



the laboratory of the future: what to expect at the venice architecture biennale 2023

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THE 18TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION OPENS ITS DOORS

The 18th Venice Architecture Biennale will open its doors to the public from May 20 to November 26, 2023, under the title *The Laboratory of the Future*. Curated by Ghanaian-Scottish architect Lesley Lokko, this year's international architecture exhibition is focused on combating climate change by promoting a more sustainable model for the design, installation, and operation of all its events, while reflecting on the themes of decolonization and decarbonization. At the same time, the Biennale shines a spotlight on Africa and the African Diaspora, with 89 participants, over half of whom are of African descent. The main show, on display at the Giardini pavilion and the Arsenale grounds, boasts renowned contributors such as Adjaye Associates, atelier masōmī, Hood Design Studio, Ibrahim Mahama, Kéré Architecture, MASS Design Group, Theaster Gates, Andres Jaque, Neri & Hu, while the list of special participations features Israeli filmmaker Amos Gitai, photographer James Morris from Wales and London-based multi-disciplinary artist Lionheartfelt.

Before the start of the event, it has been announced that Nigerian-born artist, designer, and architect, Demas Nwoko, is the recipient of the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement of the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

For a comprehensive overview of this year's main exhibition, as well as collateral events and national pavilions on view, keep reading below, and make sure to follow @venice.architecture.biennale for LIVE coverage of the 18th Venice Architecture Biennale during its official opening.

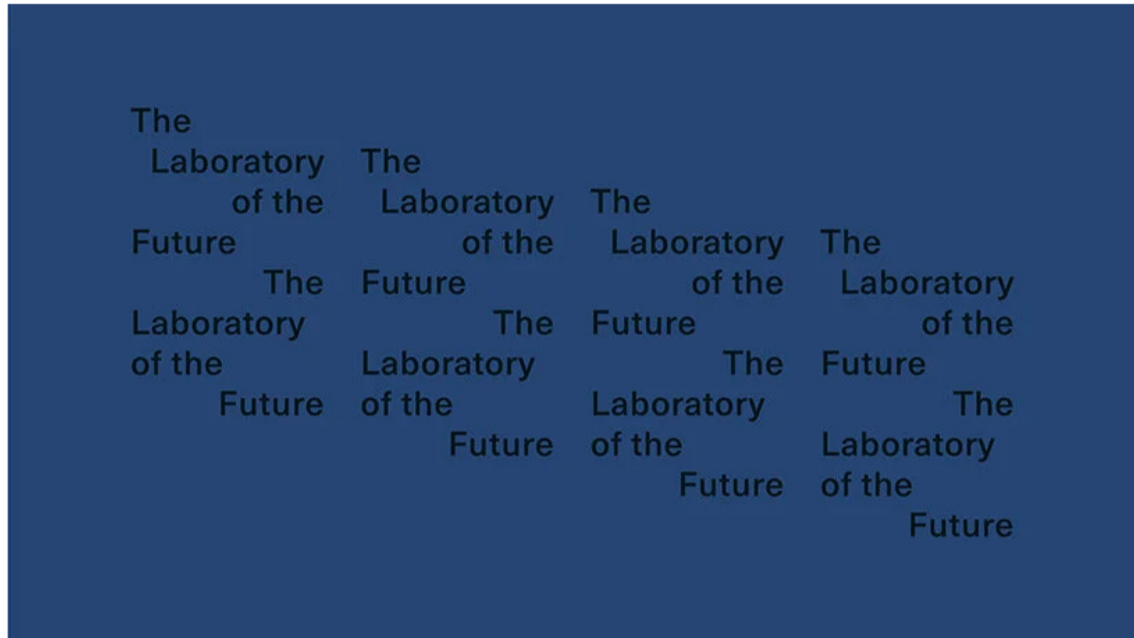


image courtesy of Fred Swart (head image by Andrea Avezzù, courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia)

THE LABORATORY OF THE FUTURE

The 2023 International Architecture Exhibition focuses on agents of change, introducing a new way of thinking. *'What does it mean to be 'an agent of change'? (...) In May last year, I referred to the exhibition several times as 'a story', a narrative unfolding in space.'* states **Lesley Lokko**. *'Today, my understanding has changed. An architecture exhibition is both a moment and a process. It borrows its structure and format from art exhibitions, but it differs from art in critical ways which often go unnoticed. Aside from the desire to tell a story, questions of production, resources, and representation are central to the way an architecture exhibition comes into the world, yet are rarely acknowledged or discussed. From the outset, it was clear that the essential gesture of The Laboratory of the Future would be 'change.'*

