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# The Pavilions in the Venice Art Biennale: national representations in the XXI century

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## Abstract

The Venice Biennale, founded in 1895, is still a reference on the international art scene. As is widely recognized, its main feature is its organization in national pavilions. If at the beginning this particularity made it famous and an example for other biennials, later it ended up becoming one of its most controversial aspects. From the 1960's to present day, many critics and curators have argued that this model not only does not allow a proper exhibition discourse but it also creates an obsolete system of representation in the artistic context, which from decades has been supranational. Taking into account these criticisms, the ultimate goal of this paper is to demonstrate how in recent years the Venetian pavilions, despite the limitations of their format, through specific curatorial and artistic choices have nevertheless tried to offer a more up-to-date representation of the concept of 'nation'.

**Keywords:** Venice Biennale, Biennials, Pavilions, National representations, Nationality

Inaugurated in 1895 and designed following the model of the great universal exhibitions, the Venice Biennale has always been characterized by its organization in national pavilions. However, until 1907, when the first pavilion (Belgium) was built, the works participating in the Biennale were still exhibited exclusively inside the Central Pavilion, built in the *Giardini* area. In the different rooms, the artworks of Italian artists were displayed according to their regions of origin, while those of foreigner artists were organized by countries. In fact, in its first editions, the Biennale was a predominantly Italian event, where the presence of international artists was still minor. It is thus in an attempt to increase international participation that the Biennale, following the model of the great universal exhibitions, first encouraged the construction of national pavilions. A solution that at the same time relieved the Venetian organization of international representations' costs. From 1907 to 1995, 29 countries established their pavilions inside the *Giardini* area; to the others nations the Biennale offered or rented exhibition spaces inside the central pavilion or in its surrounding areas. The growing number of participating countries occurred in this period and the corresponding increasing need for space for the general thematic exhibitions resulted, however, in states without a pavilion having to independently seek a venue in Venice city center. More recently, with the recovery of new areas within the *Arsenale* zone, this problem was partially mitigated as many countries had the opportunity to rent a space there. To give a general overview, the 89 national representations of 2015 were distributed in the following manner: 29 had their pavilion in the *Giardini*, 29 were hosted in the *Arsenale* and the remaining 31 were scattered across the city. This organizational system has been and continues to be one of the main criticisms of the Biennale. The reasons differ and have partly changed across time, but one of the main issues is centered on the perpetuation of values and meanings related to the nineteenth century and to colonialism accruing from the Biennale's inspirational model i.e., the great universal exhibitions. In these events, countries participated to show what they considered that best represented them, creating exhibition buildings where size, architecture and position was intended to reflect the power and importance that each country had in the world. This aspect was emphasized when, starting from the nineteenth century onwards, nations began to display materials brought from their colonies, not so much with pedagogical purpose of giving to know something new/different, but with the intention of proving their colonial superiority: "the role of anthropology at the art fair was to provide the visual narrative of empire for the visual command of the 'civilised world'" (Davidson 2010, 727). To a certain extent Venice still reflects this tendency, both from an architectural point of view "the pavilions in the *Giardini*, where the exhibition is housed, are erected by each country and the style are a vivid array of national self-images" (Alloway 1968, 17), and especially from their meaning, "it is a remnant from World Fairs that plays a major role in the diffusion of an orientalist and Eurocentric vision of the art system" (Martini 2011, 102). In fact, only the great powers of the XX century were able to build their own pavilion in the *Giardini* during the first editions of the event and

"with the sole exception of the United States, countries with a colonial past were only able to install a pavilion after the mid-1950s, Venezuela being the first in 1956, Canada in 1958, Uruguay in 1960 and Brazil in 1964. Yet the existence of most of these pavilions was only possible due to political treaties and other arrangements<sup>1</sup>" (Moreno V. 2010, 9).

