist for peace in 2016, turned to "lithopuncture," healing the earth in a spirit of esoteric spirituality as far as the territory of Venice itself. Fifty years after their debates however, the multifaceted group THE PLAY who have just been given a fully deserved retrospective exhibition at the National Museum of Art in Osaka, pursue their outdoor ephemeral and marginal actions in nature, in a systematic rejection of the world of individualist and sedentary progress. Acting on the fringes of the art system, they perform their action *IE: THE PLAY HAVE A HOUSE*, drifting along the canals of the Arsenale in their floating and precarious house. Shimabuku recognizes his debt to, and admiration of, this tutelary group. His installation of

videos and glass cases with objects build stories of everyday life, nature and the animal world that he particularly cherishes.

In a minimal and frugal aesthetic he introduces a sometimes surrealist fiction in the form of improbable scenes, such as monkeys encountering a pile of snow in a summer landscape. As the inheritor of the aesthetic of his peers, Shimabuku injects fantasy into his often mischievous works, revealing his thoughts particularly on the ties between man and technology in a malicious and lucid way.

Until his recent death, the little known Inuit artist Kananginak Pootoogook was a witness to the destruction of his native land of Cape Dorset. His graphic work reveals the evolution of the indigenous world as it is progressively contaminated by intruders, missionaries, dealers, policemen or whale hunters, documenting for his community what the Qallunaaq (white men) changed in their world. After the events of March 11 2011 at Fukushima, Koki Tanaka also saw his world fall apart. For his installation in Venice he chose to walk for four days from his house in Kyoto to a nuclear power station, not Fukushima which is still closed six years after the event, but to the closest station to where he lives, following the road which had previously transported fish.

Sam Lewitt is concerned with issues of energy conversion and industrial transformation and he became interested in the site of the Volpi factory in Porto Marghera on the edge of Venice. He borrowed lamps from the factory and set them up as part of an installation which reflects upon the production of light, also reproducing a facsimile of a technical document on the light emissions of the Italian electric company ENEL.

With his piece *Future Fossil Spaces*, Julian Charriere dug up the Argentinian earth to extract the columns of salt built up over time. He arranges them next to lithium taken from the same land which represents the material of the future and is often used in electronic elements. Without any sense of militancy, he evokes however the overexploitation of the earth, the possibility of the extinction of certain resources as well as their economic and political consequences.

Thu Van Tran's project similarly questions the production of rubber both within the historical perspective of the exploitation of the rubber tree forests during colonial times, in particular by Michelin in Vietnam, and through the prism of the unstable, sensual material itself. Michel Blazy creates a hybrid from an industrial product such as sneakers and the plant world, grafting natural life onto the artificial, while he undertakes a slow destruction through the dripping of water over newspapers, creating aesthetic surprises from the results.

Several artists introduce animals into their concerns at a time when the animal is at the heart of many discussions in an attempt to stop their undue exploitation, as almost 60% of species have already been eradicated from the planet by man himself. In her film *Les Immobiles*, Marie Voignier adopts a documentary point of view with her fixed camera, where the voice of a hunter comments an album of souvenir hunting photos, reinforcing feelings of repugnance in face of these crimes by wealthy tourists.

Others evoke animals in a poetic and fictional proximity. Few have been witnesses to as violent changes to his original land as Petrit Halilaj. Born in Kosovo, he returns regularly to his town Pristina to visit his close relatives who are often a part of his creative process. Halilaj articulates his personal story around the political situation in installations where animals constitute the world in which he has chosen to reinvent himself. For Venice, he works with butterflies who rest and hide beneath the roof of the Arsenale, seeking shelter for sleep. The same elements of fantasy, humor and sensibility penetrate the works of Erika Verzutti whose sculptural verve profits from her capacity to employ multiple materials, from clay to concrete and bronze. Pets, cats, dogs, tortoises are part of this organic and vital world that she builds with a mixture of self-assurance and fragility. Finally Michelle Stuart, in a conceptual approach close to mysticism, continues her thoughts on nature and time begun at the end of the 1960's with her first *Earth Works*, where photographs, fabricated objects and natural objects drawn from flora and fauna meet between



