

Italy and Magazzino for Italian Art present Melissa McGill's Red Regatta ahead of Venice Biennale

Di **Alessandra Baldini** - 24/03/2019



NEW YORK, MARCH 24 – **Red Regatta**, an independent public art project created by artist **Melissa McGill** that will activate Venice's lagoon and canals with large-scale regattas of traditional *vela al terzo* sailboats hoisted with hand-painted red sails, will be presented on March 28 at the United Nations on the occasion of the High Level meeting on the protection of the **global climate**. The **Italian Permanent Mission to the United Nations** is sponsoring the presentation in collaboration with **Magazzino for Italian Art**. A museum located in Cold Spring, New York, devoted to Postwar and Contemporary Italian art, Magazzino takes the name from the word meaning warehouse in Italian. It was co-founded by Nancy Olnick and Giorgio Spanu.



Red Regatta will launch in May, 2019 and will unfold in multiple parts over the duration of the 58th Venice Biennale. The project will convene more than two hundred and fifty Venetian partners working closely with the artist, ranging from local sailors to artisans to art students, to present an unprecedented, site-specific performative work that calls attention to the central issues that face Venice today: the displacement of its residents due to the imminent threat of climate change, sea level rise, and mass tourism to the region.

Venetians have been sailing the **vela al terzo boats** in the city's waterways and lagoon for over a thousand years. Designed with a flat bottom and removable mast to navigate Venice's terrain, *vela al terzo* boats traditionally hoist sails painted with identifying graphics in earthy colors, representing each sailor's family. In **Red Regatta**,

each boat will have sails hand-painted in **distinct shades of red**, developed by McGill. As the boats glide through the lagoon in unison set against the sky, sea, and cityscape, the reds reference forces of life and passion, alarm and urgency, and Venice itself—from its bricks and terra cotta rooftops, to its flag and history of trade in red pigment, to paintings by **Titian**, **Tintoretto**, and other Venetian masters.

Red Regatta navigates the delicate and liminal relationship between Venice's built and natural environments, between land and sea, and between humanity and nature. The performative regattas will comprise approximately fifty vela al terzo vessels, sailing in routes mapped out by McGill and the local sailors to be visible from vistas circling the city. Additional happenings of smaller-scale vela al terzo regattas will be mounted in historic locations to be announced. McGill is hosting programs and workshops to bring the Venetian community together and spur conversations on project themes in relation to the traditions that have shaped life in Venice for a millennium.

Red Regatta is the first artwork to be registered as a **Clean Regatta** and is made possible through an ongoing partnership with the **Associazione Vela al Terzo Venezia**, an organization that is dedicated to preserving this storied maritime tradition. Members of the association will sail their boats through the duration of the project, some bringing their own vessel passed down over generations.

McGill is a New York-based artist who previously lived in Venice (1991-93) and continues to be engaged with the city. Red Regatta emerges from the artist's history of social practice projects and previous work in Venice, such as her 2017 sculpture sound project **The Campi**. The *Red Regatta* project is led by McGill, curator Chiara Spangaro and project manager Marcella Ferrari and is co-organized by Magazzino Italian Art Foundation in Cold Spring, NY. Additional partners include No Longer Empty, Fractured Atlas, and Golden Artist Colors, Inc. McGill has been exhibiting her artwork nationally and internationally since 1991, including recent solo exhibitions at Francesco Pantaleone Arte Contemporanea, Milan; White Cube, London; Power House, Memphis; Palazzo Capello, Venice; and CRG Gallery, New York. (@OnuItalia)

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