The Laboratory of the Future is conceived as an exhibition separated into six parts and includes and 89 participants from across the globe. *'Central to all the projects is the primacy and potency of one tool: the imagination'* explains the curator. *'It is impossible to build a better world if one cannot first imagine it.'*

The event is complemented by 'Carnival,' a six-month-long series of events, including lectures, panel discussions, films, and performances, that delve into this year's themes. A diverse group of famed architects, including **Sir David Adjaye OM OBE**, **Issa Diabaté**, **Mariam Issoufou Kamara**, **Walter Hood**, **Christian Benimana**, and **Felecia Davis**, will participate in a thought-provoking meeting titled 'Force Majeure: a Conversation.' **Lesley Lokko** will join them on the stage of Teatro Piccolo Arsenale as they discuss their personal and professional interests and concerns that have influenced their practices and responses to architecture in general, as well as their contributions to the Exhibition.

In addition to the main venues of the Giardini and Arsenale, a series of collateral events are taking place around the city, including 'A Fragile Correspondence - Scotland + Venice', 'Catalonia in Venice_ Following the Fish', 'Diachronic Apparatuses of Taiwan', and more. Find the full list, [here](#).



Lesley Lokko and Roberto Cicutto | image by Jacopo Salvi, courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia

NATIONAL PARTICIPATIONS

As every year, the national pavilions at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2023, provide a diverse range of responses and exhibits that complement the main show. Set across the historic locations of Giardini and Arsenale, as well as in various venues throughout Venice, the program encourages visitors to embark on a journey of discovery, navigating the city's intricate canals and streets in search of exhibitions.

AUSTRALIAN PAVILION – UNSETTLING QUEENSTOWN

At the Australia Pavilion, the **Australian Institute of Architects** presents the 'Unsettling Queenstown' exhibition. The show is curated by Creative Directors Anthony Coupe, Julian Worrall, Emily Paech, Ali Gumillya Baker, and Sarah Rhodes, who have designed a multi-sensory installation that explores the themes of decolonization and decarbonization, focusing on the construct of 'Queenstown'. This name is used for several places across the former British Empire, including Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Africa, and both Americas, making it both a local and global place.

'Unsettling Queenstown' aims to highlight Australia's colonial inheritance at the end of the second Elizabethan era, using Queenstown as a symbol of the worldwide struggle against decolonization. The exhibition examines and questions the relationships between people and the environment under the influence of colonialism and resource extraction, through the lens of a place where these issues are particularly evident. The exhibition weaves between real and fictional Queenstowns, offering a thought-provoking exploration of this complex issue.



image courtesy of Sarah Rhodes

AUSTRIAN PAVILION – PARTECIPAZIONE/BETEILIGUNG

The Austrian contribution to this year's Venice Biennale was originally planned to make one half of the pavilion freely accessible to the neighboring district of Sant'Elena, as a way to engage with the local community and reverse the spatial practice of exclusion. However, the Biennale and the Monuments Office rejected the idea, raising questions about the role of the exhibition in the future of Venice. The Austrian contribution showcases the exclusion of local residents and the constant expansion of the Biennale since its foundation.

Local residents and Venetian initiatives will organize events throughout the city to discuss the institution's role in the city. The show and its accompanying catalog will present the findings of the Biennale's growing demand for space and collateral events, contrasted with Venice's urban reality of depopulation and economic exploitation. The exhibition raises the question of whether an organization can showcase references to social and environmental justice without specifically addressing these issues in its operations.



image by Clelia Cadamuro

DANISH PAVILION – COASTAL IMAGINARIES

Curated by Josephine Michau, the **Danish Pavilion** presents 'Coastal Imaginaries' – a collective exploration of tomorrow's coastal landscapes that face challenges due to rising sea levels caused by climate change. The pavilion will showcase a variety of contributions from artists, architects, and researchers that provide insight into the many challenges faced.