For several years almost all the countries without a fixed pavilion were forced to find a space in the city of Venice, creating a strong visibility difference between those who were within or outside the fences of the *Giardini* and *Arsenale* areas. It is in fact almost impossible for a Biennale visitor to locate and see all the pavilions scattered around Venice, even when these are located in transit areas of the city, or as the art critic and curator Barel Madra puts it "many countries/ nations can be present in the Biennale but this does not mean that they are being recognised" (Madra

2001, 105). She also sustains that fair play and a kind of transparency would be possible if every state declared their budget at the entrance. In fact, the participation of a country at the Biennale is very expensive compared to other exhibitions due to high rental or maintenance costs of the pavilion, transportation and organisation within the lagoon and a media strategy that need to be intensive considering the high number of events in a small compact city, in a limited time period. Having said that, one should however also acknowledge that while it is true that countries with more economic resources have more possibilities than those with less, it is also true that for states with a marginal role in the contemporary art world and its market, to have a pavilion at the Venice Biennale is a chance to participate and to have a profile in an international art exhibition. Testimony to this is the comment given by Yugoslavia<sup>2</sup>

“The Venice Biennale is the only international art event where we have our premises, independent of the international jury and its invitation, as is the case with many other such exhibitions. We are invited to some of them, but not to others. Regular appearances at the Biennale give us the opportunity to plan in advance, to formulate a stable policy and to keep the world informed of current trends in Yugoslavia” (Susovski 1988, 10).

In the same vein, the Icelandic curator Laufey Helgadóttir acknowledges that “the Biennale is the only official presentation of Icelandic art abroad” (Helgadóttir 2011, 24). Also for the Japanese art critic Yusuke Nakahara (1931-2011) “The building of the Japanese pavilion (in 1956) enabled Japan to participate regularly in the Biennale and provided a base for the active international promotion of Japanese Art” (Yaguchi 1995, 12).

“Moreover, if a screening committee were convened to select artists from all over the world, then the selection would inevitably concentrate on a number of countries, since there is no one who is perfectly well-informed about contemporary art all over the world” (Kamon 1995, 217).

So on the one hand the pavilions perpetuate some hierarchies, while on the other they also represent a chance to be present regardless of “international” curatorial choices.

While this is still a highly debated issue, the criticism to Venice’s organizational model is not new and to a large extent followed the radical social transformations of the XX century.

The Portuguese art historian José-Augusto França recognized, already in 1962, in the magazine *Colóquio Artes e Letras* that the pavilions’ structure was outdated, consisting of an old-fashioned and academic model which did not correspond to the dominant artistic culture of the time. In another article from 1967 França also admitted that at the beginning

“the Venetian event corresponded to a cultural need [...]; the meeting point and comparison of a variety of national works represented a notable improvement in awareness”, but over time this became a simple “fair, with ‘stands’ calling for dubiously-chosen national products with diplomatic interests dictating the attribution of prizes” (França 1967, 30).

França criticism represents an example of an idea shared by many critics and art historians at that time. These objections won an even more public dimension with the 1968 student protests, which accused the Biennale of having policy related artistic choices, to be focused more in the market’s interests than on the critical discourse and to be still anchored to an old-fashioned exhibition model. Given the urgency of reflecting on these charges, that year the Biennale organized a round table to discuss the problem. At this meeting, the Italian critics and art historians Gillo Dorfles and Germano Celant proposed to demolish the pavilions, arguing that as these conditioned the exhibition and did not allow discussions and global views of the contemporary art world (Martini 2011, 49). This proposal, however, was not - and is not - feasible as the pavilions are property of the nations who built and maintain them; functioning as embassies where prevails the principle of extraterritoriality. The Biennale cannot therefore decide or impose conditions in such spaces.

From 1972 onwards and as a search for a solution to the lack of an exhibition discourse, a general theme was introduced. In the first editions where this was implemented, the chosen theme was however so generic that it did not offer a real research topic. Only with the 1976 edition there was real progress on this issue and for the first time the general theme enabled a real opportunity for a critical discourse between the pavilions. Yet, this achievement was not continued in all subsequent editions, because the theme remained only a suggestion and not an obligation for the national pavilions. Even nowadays, even if the attribution of the Golden Lion prize award depends on the relevance of the artwork to the overall theme, to follow it or not is still optional for the participating countries.

