

Australian exhibition opens at Venice Architecture Biennale

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Suspended above the exhibition is a model of the arched belvedere of the Empire Hotel in Queenstown on lutruwita/Tasmania.

Image: Tom Roe



The Australian exhibition has opened at the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale with an immersive installation that reconstructs the semi-fictional “Queenstown.” At the end of the second Elizabethan Age, when the voices of First Peoples call for truth-telling and self-determination and the climate crisis feels increasingly like an unwinnable race, *Unsettling Queenstown* explores colonialism and its legacy through a process of “demapping” to reveal prior inhabitations and hidden histories.

“There are Queenstowns all over the former British Empire ... It is a place both local and global,” said creative directors Anthony Coupe, Julian Worrall, Emily Paech, Ali Gumillya Baker and Sarah Rhodes.



The official opening of the the Australian exhibition at the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale.

Suspended above the exhibition is a model of the arched belvedere of the Empire Hotel in Queenstown on lutruwita/Tasmania. Made from copper tubing to reflect the town's mining heritage, this model houses community voices and frames landscapes to draw the viewer in. Aboriginal placenames from another Queenstown, this one on Kurna Yarta land, are projected onto the structure, inverting the way that colonial maps overwrite the names and narrative of Indigenous lands.

In line with "The Laboratory of the Future" – the theme of this year's biennale – the installation considers how we can mitigate or reverse the extractive despoliations of colonialism. It suggests contemporary methods for restoring nature and reinstating Indigenous relationships with the land in a future no longer bound to the British Crown.

Unsettling Queenstown is on display in the Denton Corker Marshall-designed Australian Pavilion in the Giardini until 26 November. Donald Bates will review the exhibition on ArchitectureAU soon.