Landscape architectural studio **Schönherr** will showcase their innovative proposal 'Copenhagen Islands,' which offers nature-based solutions for the Copenhagen metropolitan area. The pavilion will also feature research by the trans-disciplinary research group Mitigating Sea Level Rise, architect-designed solutions, and prototypes from the Master's program Architecture and Extreme Environments at the Royal Danish Academy of Architecture. Visitors will be invited into an immersive experience of a dramatically-staged coastal landscape of the future created by set designer **Christian Friedländer**, allowing them to experience climate change on a 1:1 scale.

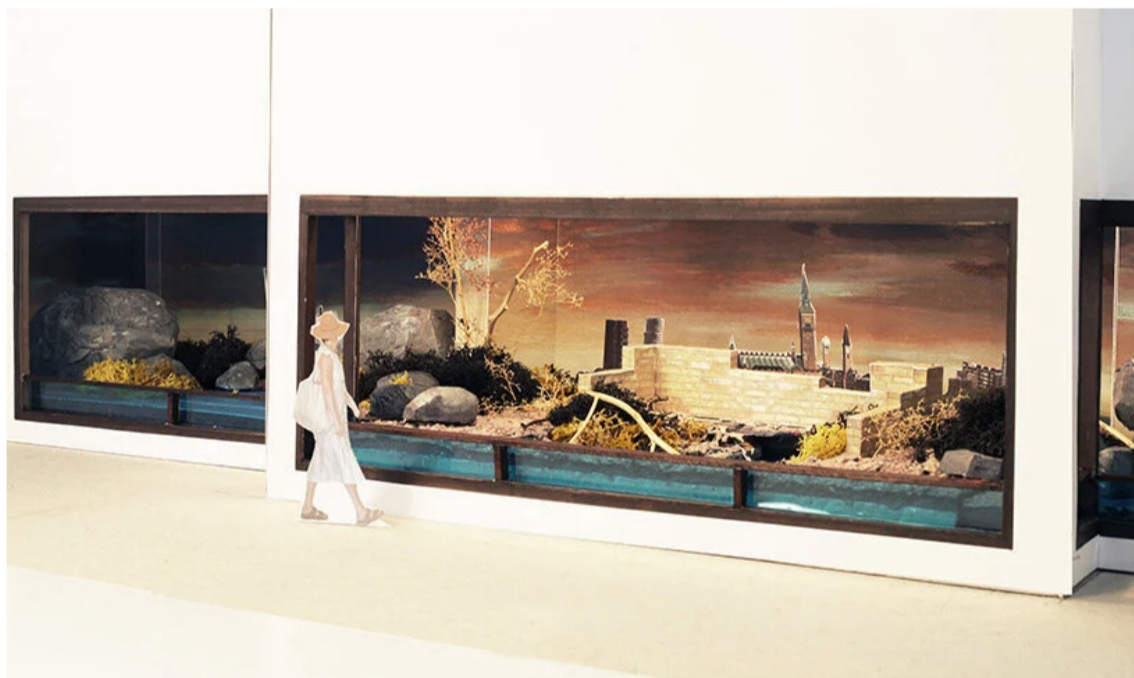


image by Christian Friedländer

ESTONIAN PAVILION – HOME STAGE

The **Estonian Centre for Architecture** will showcase the 'Home Stage' exhibition at the Pavilion of Estonia, curated by Aet Ader, Arvi Anderson, and Mari Möldre from **b210 Architects**. Held in a rental apartment close to the rear exit of the Arsenale complex, the exhibition explores the dichotomy between a living place as a home and its value as an exchange commodity. Throughout the duration of the show, various Estonian performers will inhabit the apartment for a month each, transforming it into both a home and a stage.

'The Estonian pavilion exists in the format of a durational performance, where ordinary domestic duties as well as fictional outbursts, both scripted and non-scripted, all take place in the public eye. One of the performers, Paula Veidenbauma, is intrigued by how issues of invisibility, such as care, aggression, and loneliness, contrast and accelerate in tandem with the vast visibility of real estate, which especially in Venice is driven by hyper-tourism and gentrification' shares Mari Möldre, one of the curators.



image courtesy of Arvi Anderson

Led by architectural firm **Muoto**, **France's national pavilion** presents **'Ball Theater'** a reflective, hollow half-sphere that invites visitors to become active participants by engaging with the exhibit through movement, speech, and gesture. Muoto collaborated with scenographers Georgi Stanishev and Clémence La Sagna, associate curator Jos Auzende, and programmer Anna Tar-divel to create an experience that is akin to a disco ball-like echo chamber, offering a place for listening, meditation, and a laboratory of identities. The smooth hemispherical form gives an aura of a miniature world that shares a sense of calm with its occupants.