nostalgia and the sense of a future unknown. The Pavilion of Traditions that were once rejected in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Enlightenment and later by secular modernity, have re-emerged in the worst sense, namely fundamentalism and conservatism, sparking rejection and nostalgia for a past believed to be better. The past thirty years have seen modernism and its faith in a new man stagger and fall, inaugurating a period of “liquid modernity”<sup>3</sup> according to Zygmunt Bauman. They have nevertheless provided the opportunity, in the field of art, to question tradition no longer from the point of view of customs and behaviors, often associated with religion or morality, but through the lens of dialogue between the old and the recent. The last few years have seen a plethora of artists explore not only contemporary or recent history, but also a more distant past, as if fired by the fever of archaeology, excavation, re-interpretation and reinvention. A sign of unstable times, tainted by the feeling of a by-gone era that must open up new values, art delves into long past historical references in an urge for legitimacy, rebirth and reinvention. Hao Liang, a young Chinese artist, reveals this change of paradigm, reinterpreting the classic *Eight Views of Xiaoxiang* as if he wished to reinvent the figure of the literary scholar at a time when the founding traditional culture of the only lasting civilization in history has been effaced. Likewise, the Spanish artist Teresa Lanceta questions notions of filiation both in her thesis on 20<sup>th</sup> century textile art and in her patient weaving work inspired by traditional Moroccan art. Michele Ciacciofera immerses himself in his Sardinian history and the mysteries that still surround today the Neolithic *Domus de Janas*—rooms or tombs dug out of stone, whose function is unclear and which popular legend has made into dwellings for feminine figures—in order to imagine a contemporary “fairy house.” The essential role of women in Sardinian culture and in the transmission of tradition inspired this work where artisanal practices from tapestry to ceramic are revisited in a universe marked by links with myth and ancient cosmologies, where memory and game allow for a reinvention of archetypes. Memory is also essential for the Mexican artist Cynthia Gutierrez who often refers to antique statuary as well as the traditional techniques kept alive by Mexican women. Her sculptures combine and mingle scattered elements from her culture, rearticulating and combining a Spanish inheritance with native lore. The same process of hybridization is at the heart of the project *Translated Vases* by the Korean artist Yeessookyung, who emerged in the 1990’s and who explores cultural stereotypes by associating ancient with contemporary techniques. *Translated Vases* evokes the tradition of Korean ceramic vases, their systematic destruction and their consequential reconfiguration into sculptures that are both elegant and deformed as if affected by unnatural growths. Yeessookyung’s re-reading of ancient traditions and in particular the tension between refinement and the rejection of codified perfection can also be found in her performances such as *Chasing the Sun’s Orbit* created for the Biennale which reinvents an ancient Korean dance from the Joseon dynasty. Francis Upritchard, who left her native New Zealand and moved to London at the end of the 1990’s, creates sculptures of people or animals in an unusual style that seems to arise from an imaginary archeology where references to the Maori population combine with craftwork and modernist design. The depictions of her figures, placed on pedestals, activate a kind of silent room where ethnological references rub shoulders with the most diverse elements of art history. The modernist tradition remains a central reference point for Leonor Antunes whose minimal works, using both natural and industrial materials, always rely upon a particular attention to the material environment where her work is situated. If she often refers to the Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi, here she plays on the tradition of Murano glass and the indelible presence of Carlo Scarpa in Venice which guided her research for her new installation at the Arsenale, where leather, cork, brass and lamps mingle in an arrangement that is both airy and subtle. The traditional

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<sup>3</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Polity*, 2010.

architecture of his country is a constant source of inspiration for Sopheap Pich who, after fleeing Cambodia, was able to settle elsewhere and develop a work based entirely on existing or renewed handcraft skills, in particular wickerwork techniques. Using bamboo and natural pigments, Sopheap Pich creates organic sculptures and more recently sculptures inspired by religious Asian architecture, such as his *Monument 2*, as well as new drawings. Made with bamboo and natural pigments, they evoke a relation to materials taken directly from the earth, as well as an awareness of time, not in the sense of history, but of daily practice and an internal rhythm bordering on meditation. In the reconfiguration of his installation *Visible Labor*, Gabriel Orozco also explores a tradition, which is not his own but that of Japanese architecture which he discovered when he moved to Tokyo in early 2015 as part of his habit of immersing himself in different cultural contexts. Craftwork is suggested here through the use of wooden beam fragments originating from old Japanese houses and temples, and in particular of both linear and angled joints made without any metal pieces. This tradition of wooden joints, called respectively “Tsugite” and “Shuguchi,” is revisited through a reflection on fullness and the void, whilst the painting of the extremities in white evokes the protective painting of the original buildings. The presence of small Buddha figurines with different hand movements, of small toy cars, of red Ferraris, placed in various holes offer an unprecedented and humorous dialogue between the traditions of Zen Buddhism and modernity as symbolized by the car, that Orozco had already re-interpreted in his famous *DS*. Finally, Japan inspired an unexpected musical piece by Anri Sala, derived from the impression of wallpaper. The barrel organ, the musical score or the music box are already present in his video and sculptural work, as possibilities of both visual and sound production. Here a printing roll for Japanese wallpaper invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century becomes a music machine producing not only a visual imprint but also sound, inverting inside with outside, and transforming traditional, formal perfection into an original sound experience.