From the late Eighties, the great changes on social order resulting from globalization and post-colonialism changed the focus of criticism to the Venice pavilions: in a transnational world it no longer made sense to have an artistic exhibition organized according to a criterion of national identity. None of the new biennials that came up in this period followed the Venetian model, and they were actually created as an alternative to the “First World” biennials, with the intention of showcasing the artistic production of other geographies and peripheral countries generally marginalized by those mainstream exhibitions. Also the São Paulo biennial, the only one besides Venice to be organised in national pavilions, abolished them in 2006<sup>3</sup>. Lisette Lagnado, the curator of that edition, ended this tradition having declared that, among many reasons

“the most important ones were to give countries on the ‘periphery’ the same chance to take part and to stop serving the namedropping on the part of the countries holding the hegemony. I wanted to give the biennial the autonomy of intellectual choice. No curator can ignore the worldwide migrations or the fact that in a world of political conflicts, many artists can’t

choose where they live and work”<sup>4</sup> (Gross and Preuss 2013, 94).

Parallel to this, being conscious of the new artistic context and of the increasing need to question the issue regarding the pavilions organisation, some general curators of the Biennale started to choose themes for the event that directly addressed this issue. The first clear example was in 1993 *Cardinal Points of the Arts*, the edition headed by Achille Bonito Oliva. In the catalogue of this edition he wrote:

“the recognition of the purity of a national core is no longer possible but instead the positive contribution of trans-nationality, a merging of peoples that produces cultural eclecticism and necessary *interracism*. [...] This serves as the basis of my call to overcome the national pavilions’ autarchy, (...) in favor of hosting artists from other countries. This shall inevitably lead to a valorisation of co-existence that is especially significant in this historic moment which emphasises difference”<sup>5</sup> (Bonito Oliva 1993, XXIV).

Germany, through its curator, Klaus Bußmann (1941), followed this advice and invited as representatives of the German pavilion the artists Nam June Paik (1932-2006) and Hans Haacke (1936), the first being Korean but resident in Germany and the second born in Germany but resident in the United States. The pavilion, winner of the Golden Lion, went beyond any criteria of national identity. Haacke made his intervention directly on the pavilion marble floor and smashed it to pieces. That floor had been built in 1938 during the Nazi epoch. In fact the title of his work, which appeared on the facade, was "Germania". It was not just the Italian translation of Germany, but also the name that Hitler had envisaged to Berlin after his expected victory in World War II. This example is particularly important because, as the 2015 Biennale visual art director Okwui Enwezor clearly stated,

“Haacke’s project was really the first time that an artist had taken the national pavilion as a subject of inquiry. Rather than just simply a space into which things were placed, it became a space that was contested. The German pavilion and its history and its attachment to its reconstruction in 1938 by the Nazis became the instrument, if you will, for this inquiry into the instability of the space of the nation”<sup>6</sup>.

The German pavilion remained however a fairly isolated example. In the following years, even if the Biennale continued to call into question its model, a profound solution or real intervention strategy was never established. As a matter of fact, the only real progress was again only due to the individual decisions of visual arts directors who tried to adopt themes that gave the opportunity to reflect about contemporary society, its identities, globalization problems and the evolution of nation states. The most evident, but not unique examples are: *Future, Present and Past 1967-1997* by Germano Celant in 1997; *Plateau of Humankind* by Harald Szeeman in 2001; *Dreams and Conflicts. The Dictatorship of the Viewer* by Francesco Bonami in 2003; *Making World* by Daniel Brinbaum in 2007; *IllumiNATIONS* in 2011 by Bice Curiger; *All the World’s futures* by Okwui Enwezor in 2015.

It is however interesting to note that notwithstanding this difficulty in overcoming the challenges associated with its anachronistic model, the Biennale actually remains a reference in the world of contemporary art, an event where all artists and curators want to be present, and where a growing number of countries still wish to participate. It is true that from a long time the pavilions in Venice have shown an obsolete idea of nation, however, it is interesting to investigate, first, which concept of nation the Biennale is currently trying to convey; and second if the pavilions, through their curatorial and artistic choice, have become a privileged scenarios to offer a more updated concept of the “nation” as several examples of the last two editions show.