Above all, **'Ball Theater'** celebrates the present: In a world where thoughts of the future overwhelm most with societal issues and climate anxiety, this theater allows us to appreciate being in the current moment. The pavilion will host different events, providing artists, researchers, and students with an opportunity to inhabit and transform the dynamic of the space.



image courtesy of Muoto, Georgi Stanishev and Clémence La Sagna

GEORGIAN PAVILION – JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH

The **Georgian Pavilion**, curated by the Tbilisi Architecture Biennial, will showcase 'January, February, March', an installation exploring the impact of water reservoirs on an artificially altered settlement in the Dusheti region of Georgia, reflecting on the effects of rapid political changes and climate change. The exhibit was designed by architects Gigi Shukakidze, Oto Nemsadze, and Tinatin Gurgenidze, and raises thought-provoking questions.

'How temporary is our footprint on the environment? When we mention the flows of energy, migration, time, and the outflow of the landscape itself, what flows are we really speaking of? What are the costs of disrupting an order to create a new one? Can we take water as a determinant of order? To what extent can the spatial-political development of humans bring changes in nature and society and vice versa? What physical and conceptual forms fade or remain with such transformations? Are the natural creations – their memory, history, and artifacts signifying their past life – permanent? What will be the vestige of defining such places, and, above all – considering both global and local contexts – what is their future?'



GERMAN PAVILION – OPEN FOR MAINTENANCE – WEGEN UMBAU GEÖFFNET

The **German Pavilion** at the Biennale Arte 2022 is hosting an exhibition called 'Open for Maintenance – Wegen Umbau geöffnet' that focuses on care, repair, and maintenance. Using leftover material from over 40 national pavilions and exhibitions of the Biennale Arte 2022, the pavilion becomes a productive infrastructure, promoting principles of reuse and circular construction. In collaboration with a broad network of Venetian and German activist groups, the contribution by ARCH+ / SUMMACUMFEMMER / BÜRO JULIANE GREB renders visible processes of spatial and social care work typically hidden from the public eye.



image courtesy of German Pavilion Venice

IRISH PAVILION – IN SEARCH OF HY-BRASIL

The Irish Pavilion presents 'In Search of Hy-Brasil', an exhibition showcasing the diverse cultures, communities, and experiences of Ireland's remote islands. Curated by a team of five architects, Peter Carroll, Peter Cody, Elizabeth Hatz, Mary Laheen, and Joseph Mackey, the show uses various mediums such as drawing, survey, film, sound, model, mapping, and story, to create an immersive experience that draws connections between the social fabric, cultural landscape, and ecology of the islands. The exhibition also highlights the sustainable methods of livelihood and the delicate equilibrium between culture and nature on the islands, focusing on renewable energy, ethical food production, and biodiversity.



image © Peter Cody and Peter Carroll

ITALIAN PAVILION – SPAZIALE – EVERYONE BELONGS TO EVERYONE ELSE

The Italian Pavilion titled 'Spaziale – Everyone belongs to everyone else,' will be curated by Fosbury Architecture Collective and supported by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Ministry of Culture. The project will be divided into two phases: 'Spaziale presenta' from January to April 2023 will activate nine site-specific interventions throughout Italy, while 'Spaziale – Everyone belongs to everyone else' from May 20 to November 26, 2023, will be held in the Italian Pavilion and present a formal and theoretical synthesis of the previous phase's processes. The project's vision is that Architecture is a research practice beyond building construction and that Design is always the result of collective and collaborative work that goes beyond the idea of the architect-author.



image courtesy of Spaziale 2023

KOREAN PAVILION – 2086: TOGETHER HOW?

The South Korean Pavilion presents '2086: Together How?' curated by Artistic Directors Soik Jung and Kyong Park. The exhibition will explore hypothetical scenarios and new paradigms of living in response to the climate emergency, assuming that 2086 will be a pivotal year for humanity.