### *The Pavilion of Shamans*

When in 2013 Ernesto Neto began his adventure with the Huni Kuin population living in Jordao in Brazil, he started a new cycle in his work, erupting with surprising thoughts. If his series of installations and actions implicate the Huni Kuin, it is not because he convinced them to become actors in a museum setting suffering from a lack of exoticism, but because he judged that it was time for them to heal a sick world. The artist thus falls within a line of “shaman artists” or “missionaries” as per Duchamp’s definition, and are stirred by an internal vision. The shaman figure, embodied by Beuys, from whom few managed to recover, and was mostly – in retrospect – underestimated, takes on today a new dimension, at a time where the need for care and spirituality is greater than ever. This desire to transform art into an action that is both aesthetic and healing characterizes several recent works. Ayrson Heracito thus creates a work that attempts to exorcise and purify the exploitation and slavery of colonial Portugal, as experienced by the Afro-Brazilians. Familiar with the cultural practice of Baba Egun, originally from Africa and still in use in Bahia, in which people communicate with the dead (egun), Heracito made a performance accompanied by a film and photographs in two houses showing visible traces of slavery from the past. In the House of Slaves of Goree Island, as in the Casa da Torre in Bahia, he performed purification rites in a kind of diptych linking the two sides of the Atlantic. With the help of long leaves, ghosts from the past like evil energies of the present are literally chased away with the repeated movements of a broom, banishing history whose consequences continue to unfold today. A similar resistance to violence led Jelili Atiku, an activist artist fighting for human rights in Lagos, to develop performances in an attempt to transform his rituals into a sociopolitical art against terrorism, fundamentalism and racism. The title of his performance, pronounced in Pidgin English in Nigeria, recalls a colonial past and evokes the possibility of resorting to life-saving feminine energies, a central part of the ancestral Yoruba culture. For his performance, which will resemble a

gigantic procession in the Arsenale, he will be wearing a costume and riding a white horse, leading dozens of women of different nationalities carrying gourds and ritual figurines in an atmosphere of sound dominated by the Hu song in order to activate another level of consciousness. This type of un-conceptual performance, deeply rooted in healing, also inspired several works by Naufus Ramirez- Figueroa which also drew from his knowledge of activist theatre, thanks to his own parents. His installation and performance project *Third Lung* proposes a kind of therapy by sound through sound sessions and parades by performers throughout the Arsenale. Sculptures build an environment inspired by volcanic earth, punctured with orifices in which can be found the ceramic bird whistles used during therapeutic sessions. The performer's body is linked to the spectator's, with the exchange of breath through this sculpture constituting a kind of third lung.

The wisdom of Zen spirituality and Sufism is behind the installation *Taqiya-Nor* by Younes Rahmoun, who lives in Tetouan, where light combines with traditional Moroccan art. 77 colorful woolen hats sitting on round lamps placed on the ground form clusters of 3 to 12 elements around a central axe, like the intertwining branches of a tree—the number 77 represents the different degrees of faith in the Koran. His work, whose title highlights “that which is veiled” and “the light” thus conjures up notions of illumination and awakening that the artist seeks himself in his practice, whilst opening the way for the spectator.

As for Rina Banerjee, she makes sculptures in a style that is both realistic and fantastic, accumulating commonplace consumer objects and natural materials like fetishes evocative of Indian iconography. These hybrid totems question the notion of exoticism and its colonial roots, whilst summoning a mythology and imaginary rituals. Finally, the mask worn by the character filmed by Enrique Ramirez in *Un hombre que camina* serves in Chilean popular ceremonies as a means for exorcising the devil “nortino” embodied by the Spanish conquistador, as an incarnation of evil itself. Filmed at a high altitude in Uyuni, on the icy plateaus of Bolivia, the masked man calls to mind the last journey. Walking becomes a metaphysical ritual which allows man to master his ultimate solitude when faced with his own passing.

