



Vatican \ Activities

## Holy See introduces Pavilion for Biennale di Venezia 2015



09/04/2015 14:37

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(Vatican Radio) The Holy See's Pavilion for the 56th International Exhibition of Art of the Biennale di Venezia 2015 was introduced on Thursday at the Holy See Press Office. The Pavilion will feature the work of three artists: Colombian-born Monika Bravo; the Macedonian Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva; and the Mozambique photographer Mário Macilau.

The theme of the Pavilion is "In the beginning...the Word became flesh", and Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, the President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, said the words of the Gospel of John inspire the thematic spaces into which the Pavilion is divided.

"They find the creations of artists who have been selected in light of the consonance of their current research journey with the chosen theme, for the variety of the techniques used, and for their geographic and cultural provenance," said Cardinal Ravasi.

The Curator of the exhibit, Micol Forti, has structured the Pavilion around two poles: The transcendent Word, which reveals the communicative nature of the God of Jesus Christ; and the Word made flesh, bringing the presence of God in humanity, especially when it appears injured and suffering.

"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," said Forti.

Forti said the three young artists chosen for the exhibit bring the influences from different backgrounds, with different experiences, vision, ethics and aesthetics.

***The full introduction to the Pavilion, and interventions by Cardinal Ravasi and Micol Forti follow***

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

**Pavilion of the Holy See**

**56th International Exhibition of Art of the Biennale di Venezia 2015**

**Arsenale di Venezia – Sale d’Armi nord**

**5-8 May 2015 Vernice**

**9 May – 22 November 2015**

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.

Curated by Micol Forti, 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.

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.

### **The intervention by Cardinal Ravasi follows:**

#### **In the Beginning ... the Word became flesh**

The desire to re-establish dialogue between art and faith continues after the experience of 2013, and there remains a great vivacity of interest in the international sphere concerning the relationship between the Church and contemporary art.

Following the first edition, the Pavilion of the Holy See at the 56th Biennale d'Arte di Venezia develops the theme of the "Beginning" with a movement from the Old to the New Testament, making the Logos and the Flesh the terms of a constantly living relationship.

With reference to Genesis, understood as Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation, which was the object of our reflection in 2013, we now have a new term of encounter in the Prologue of the Gospel of John. Two essential aspects of this meeting are highlighted: the transcendent Word is "in the beginning", and at the same time reveals the dialogical and communicational nature of the God of Jesus Christ (v. 1-5), and the Word that becomes "flesh", body, bringing the presence of God into the essence of humanity, especially where it seems injured and suffering (v. 14).



The descent to immanence is expressed in almost visual terms in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is taken up in this context as a further thematic suggestion completely in perspective. The pages of the Gospel of Luke offer the image of a God present within a humanity oppressed in a human condition. God made flesh helps the injured man, who is marked by death and fragility.

The "vertical-transcendent" dimension of the Logos and the "horizontal-immanent" dimension of the "flesh" are axes of research in this sense. There is a need to refer to these as they cross over, to understand the single pieces of art, the dialogue that they create between each other within the exhibition space.

The terms of the Prologue of the Johannine Gospel inspire the thematic spaces into which the Pavilion is divided. They find the creations of artists who have been selected in light of the consonance of their current research journey with the chosen theme, for the variety of the techniques used, and for their geographic and cultural provenance.

### **The intervention by Micol Forti is below**

#### **A dialectic dynamism in three voices**

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.