Using multidisciplinary installations, such as photographs, drawings, models, video, and architectural installations, the show invites audiences to imagine an *'eco-cultural revolution through a critical reassessment of our capitalist, globalist, and colonial history.'* Along with digital interaction, the exhibition provides an immersive experience for viewers to confront fundamental changes through physical installations and a video game.



image courtesy of NHDM Architects

SINGAPORE PAVILION – WHEN IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH? THE PERFORMANCE OF MEASUREMENT

Co-commissioned by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the DesignSingapore Council (Dsg), the **Singapore Pavilion**, organized by the Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA), presents **'WHEN IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH? The Performance of Measurement'**. The exhibition, led by curators Ar. Melvin Tan, Ar. Adrian Lai, and Ar. Wong Ker How, aims to showcase how intangible elements can be measured and visualized.

The centerpiece of the Pavilion is the 'Values Measurement Machine', an impressive series of analog plotting machines that mark data on 5-meter-tall calligraphic scrolls. Visitors can respond to six questions that reveal the intangible aspects of the city and reflect on the qualities that can transform the urban landscape from a human-oriented city to a worldly, lovable one. Visitors can navigate through a spectrum of artistic renders and pinpoint the critical balance of qualities to evoke their desired habitat, weighing up their preferences and registering these values at the Pavilion.



image courtesy of Singapore Pavilion

SWISS PAVILION – NEIGHBORS

The **Swiss Pavilion** by Karin Sander and Philipp Ursprung, both professors at ETH Zurich, presents the project **'Neighbors'**, which highlights the spatial and structural proximity of the Swiss Pavilion to its neighbor, the Venezuelan Pavilion, and the professional bond of the two architects, Bruno Giacometti and Carlo Scarpa. The project turns the architecture itself into an exhibit, offering new perspectives on the territorial relations within the Giardini of La Biennale.

Giacometti and Scarpa established a professional relationship, resulting in the design of the pavilions, which communicate with the spatial continuity and compositional elements of their respective architecture. The Swiss and Venezuelan pavilions, designed by Giacometti and Scarpa, respectively, were built around old plane trees, meeting at the closest distance. Sander and Ursprung aim to dissolve the borders between the two pavilions with artistic means, rethinking and investigating their functions and surroundings in a new light.



image courtesy of KS 2023

UAE PAVILION – ARIDLY ABUNDANT

The UAE National Pavilion features 'Aridly Abundant', exploring themes of aridity, abundance, and sustainability in relation to architecture and the Al Hajar Mountain range. The exhibition will consist of a series of environments and spaces showcasing the diverse spatial, material, and tactical qualities of the region, including its desert plateaus, wadis, and coastal plains. Through a combination of historical land-based practices and innovative technological tools, the installation reimagines these areas as thriving spaces of preservation and productivity. By providing adaptable methodologies for other perishing regions, 'Aridly Abundant' encourages architectural provocations for future global arid contexts.



image courtesy of Reem Falaknaz

US PAVILION – EVERLASTING PLASTICS

Cleveland-based art organization SPACES is the commissioner of the **US Pavilion** which presents a **site-specific exhibition titled 'Everlasting Plastics,'** curated by Tizziana Baldenebro, Executive Director of SPACES, and Lauren Leving, Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland. The exhibition will explore the overabundance of plastic detritus in our waterways, landfills, and streets as a resource, and invite a discussion about the ways plastics shape contemporary ecologies, economies, and the built environment. Five artists and designers, including Xavi Aguirre, Simon Anton, Ang Li, Norman Teague, and Lauren Yeager, will create site-specific works for the pavilion.

