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If You Visit Venice This Summer, Don't Miss The Breathtaking Biennale Exhibition

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May 23, 2023, 01:45am EDT



What to expect at the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale UNSETTLING QUEENSTOWN, PAVILION OF AUSTRALIA

If you've booked to visit [Venice](#) anytime from now until November, your trip will coincide with the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale.

It is one of the world's most important festivals of the built environment and it takes over two key locations in Venice: the Arsenale (once the city's shipbuilding yard) and the Giardini della Biennale. There are also various satellite shows in historic palaces, churches and nearby islands.

The Biennale is the perfect contrast to the standard sightseeing program of ancient art and centuries-old buildings; you find everything from the outlandish to the thought-provoking.

Attending the exhibition is also a shrewd way to see inside parts of the city not normally open to the public.

The 18th edition of the international exhibition, entitled *The Laboratory of the Future*, will confront many of the conventions and practices of the world of architecture and open up discussions centered around the idea of change.

Here are the highlights to expect from the Biennale Architettura 2023.

African architects take center stage at the 2023 Venice Biennale

This year's Biennale is making waves with over half of the participants being African or from the African diaspora.

The continent is a place where “most of what is happening in the rest of the world is already happening to us,” in the words of Roberto Cicutto, President of La Biennale di Venezia.

Africa is home to some of the fastest-growing nations on earth with rocketing populations and rapid urban expansion. For curator Lesley Lokko, this means younger generations speaking multiple languages with a global outlook and greater awareness of their impact on the planet.

Lokko, who has Ghanaian-Scottish origins and is the first curator of the architectural Biennale of African descent, wants the show to explore Africa's possibilities as an “agent of change” with a worldwide impact.

In the main show located in the Central Pavilion at the Giardini, 16 architectural practices “represent a distilled force majeure of African and Diasporic architectural production,” in Lokko's words.



The Brazil national pavilion critiques the founding myth of the capital Brasília. TERRA [EARTH], BRAZIL NATIONAL PAVILION

Visitors can find the work of young African and Diasporan creatives dotted throughout the national pavilions in both the Giardini and the Arsenale. These *Guests from the Future* will give insights into futuristic architectural practices and views of the world.

Some of the most important practitioners to look out for are Pritzker Prize winner Diébédo Francis Kéré; the Cave Bureau firm from Nairobi who has made 3-D maps of Shimoni slave caves on Kenya's coast; and

the renowned British Ghanaian architect David Adjaye.

Nigerian-born artist, designer, and architect Demas Nwoko has been announced as the recipient of the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement this year.

Indigenous voices speak loud at Venice Biennale 2023

The 18th edition of the architecture exhibition also calls into question the “exclusive and singular” voice that dominates the discipline.

Lokko’s show is letting marginalized voices speak up and break the mold (while noting that numerically speaking, these ‘marginalized’ communities are becoming the majority).

In the curator’s words, the Biennale will tell “multiple stories that reflect the vexing, gorgeous kaleidoscope of ideas, contexts, aspirations, and meanings that is every voice responding to the issues of its time.”

The Australian pavilion’s *Unsettling Queenstown* exhibition highlights the multiple Queenstowns around the world as a symbol of the global struggle to untangle places from colonization.

The installation will “challenge the ‘edifice’ of colonialism, in Australia and across the world,” the team says, “as a microcosm of a worldwide move to actively decolonize towns and cities.” The show’s topic is particularly timely considering the Australian parliament’s move to instate indigenous voices within its constitution through an upcoming referendum.

The Brazil national pavilion critiques the founding myth of the capital Brasília, highlighting the real history of Indigenous and Quilombola populations driven out by colonizers. The building is filled with earth structures, putting the public in direct contact with the tradition of Indigenous territories, Quilombola dwellings, and candomblé ceremonies.

Venice Biennale grapples with climate change solutions

Building eco-consciously is deeply relevant to both African nations and the host of the event, Venice.

Several national pavilions are exploring novel and radical solutions to sustainable architecture. “Central to all the projects is the primacy and potency of one tool: the imagination,” explains Lokko. “It is impossible to build a better world if one cannot first imagine it.”

Finland’s pavilion has declared “death to the flushing toilet” – with a broken ceramic toilet bowl excavated outside – and showcases the compost toilets already used in thousands of houses around the country.



Finland's pavilion has declared "death to the flushing toilet" © UGO CARMENI 2023

The Georgian Pavilion, curated by the Tbilisi Architecture Biennial, exhibits an installation asking, "how temporary is our footprint on the environment?" *January, February, March* will examine the impact of water reservoirs on an artificially altered settlement in the Dusheti region of Georgia to raise questions about the spatial-political development of human beings and their effect on nature.

Germany's pavilion presents *Open For Maintenance* in collaboration with various Venetian and German activist groups. Using discarded and leftover materials from last year's Biennale, the pavilion will become a productive hub showcasing concepts of circular construction and repurposing waste.