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Decolonisation at the heart of Australia Pavilion installation for La Biennale di Venezia

Edited by [Branko Miletic](#)

'Unsettling Queenstown', a multi-sensory installation curated for the Australia Pavilion at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, will explore themes of decolonisation and decarbonisation through the construct of 'Queenstown'.

Curated by Anthony Coupe, Julian Worrall, Emily Paech, Ali Gumillya Baker and Sarah Rhodes for the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), the installation will be presented at La Biennale di Venezia, which will run from May 20 to November 26, 2023.

Addressing the theme of The Laboratory of the Future set by curator Lesley Lokko for the Biennale Architettura 2023, Unsettling Queenstown responds to the call to 'chart a path for the audience to weave through, imagining for themselves what the future can hold'.

Portraying Australia's colonial inheritance at the end of the second Elizabethan era, Unsettling Queenstown treats Queenstown as an emblem for decolonial struggle the world over. There are Queenstowns all over the former British Empire across Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Weaving between real and fictional Queenstowns, the exhibition will explore and question the relations between people and the environment under the logics of colonialism and resource extraction, through the lens of a place in which these are brought into sharp focus.

The Queenstown at the heart of the installation is a colonial copper mining town on the island of Lutruwita (Tasmania). An additional Queenstown is on Kaurna Yarta, kuraYartaPuulti (South Australia near Port Adelaide).

At the centre of the Pavilion, a ghostly fragment of colonial architecture is suspended – a 70% scale model of the belvedere of the town's Empire Hotel. A wireframe constructed of copper tubing, this colonial ghost will be accompanied by immersive sounds, voices and images.

Australia's colonisation led to an overwriting of Aboriginal Country, whereby British names and symbols were stamped upon Indigenous lands. The exhibition aims to 'demap' and reveal hidden histories of Country where colonies were built.

"The British Imperial hangover is pervasive in every corner of the globe: there is quite literally a Queenstown on every continent, bar Antarctica. Unsettling Queenstown unites decolonial theory and praxis, weaving elements from real places and gleanings from current architectural intelligence in search of ingredients to contribute to Venice's Laboratory of the Future," the creative directors said.

Tony Giannone, AIA Venice Committee chairman, said: "The AIA is honoured to take part in this year's Biennale Architettura, the most important event in the international architectural calendar. Unsettling Queenstown will offer an immersive, multi-sensory experience that will captivate and challenge visitors. The exhibition represents an approach to architectural thinking that we believe will become a critical strategy of architectural culture worldwide."

Unsettling Queenstown will be the 9th exhibition coordinated by the AIA at the Biennale Architettura. The exhibition will be installed in the Denton Corker Marshall-designed Pavilion of Australia (2015) – the first 21st-century Pavilion to be built in the Giardini.