### *The Dionysian Pavilion*

With her sculptures built like relics of nightdresses and female underwear, made with superposed additions of latex which solidify into a second skin, Heidi Bucher created in the 1970's an intimate and erotic universe where sensuality is associated with a fluid and floating marine world. The work's very process, like her references to animals such as fish, mollusks or dragonflies, reveals the artist's constant need for transformation, sustained by a desire to live intensely. She also questioned the traditional role of women, within the couple as within the family, by humorously objectifying layers of clothes, this feminine “trousseau” as she calls it, thus operating a liberating metamorphosis. At the same time, when the Lebanese artist Huguette Caland dared in the 1970's to celebrate the female body and its sexuality in an eminently conservative Beirut society, she affirmed her desire to celebrate life and pleasure with joy and a sense of humor that animated all her work. A similar hymn to the female sex and ecstasy animates Pauline Curnier Jardin's baroque installation inspired by burlesque theatre entitled *Grotta Profunda Approfundita* where the artist proposes the literal penetration of a vagina. A first video presents the adventures of Bernadette Soubirous who, after a divine apparition, discovers ultimate ecstasy during an orgasmic bacchanal. Beneath this outlandish appearance unfolds the thoughts of a storyteller, where the boundary between fiction and reality is broken to create a re-appropriation and a defiant celebration of the female body.

A line of women like the amazons that Zilia Sanchez describes, illustrate this need to get out of oneself, combined with the Dionysian values of laughter and lightness. As Zilia Sanchez watched a sheet fly off the roof of her house in Havana in the 1950's, as it was lifted up by the wind and

wrapped itself around a pipe, she had the idea of taking her canvases down from a horizontal position and blowing them up into forms, giving volume and depth to her paintings.

The third dimension that then appeared in her works was not simply an architectonic play on forms, as references to the female body quickly inserted themselves creating “erotic topologies” as the artist called them. Sanchez thus develops an organic, eccentric abstraction, as Lucy Lippard describes, both sensual and full of life. In her works of the 1970’s and 1980’s eruptions, nipples, or slits arise, giving her paintings erotic volumes whilst *Amazonas* (1993) clearly evokes the legendary warriors of Greek mythology.

Eileen Quinlan uses her own body and that of a close friend as the subject of her photographs, taken after her second pregnancy. As she explains, the body of a forty year old woman is no longer the object of media attention, while she attempts to explore its erotic dimension both as an object of desire and as a desiring body, from outside as from the inside. She finds the tools for her complex images in the bathroom, under the shower, scrutinizing her own body and its changes, pressing it against the glass and magnifying it in an unexpected play on black and white stains, induced by the development of the photos in water from the shower itself.

In a different vein, Maha Malluh’s works evoke in subtle fashion a femininity which is restricted or inhibited by the imprecations of fundamentalism. For her large wall panel *Food for Thought “Amma Baad,”* Maha Malluh collected traditional wooden dishes used by women to cook bread in her hometown of Ryad, as well as the preaching cassettes repeating urgent recommendations on how to behave. The arrangement of colorful cassettes forms Arab words, veiling and unveiling notions of temptation and prohibition which still immure certain women in obscurantism. Yet the Arab world is also celebrated by women, particularly by its singers and its divas with their enchanting voices. Over the past few years Kader Attia has researched and collected songs from the Arab world, taking a particular interest in transgender voices. In his installation for the Biennale, he brings together a group of films of singers and links them to systems that, in the transmission of frequencies, draw with couscous grains different forms that recall the uniqueness of each voice, above and beyond gender and in reference to a phenomenon highlighted by the physicist and composer Ernst Chladni in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Dancing and singing are a means of retrieving a dimension where new states of consciousness seem possible. Mariechen Danz flirts with excess and immoderation whilst using the organic body from the inside and from the outside as a reference point for her sculptures and performances where she stages herself as a singer, reactivating in this way her pop music group UNMAP.