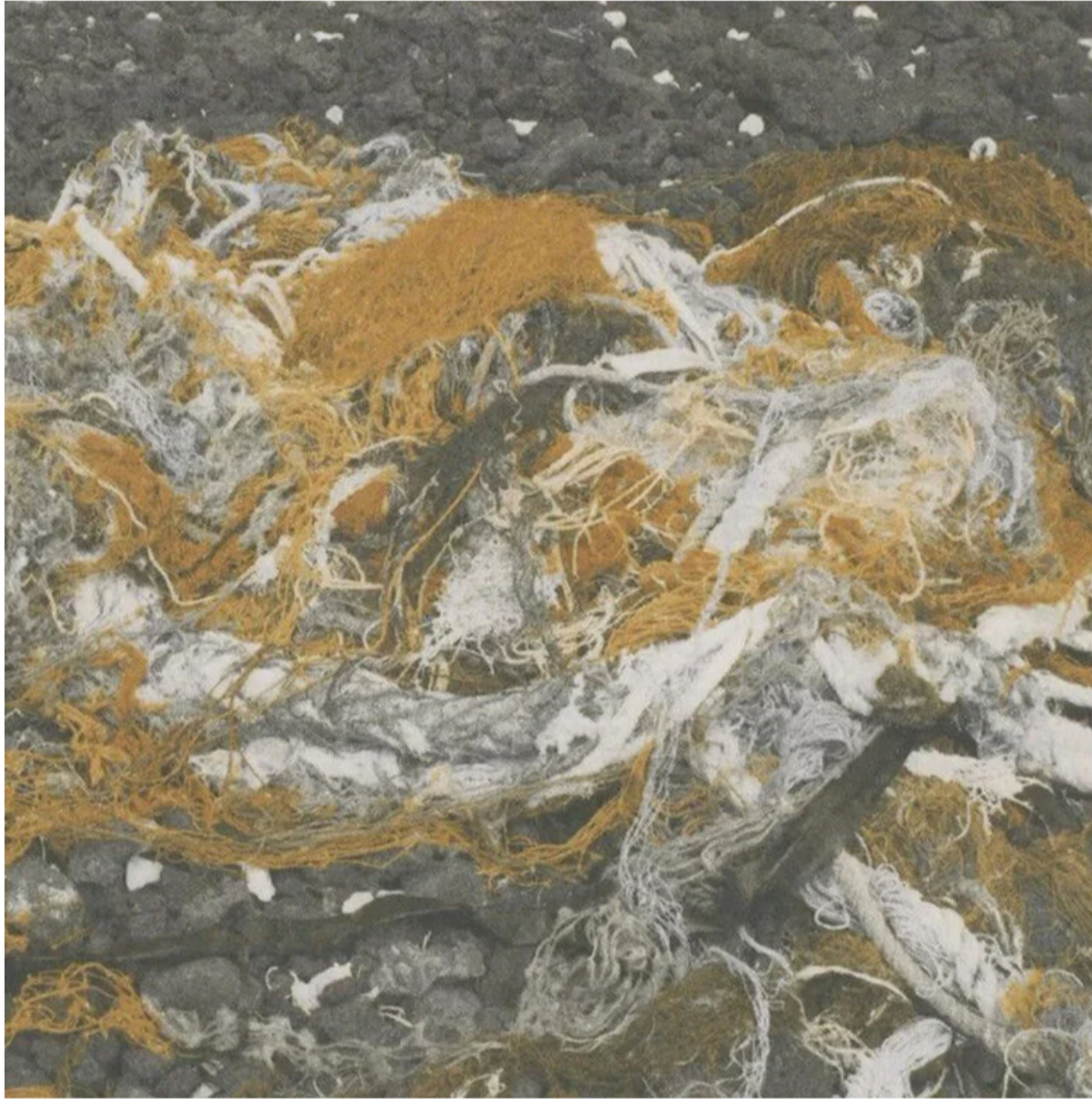


image courtesy of Lauren Leving

UZBEKISTAN PAVILION – UNBUILD TOGETHER

Uzbekistan's National Pavilion titled '**Unbuild Together**' is curated by architecture firm Studio KO, and reflects on this year's theme 'Laboratory of the Future', exploring the potential relevance of Uzbekistan's architectural heritage to modernity. The project is a research project that examines the ruins of the Qalas, ancient fortresses in Karakalpakstan, and the legacy of the Khorezm civilization, using traditional bricks. The pavilion explores the materiality of bricks, earth, and clay through theoretical working experiments with the students and professors of Ajou University in Tashkent, ultimately resulting in a spatial proposal.

'Participation is above all collaborative, placing the human being at the center of our approach. Through the exchanges between the curators (Studio KO), researchers (Ajou University in Tashkent), craftsmen, and associated artists, a collective proposal will emerge, leaving a place for the unexpected.' shares the team at Studio KO.



project info:

name: The Laboratory of the Future – 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale Di Venezia

curator: Lesley Lokko | @lesleylokko

dates: May 20 to November 26, 2023

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