



## Day one from Venice Architecture Biennale



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The Dezeen team are reporting from the 18th international [architecture biennale in Venice](#), curated by [Lesley Lokko](#). Read on for all the coverage from the first day (Wednesday 17 May)

**5:00pm** In a conversation with Dezeen's [Lizzie Crook](#) following the opening of the [Essential Homes Research project](#) (below), Norman Foster said that he is expecting this year's Venice Architecture Biennale to be a reflection of its curator [Lesley Lokko](#).

**'Venice Architecture Biennale is very much a reflection of the individuals who steer it'**

"[Venice Architecture Biennale] is very much a reflection of the individuals who steer it", Norman Foster told Dezeen. "It's a combination of who's behind it, behind the scenes here in Venice, and the curators who are invited."



*How many people does it take to cut a ribbon? Norman Foster presides over the opening of his Essential Homes Research Project*

"I think the curators in the past, they've all had the individual points of emphasis. So one curator has an interest in the city, another curator has an interest in issues of materials, another curator sees the role of history as important," he continued.

However, he is yet to see this year's exhibits himself: "I haven't seen this Biennale because I only arrived literally late yesterday afternoon," Foster said.

"I was just saying at the end of the conference earlier in the [Hotel] Monaco, 'what should I see here?' and somebody was saying this is a different Biennale," he continued.





*The Essential Homes Research Project is a concept designed to sustainably provide rapidly assembled housing for people displaced by natural and manmade disasters.*

**3:00pm** Dezeen has exclusively revealed the **Australia pavilion** at the **Venice Architecture Biennale**, which features a **copper reconstruction** of the **Empire Hotel** in **Queenstown**.

Named **Unsettling Queenstown**, the pavilion aims to draw attention to the legacy of colonialism and extraction by focusing on several settlements named **Queenstown**.



*Australia pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale*

*"The pavilion explores the concept of decolonisation, on both local and global scales," curators Anthony Coupe, Ali Gumillya Baker, Julian Worrall, Emily Paech and Sarah Rhodes told Dezeen. [Read more about the pavilion and our interview with the curators >](#)*



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**1:00pm:** The Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at this year's biennale has already been announced. Nigerian-born artist, designer and architect Demas Nwoko is the recipient.

There is a "small but perfectly formed and articulated" (according to Lesley Lokko) display of his work in the Stirling Pavilion in the Giardini, alongside the "Book Pavilion Project" of The Laboratory of the Future.



*Demas Nwoko, recipient of the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 18th architecture biennale*

Read our [interview with Lesley Lokko](#) now, where she told Dezeen that "for this exhibition, two keywords shaped practitioners' responses: decarbonisation and decolonisation".

Discussing the exhibition, she continued: "I think this year's themes were very emotive and emotional, not the kind of space in which AI easily thrives, thankfully."

Dezeen is shortly to launch our next editorial series exploring the complex world of AI and its intersection with the architecture and design professions. [Enter the competition to produce the illustration for the series](#), with a £1,000 prize for the winning design.

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**11:45am:** Architect [Norman Foster](#) has unveiled The Essential Homes Research Project, a housing prototype for displaced people that the Norman Foster Foundation developed with building materials company Holcim.



*Norman Foster introduces The Essential Homes Research Project at the 18th international Venice Architecture Biennale*

The project responds to the fact that people displaced by natural and manmade disasters often end up living in temporary accommodation for more than a decade.

The homes, which have been designed to offer a durable alternative to tent shelters in order to withstand the elements, can be built on-site in order to expedite construction during emergencies. Find out more about the project in our exclusive video collaboration with Holcim.