Nevin Aladağ reinvents her performance *Raise the Roof* and proposes a dance where the performers isolate themselves in music with their headphones in order to create a new soundtrack based only on the sound of their tapping heels, just as she makes musical instruments vibrate or bounce in an urban context in her recent video *Traces*. Jeremy Shaw explores the alteration of states of consciousness by combining ethological and scientific research. Through the series *Towards Universal Pattern Recognition* based on photographs, he accentuates facial expressions through kaleidoscopic, optical effects to create an experience of ecstasy that is either artificial or religious. His film *Liminals* is a new chapter in this series around the evolution of the human being in the years 2050, examining virtual reality as a desire for transcendence.

### ***The Pavilion of Colors***

According to well-known neuroscientific studies, colors do not exist in themselves but are the result of a cognitive function performed by the human brain and eyes as they decipher reality. Colors thus appear to be a particularly subjective source of emotion, which asks to reconsider the relevance of phenomenological approaches to art. With a fine balance between subtlety and transparency, light and spirituality, haptic experience and visual explosion, loaded sometimes with anthropological even political connotations, the *Pavilion of Colors* can be described as the

fireworks at the end of the journey through the Arsenale, where all the questions presented in the preceding pavilions come together to provide what might be described as an “out-of-self” experience prior to the final chapter. At the entrance the immense work *Brésil (Guarani)* by Abdoulaye Konate unfolds, combining both formal and socio-political concerns. For him, color can be understood in its anthropological dimension. Here he uses the indigo blue in recollection of its cultivation in Brazil during colonial times and as a means of evoking the Amazonian population of the Guarani, that he likens to certain Malian tribes with which he is familiar. Color is also linked to the work of women weaving fabrics, like the assistants that then patiently sew them together. Similarly, in Hale Tenger’s video *Balloons*, the coloured balloons float and then explode on the river Bosphorus, creating a beautiful show inspired by a game of popping the balloons to form a visual ballet caught between two extremes, as a metaphor for the psychological and political tensions present in Turkey today. In addition to these works, the artists throw themselves physically into materials and color precisely because, as emphasized by Peter Miller author of a cinematographic work and creator of coloured, musical atmospheres through his talent as a “magician” of film, it is difficult to put color into words, to capture it, to describe it.

Riccardo Guarneri has made it one of his obsessions in his pictorial work which he links to research on light, in an approach where artistic issues find their equivalent in more existential questionings: “color is a reflection of the soul, the reproduction of psychical happiness and suffering of creation, the intensely quest. Intensity and tension make color become a holy phenomenon, an act of faith in painting.”<sup>4</sup>

In his recent canvases, Guarneri associates geometric forms with painting in search of transparency through the fluidity of watercolors, where the perceptive experience becomes incredibly subtle, mixing with the surrounding light, even glorifying light in color. In this context, Karla Black’s sculptural and haptic research resonates in an even sharper manner. Similarly, she uses coloured matter without defining precise forms, by means of cellophane paper in pastel colors or materials taken from cosmetics or cooking, such as sugar or powder. Her limited palette, her moving colors constitute “states of possibility” according to the artist. They attract whilst allowing for only a visual approach, as they cannot be touched, and thus become objects of fascination and desire.

For his part, Giorgio Griffa a major figure of Italian analytical painting, makes work where a sacred even metaphysical dimension, scientific questioning and physics are inseparable from his work on color which he began at the end of the 1960’s. His new works associate color with rhythm and light in their spiritual dimension.

Reproducing Agnes Martin’s words “you get light enough and you levitate,” Griffa paints colors in light brushstrokes on unprimed, un-stretched canvases, as if he were playing music with painting. Gay, light and deep, his colors have no margins and spill into freedom. Alongside him, Dan Miller’s drawings with their saturated lines of color, throw us into a materiality where the meaning of the words describing his everyday life disappears. Revealing nothing of his life as an author, suffering from autism and epilepsy, they show the intricacies between organization and chaos, in an exaltation of bright colors.

Likewise, Judith Scott encircles colored objects in a web of threads, creating fascinating sculptures like fetishes which peopled her life at the Creative Growth Centre of Oakland. Threads and colors here lead back to childhood, to transitional objects which develop a creative space through play.

A frequent visitor of flea markets, Shaver also collects ordinary objects that she always chooses in different colors and either sells as they are or arranged into sculptures in her shop Henry opened in 1994. She also uses them for installations where the conceptual vies with the decorative in a

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<sup>4</sup> Riccardo Guarneri, in “Some Thoughts about the color,” in Enrico Crispolti (edited by), *La pittura in Italia. Il Novecento/3. Le ultime ricerche*, Milan: Electa, 1994.

flamboyant style. Color is taken from industrial objects that sometimes border on kitsch and testify to the popular culture of the American middle class, and is celebrated in its ornamental dimension as opposed to a certain scientific decorum.

