

NEWS



Artistic director Ralph Rugoff at the Venice Biennale. Photo: David Velasco.
May 08, 2019 at 9:27am

FIFTY-EIGHTH VENICE BIENNALE TO OPEN SATURDAY

The much-anticipated 2019 Venice Biennale has finally begun. The fifty-eighth edition of the event will officially kick off on Saturday, May 11—when the exhibition’s inauguration and award ceremony will take place—but the pre-opening begins today. Curated by sixty-two-year-old artistic director Ralph Rugoff, “May You Live in Interesting Times” will feature seventy-nine artists and artist partnerships who will exhibit their works across both the Giardini and the Arsenale.

“The artists will show different types of work in each space,” Rugoff told Artforum contributing editor Daniel Birnbaum earlier this year. “This comes from a desire to not only highlight the multiplicity of artists’ practices, but to point to our polarized world, where people inhabit separate information landscapes.”

Rugoff said that divisions, walls, and barriers will be a recurring theme of the exhibition, which also takes on the advent of fake news. When the title and theme of the biennial,

which refers to a fake Chinese curse that was most likely invented by a British diplomat, was first announced, they made a splash, drawing some criticism from arts professionals who disagreed with perpetuating the fabrication.

For Rugoff, it is an example of the impact of fake news. The saying has been referred to in the works of writers Albert Camus and Arthur C. Clarke and was even used in the autobiography of Hillary Rodham Clinton. “It influences elections, and in the UK, it was a major factor contributing to Brexit,” Rugoff said. “Its rising importance creates a new framework to think about art’s historical role in challenging established truths and points of view.”

Among the artists participating in the event are Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Korakrit Arunanondchai, Neil Beloufa, Jimmie Durham—who was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement—Arthur Jafa, Lee Bul, Teresa Margolles, Hito Steyerl, Kemang Wa Lehulere, and Anicka Yi. A complete artist list can be viewed here. In addition, ninety-something artists will be representing their countries in the national pavilions. A full list of the countries mounting pavilions this year can be found here.

Coinciding with the exhibition are a number of collateral events. “AFRICOBRA: Nation Time,” the first major European exhibition dedicated to the AFRICOBRA collective, will be presented by bardoLA and the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami at the palazzo of Ca’ Faccanon; the Future Generation Art Prize exhibition, featuring the work of fifth prize winner Emilija Škarnulytė and of twenty-one shortlisted artists, will be mounted by the PinchukArtCentre and the Victor Pinchuk Foundation at the Palazzo Ca’ Tron; and Todd Williamson, the winner of this year’s \$50,000 Pollock Prize for Creativity, will have a solo exhibition, “Processional,” at the Chiesa di Santa Maria della Pietà.

Visitors this year will also have the opportunity to see a slew of independent art projects, such as Melissa McGill’s *Red Regatta*. The large-scale work, comprising about fifty traditional vela al terzo sailboats, will activate the city’s waterways and lagoon, calling attention to Venice’s cultural and maritime history and the threat of climate change.

Thousands of people are expected to converge in Venice during the biennial’s six-month run—the last edition recorded 615,000 attendees. While the city welcomes tourists, this

year it introduced a new tax on people who are traveling to Venice for only one day. Visitors to the exhibition should be prepared to pay between 3 and 10 euros. The measure is designed to help offset the overburdened city's annual expenses for cleaning, waste removal, and bridge and cultural heritage maintenance.

ALL IMAGES

All rights reserved. artforum.com is a registered trademark of Artforum International Magazine, New York, NY.