*The housing prototype can be built on-site to speed up construction*

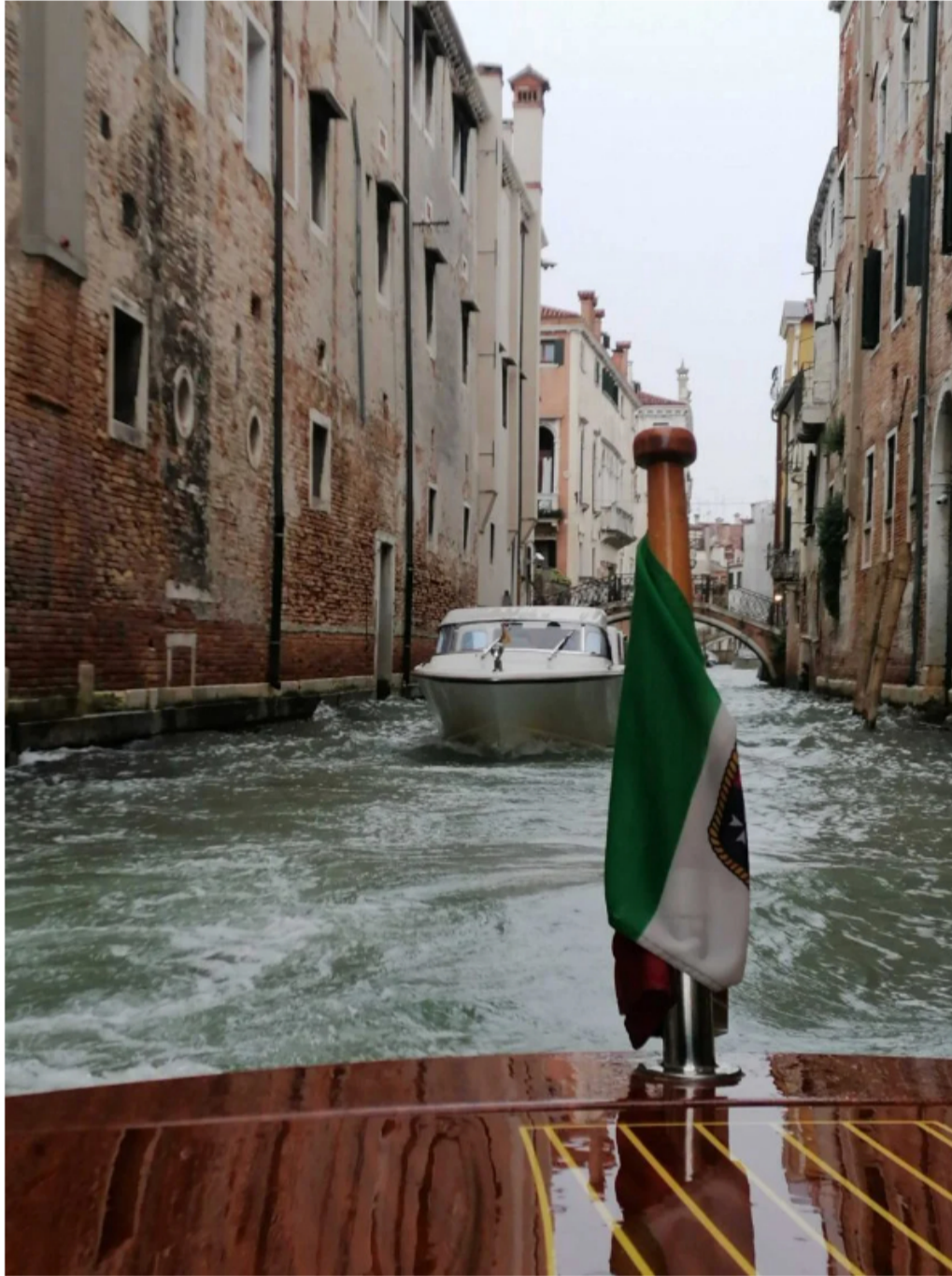
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**11:00am:** We have already started reviewing the national pavilions in the Giardini, where the exhibition at the Finnish Pavilion "declares the death of the flushing toilet". Other pavilions that have been unveiled include the US, UK, Singapore and Denmark.

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**9:00am:** Dezeen's editor Tom Ravenscroft, architecture editor Lizzie Crook and digital editor Rupert Bickersteth are on the ground in Venice reporting from the 18th architecture biennale curated by Scottish-Ghanaian architect, academic and novelist Lesley Lokko (below) to the theme The Laboratory of the Future.

Lokko said in a statement "Africa is the laboratory of the future. We are the world's youngest continent, with an average age half that of Europe and the United States, and a decade younger than Asia.



*Travelling by water taxi (or motoscafi) along the canals. Image: Lizzie Crook*

"We are the world's fastest urbanising continent," Lokko continued. "This rapid and largely unplanned growth is generally at the expense of local environment and ecosystems, which put us at the coal face of climate change."

**'Architects are key players in translating images into reality'**

"But hope is a powerful currency. To be hopeful is to be human," she continued. "The vision of a modern, diverse, and inclusive society is seductive and persuasive, but as long as it remains an image, it is a mirage. Something more than representation is needed, and architects historically are key players in translating images into reality."

"We envisage our exhibition as a kind of workshop, a laboratory where architects and practitioners across an expanded field of creative disciplines draw out examples from their contemporary practices that chart a path for the audience to weave through, imagining for themselves what the future can hold."





*Lesley Lokko, curator of the 18th architecture biennale in Venice*

Before the vernissage (pre-opening) begins tomorrow – ahead of opening to the public on Saturday 20 May – remind yourself what happened at the 17th biennale in 2021.

We rounded-up [ten of the best pavilions](#) from the exhibition that year, which was curated by Lebanese architect and academic [Hashim Sarkis](#) on the theme “How will we live together?”.

At the 2021 biennale, the Spanish architect, educator, critic and theoretician [Rafael Moneo](#) was awarded the [Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement](#) and the [Special Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement](#), given in memoriam, was bestowed on late modernist architect [Lina Bo Bardi](#).



*Italian-born Brazilian modernist architect Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992) was awarded the Special Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 17th Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2021.*

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*Follow the live coverage on [Dezeen live: Venice Architecture Biennale](#). The Venice Architecture Biennale takes place from 20 May to 26 November 2023. See [Dezeen Events Guide](#) for all the latest information you need to know to attend the event, as well as a list of other architecture and design events taking place around the world.*