Sheila Hicks who followed Josef Albers' teachings on the theory of colors at Yale University, discovered textile art in Latin America at the end of the 1950's and made it her hallmark. In Venice she has created an immense installation of coloured wool, a Baoli designating a meeting place in India. Her coloured, hanging bundles of wool are both an artwork bringing the central aisle of the Corderie to a close, and a resting place which goes beyond the differences between art and textile design and creates a flamboyant creation. Facing her, Matsutani, a Japanese artist of the second Gutai generation living in Paris since 1966, has devoted his life to paintings, installations and performances which are sometimes linked within the same work. After a period dedicated to the exploration of all colors, Matsutani focused on black in 1977, in a concentrated, Zen approach evocative of the immanent transcendence characteristic of this spirituality. The work he has created for the Biennale is conceived of in dialogue with Sheila Hicks' installation and consists of a performance where a bundle filled with black ink slowing drips onto a long, white canvas placed beneath it, thus inaugurating issues broached in the Pavilion of Time and Infinity.

### *The Pavilion of Time and Infinity*

What form would a metaphysical approach to art take? Time as a flow of continuous mutations and impermanent states that eventually lead to death, has inhabited the work of artists since the 1970's, when conceptual performance combined thoughts on deep time and the inevitable fall.

Reformulated by artists since the 1990's at the time of "presentism," or suspended time and "hyper-instantaneousness," the notion of time re-emerges today with a new metaphysical quality, within borgesian mazes and speculations of a future that is already embedded in the present, or in an ideal infinity. In face of the lagoon, the artist, in this instance Bas Jan Ader, disappears or reinvents himself as "improved" through the power of hypnosis, according to Salvatore Arancio's work *MIND AND BODY BODY AND MIND*. With *El Hombre con el Hacha y otras situaciones breves*, Liliana Porter explores first and foremost the improbable links between cause and effect, through objects purchased in flea markets and placed on pedestals as if a maelstrom had triggered their explosion, going so far as disemboweling a piano. Fascinated by time in its continuity as well as memory, she subjects them to a principle of uncertainty.

Edith Dekyndt creates a work that unfolds in Sisyphean manner over six months, where a performer constantly sweeps dust following the movements of a luminous, motorized rectangle. Repetition and variation, united with the impossibility of definitively completing an action, characterizes this undertaking, where the eternal return is never exactly the same.

As an observer of the states of matter and the "fascinating existence of things,"<sup>5</sup> Dekyndt is captivated by the appearance and disappearance of phenomena, from the microscopic to the macroscopic and by the difficulty of capturing the moment and a stable state. *Square*, the installation by Liu Jianhua procures, on the contrary, a feeling of the stabilized suspension of matter. Round forms in golden porcelain and in different sizes are placed on the dark coloured metal plates on the floor, creating a kind of cosmogony. Like drops fixed in state, the sculptures also represent objects of desire, the symbols of wealth so sought after by the capitalist world and notably in contemporary China. Liu Jianhua, whose practice combines the traditions of China and Pop culture, criticizes consumer society and produces a work that not only provokes thought of a sociopolitical nature but also of a spiritual nature that inhabits her way of being. The following

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<sup>5</sup> Julien Foucart, "Speed of Life" – conversation with Edith Dekyndt," in *Edith Dekyndt. I Remember Earth*, Brussels: Facteur Humain Editions, 2009, p. 103.

installation by Alicja Kwade which fills the next colonnaded space creates an environment where the question of time is central: different states of the same object, as if modified several times over, are interspersed across the room whilst mirrors produce reflections that provoke certain perceptual doubts between reality and its double. A performance organized at different moments of the exhibition confronts the spectator with two almost identical people who appear in specific places at specific times throughout the installation, thus creating an effect of "deja vu." This phenomenon, well known to neuroscientists, constitutes a short-circuit moment in the brain creating the impression of a repeated event. Memory is also thus questioned, in a reflection upon psychic time and its absence of linear temporality.<sup>6</sup>

