



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

IN THE BEGINNING ... THE WORD BECAME FLESH



The Pavilion of the Holy See

56th *Biennale d'Arte di Venezia* 2015

Theme: ***In the Beginning ... the Word became flesh***

The Holy See participates this year for the second time at the *Biennale d'Arte di Venezia*, with a Pavilion inspired by the New Testament. *In the Beginning ... the Word became flesh* is the theme chosen by the Commissioner Card. Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, at whose request the theme of the "Beginning" has been developed, passing from the 2013 edition's reference to *Genesis* to that of the Prologue of the *Gospel of John*.

The structure of the Pavilion is articulated around two essential poles: firstly, the transcendent Word, which is "in the beginning" and which reveals the dialogical and communicative nature of the God of Jesus Christ (v. 1-5); and then the Word made "flesh", body, bringing the presence of God in humanity, especially where it appears injured and suffering (v. 14). The encounter of these "vertical-transcendent" and "horizontal-immanent" dimensions is the heart of the research.

The two "tables" of the Prologue of John's Gospel are the basic inspiration for the artistic creations of three artists, who have been chosen after a long selection, in light of some precise criteria: the consonance of their own journeys with the chosen theme, the variety of the techniques used, their internationality, diversity and geographic and cultural provenance, and above all the open and evolutionary nature of their work.

PRESENTATION OF THE ART

A dialectic dynamism in three voices

by Micol Forti, Curator

There are two hubs around which the project for the Pavilion of the Vatican rotates and takes its form: the *Logos* and the *flesh*. The *Logos* establishes a relationship, a harmony, a mediation; the flesh imposes immanence, a track, a process of embodiment.

Their inseparable unity produces a dialectic dynamism, irregular, elliptical, abruptly accelerating, precipitously slowing down, to solicit in the artists as in the public, a reflection on a combination that lies at the root of humanity itself.

Three artists, all young, from different backgrounds, with different experiences, vision, ethics and aesthetics, brought together to give body to the *In the Beginning ...* evoked by the Prologue of John's Gospel.

Monika Bravo, a Colombian by birth, with international training but American by adoption, has skillfully come up and elaborated a narrative which can be assembled and reassembled on 6 screens and as many transparent panels, placed on strongly colored walls. Nature, the Word, written and spoken, and Artistic abstraction present themselves in every composition as active elements of a heuristic vision, open to a degree of uncertainty in the development of a new experimental perception of space and a sensory fullness, through the grace and the "manual" poetry with which the artist uses technological media.

The young Macedonian Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's research blends craftsmanship, scientific knowledge and a powerful aesthetic vision. She has designed a monumental architectural installation for the Pavilion, whose "fabric" is almost a skin, a mantle, which welcomes visitors both in a physical and symbolic dimension at the same time. Realized with organic waste materials in a way which leads from the ready-made to the re-made, the artist creates a cloth that is both an embroidery and surface skin, physical presence and transparency, an instrument of suggestion and surprise.

The flesh gains importance in the return to reality without falsification in the photographs of the thirty year old Mário Macilau. The series of nine photographs in black and white, taken in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, where the artist was born and works, are dedicated to the street children who still are living on the streets as means of survival. This is not a documentary, but a poetic work that transforms the relationship between the now and the past, the near and far, the visible and the invisible. The theme of the origin and the end of each artistic act is driven by the power of the photographic composition to confront the agony of the real.

A press conference presented the pavilion 9 April 2015 in the Holy See's Press Office.

The overall theme of the 56th International Exhibition of Art is *All the World's Futures* and is curated by Okwui Enwezor. It takes place in Venice from 9 May to 22 November 2015.

Monika Bravo (1964) was born and raised in Colombia, and today lives and works in New York; the Macedonian Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva (1971), currently lives and works in London; the photographer Mário Macilau (1984), was born and raised in Maputo, Mozambique, where he lives.

The catalogue of the Pavilion, edited by Micol Forti and Elisabetta Cristallini, (Italian and English – Gangemi Editore), together with an introductory essay by Gianfranco Ravasi focusing on the theme of the Pavilion, contains texts by Micol Forti, Elisabetta Cristallini, Ben Quash, Octavio Zaya and Alessandra Mauro.

Criteria of sobriety and economy have guided the project and installation of the Pavilion, realised by architect Roberto Pulitani, and the costs are entirely sustained by Sponsors who have made this important project possible.

The official inauguration of the Pavilion takes place in the presence of His Eminence Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi on Friday 8 May, at 4.30pm.

Biennale Arte 2015
All the World's Futures
9 maggio › 22 novembre