

What to See At The Venice Biennale

At the 57th Venice Art Biennale next month, expect Nigerian performance art, Welsh poetic audio-collage and a Chilean installation of 1,500 Mapuche masks.

The art fair will feature 85 international participants in the historic pavilions at the Giardini, the Arsenal, and the city of Venice. Antigua and Barbuda, Kiribati and Nigeria will be participating for the first time.

Conceived by French curator Christine Macel, the exhibition this year is titled Viva Arte Viva because "it's 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," she said in a statement. "Viva Arte Viva also seeks to convey a positive and prospective energy, which, while focusing on young artists, rediscovers those passed away too soon or those who are still largely unknown despite the importance of their work."

According to Paolo Baratta, president of the Venice Biennale, her choices of artists are "courageous" — of the 120 artists whom she invited to the exhibition, 103 are participating for the first time.

Here are the top picks to see.

Dutch Pavilion

Cinema Olanda is a site-specific installation, centred around three filmic works, exploring Wendelien Van Oldenborgh's engagement with forgotten aspects of modern Dutch history. Through these films the artist reveals an alternative narrative to The Netherlands' self-image as a progressive and tolerant nation, manifest in Gerrit Rietveld's Modernist pavilion. The Dutch Pavilion is curated by Lucy Cotter and commissioned by the Mondriaan Fund.

Greek Pavilion

Greek artist George Drivas explores the complexities of the current refugee crisis in film installation *Laboratory of Dilemmas*, curated by Orestis Andreadakis and commissioned by the EMST National Museum of Contemporary Art.

Hungarian Pavilion


Hungarian artist Gyula Várnai will present *Peace on Earth!*, a new project for the Hungarian Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale. Drawing on the notion of futurology, Várnai's interactive installations evoke the promised utopias of the past, confronting them with the challenges of the present. Recreating the slogans and symbols of socialism, this commission critiques an idealised, futuristic vision using ordinary materials that transcend their everyday function.

Chilean Pavilion

The exhibition, *Werken*, focuses on the theme of the current representation of the Mapuche community, a group of indigenous inhabitants of south-central Chile and south-western Argentina, and will feature an impressive installation of over 1,500 Mapuche masks. Oyarzún's work often combines anthropological, social and historical elements in order to present a critique of Chilean culture and society.



SLIDESHOW: A preview of the Venice Biennale 2017.

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South African Pavilion

Candice Breitz and Mohau Modisakeng will represent South Africa at the 57th Venice Biennale. The pavilion is being organised by Connect Channel, and curated by Lucy MacGarry. Breitz is an internationally acclaimed artist best known for her moving-image installations, and Modisakeng is known for his award-winning and internationally exhibited photography, film, performance and video installations.

Hong Kong Pavilion

Samson Young is a trained composer and practising sound artist. He appropriates the components of music to reflect upon past and present global conflicts, and will present all-new work in Venice. The exhibition is co-presented by M+, West Kowloon Cultural District, and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. It is curated by Ying Kwok and Doryun Chong, deputy director and chief curator, M+.

Portugal Pavilion

José Pedro Croft will present a series of monumental sculptures made of steel, coloured glass and mirrored planes dispersed in open air. Croft's work will interact and dialogue with renowned architect Álvaro Siza Vieira's work, subject of the Portuguese representation at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale.

Scotland Pavilion

Rachel Maclean will present a major new film commission for Scotland + Venice. With considerable recent success, including solo exhibitions at Home and Tate Britain, Maclean's work raises critical questions about identity, economy, society and morality. Through a unique and often disturbing vision, Maclean creates fantasy narratives under the guise of a hyper-saturated aesthetic. Presented within a dramatic church, the exhibition will question notions of truth, conscience and power in the 21st century.

Wales Pavilion

James Richards will represent Cymru Yn Fenis Wales in Venice 2017 in a presentation curated by Chapter and commissioned by the Arts Council of Wales. Richards' installations combine found and original video, sound and still images. His first major commission at an international biennale follows his 2014 Turner Prize nomination and major solo exhibitions at Bergen Kunsthall and ICA London.

The Venice Art Biennale opens on 10 May 2017.