Arriving at the Giardino delle Vergini, the visitor encounters a second work by Alicja Kwade in the form of a constellation of different coloured stones, the floating house by THE PLAY as well as the installation by Kishio Suga for the Gaggiandre and discovers, in the tower facing the lagoon, the famous 16mm black and white film by Bas Jan Ader showing him clinging to a tree branch above a stream until his inevitable fall. This conceptual artist, who has become a myth since his voluntary or accidental disappearance at sea at the age of 33 off the coast of England, is deliberately presented facing the Venetian waters as an evocation of his disappearance, of death and an afterlife. Fiete Stolte's sculpture *Printing my Steps* comes after and reproduces a cast of the artist's two feet in copper incrusting the wooden floor and also thus evoking an absent presence whilst Zhou Tao's video creates a futurist world which is in fact that of today. The borgesian maze created by Sebastian Diaz Morales with *Pasajes IV*, the illusion of a door opening onto a blue, elusive space in Vadim Fiškin's video installation *Doorway*, or Attila Csorgo's *Clock Work* piece projects in a handcrafted fashion, the sign of infinity and thus concludes this wandering through the unknown, the uncertain and the infinite both in their scientific and metaphysical dimensions.

Many other works are presented throughout the Biennale, in the Giardino delle Vergini, either in permanent form during the exhibition or in the form of ephemeral performances allowing the artists in question to create a second work, with the exception of Michael Beutler who installs his *Shipyards* at the end of the exhibition in echo of the Arsenal's past activities, or Hassan Khan who sets the Giardino delle Vergini to music.

In this way Matsutani presents *A Circle for Venetian garden*, a new version of his work *Circle* from 1998, enclosing a tree, whilst Michel Blazy presents *Forêt de balais*, and Erika Verzutti a *Pet Cemetery* in reference to the graves of Peggy Guggenheim's dogs in the garden of her Venetian museum. Over twenty performances will also take place during the opening days, and streamed live on the Biennale's website and in a room in the Arsenale, whereas others by Lee Mingwei and Dawn Kasper in the Central Pavilion and Edith Dekyndt in the Arsenale will run throughout the Biennale.

Parallel projects and events follow the same curatorial premise, which is to place artists at the heart of the exhibition. The catalog is exclusively dedicated to the artists who are invited to present visual and textual documentation about their practice and their environment. Artists are the guiding force behind *Viva Arte Viva* in more ways than one.

In addition to their participation in the exhibition, they will be given the opportunity to be heard. Every week during the six months of the exhibition, artists will host a *Tavola Aperta* (*Open Table*) and meet visitors over a casual lunch to hold a lively conversation about their practice. These biweekly events will be organized in two dedicated spaces refurbished for this purpose in front of the Central Pavilion of the Giardini and in the Sala d'Armi in the Arsenale.

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<sup>6</sup> Andre Green, *Le Temps eclate*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2000.

A space will also be created in both exhibition venues for the *Artist's Practices Project*, a series of short videos made by the artists about themselves and their way of working. In the weeks preceding the opening of the exhibition, a new video will premiere every day on the Biennale's website, giving the public the opportunity to become familiar with the participating artists even before the exhibition opens and constituting thus a permanent archive. These two projects are open to all artists in the Biennale. The artists representing the National Pavilions are welcome to host their own *Tavola Aperta* (*Open Table*) event during the rest of the week.

They are also invited to join the *Artist's Practices Project* with their videos. *Viva Arte Viva* thus hopes to reinforce and build on the unity of the Biennale around the artists themselves.

Finally, the project titled *Unpacking My Library*, inspired by Walter Benjamin's essay published in 1931,<sup>7</sup> allows the artists of *Viva Arte Viva* to compile a list of their favorite books.

This is both a way to get to know the artists better and a source of inspiration for the public.

The list of books will be published in the exhibition and in the catalog. The books listed by all the participating artists will be available to visitors in an installation created by the poet and artist franck leibovici in the Central Pavilion, *the training (an artwork for other artwork, for later and after)* which explores the works and practices of the artists as did his book (*des forms de vie*): *une écologie des pratiques artistiques*.

These documents, which form a large part of the catalog, reveal how the artist represents him or herself, how certain generational changes have taken place in the way in which artists choose to position themselves, while the texts they propose shed light on their practices and their relationships with exhibition curators, critics, theory, even life itself. As franck leibovici writes in this book,—who better than an artist is able to conclude this reflection ?—, the research undertaken in the course of *Viva Arte Viva* offers another way of seeing art and artists, another direction rather than any definitive answers.

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<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Unpacking my Library*, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.