In this context, perhaps the best known example took place in the 2013 edition, when France and Germany decided to exchange their respective pavilions, which are located inside the Giardini area opposite each other, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Elysée Treaty that ended years of war between the two nations. In their press release they claimed that

“A fundamental consideration was the current working reality of the art world, in which international cooperation and communication has become a matter of course—an art world in which the dialogue between cultural spheres has much greater influence than the impermeability of national borders” (Müller 2012).

Also the artists’ choice followed the same direction: foreign artists but with links to these countries<sup>7</sup>.

Other pavilions did similar choices, inviting curators and / or artists from other countries, thus putting in dialogue artists from different geographical areas. This was the case of the 2013 Cuba Pavilion, which invited seven Cuban artists and seven international<sup>8</sup> with the aim of creating a dialogue between them and the exhibition space, the Venice Archaeological Museum. The same formula was used again in 2015, when in the pavilion participated four Cuban and four artists from other nationalities<sup>9</sup>. In the same year, also the Mauritius, State of San Marino and the Syrian Arab Republic opted for artistic choices promoting the dialogue between their national artists with fellows from other countries<sup>10</sup> for their pavilions in Venice.

Still in 2013, Kenya was represented by artists of different nationalities: one Italian, one Italian-Brazilian, two Kenyans and eight Chinese with the curatorship of two Italians<sup>11</sup>. But in this case the choices were not determined by the desire to establish art dialogues and / or a relationships, but by political and economic influences: the interests and personal relations of the Italian artist - owner of a tourist resort in Kenya – and the Chinese investment, which made possible this country participation. Though it is not a positive example, it actually turned out to be very fruitful event, as the criticism addressed by many allowed divulging this situation –and, indirectly, it was also an opportunity to

denounce how contemporary art area in Kenya is affected by different interests<sup>12</sup>.

A strange coincidence caused, again in 2013, another very interesting case: the creation of a single pavilion for two countries, Lithuania and Cyprus. Both nations had contacted, without knowing it, the same curator, the Lithuanian Raimundas Malašauskas. He took advantage of this situation to create a single project, which would include both countries. The purpose was to emphasize the importance of cosmopolitanism and relations between countries that characterize modern society. The pavilions received a special mention for national participations by the Biennale international committee for their "original curatorial format that brings together two countries in a singular experience" (La Biennale 2013). This was also a good example for sharing the resources and the high cost of participation.

International relations are, however, also made of conflicts and states that are not officially recognized, as is the case of Palestine - which, therefore, cannot be officially present with a national pavilion in Venice. However, throughout the various editions of the Biennale, there were many occasions for the Palestinians to be present in Venice, projects that promote a reflection on their own political status. In 2003 the general Biennale curator, Francesco Bonami, proposed to the Palestinian artists Hilal Sandi and her husband, the Italian Alessandro Petti, the realization of a Palestinian compensatory project within the space of the Giardini. The work, entitled *Stateless nation*, consisted of reproductions in large format of ten ID cards and travel documents issued by the Palestinian Authority and by the governments of Israeli and Lebanon. The reproductions were installed among the other pavilions. As Hilal said, the Palestinians

"are absolutely obsessed with travel documents of all kinds; we can't afford not to be (...). If Palestinians are dispersed all over the world, and if we think of the Biennale as a metaphor for the world, then Palestinians should be dispersed all over the Biennale. I would have represented the Palestinians this way even if he [Bonami] had asked us specifically to design a pavilion. For us, this is the Palestinian pavilion" (Hawthorne, 2003).

In 2013, Bashir Makhoul, one of artists who represented the Palestine (still without an official pavilion, but as an official collateral event), invited the public to contribute to his *Otherwise occupied* work, with the occupation of the Venice Fine Arts Academy Garden, putting cardboard boxes in which were carved small windows. The work intended to raise questions about the kinds of spaces that arise in the conflict areas and in the urban margins of globalization. So this artwork tried to emphasize the performative aspects of the idea of occupation.

In other cases, the pavilions become the appropriate place to know and / or to put into discussion different realities of their own country or even of other nations. In 2013, the artist Richard Mosse presented, in the Irish Pavilion, through videos and photographs, a narrative of the civil war in Congo. In 2015 the pavilion of Tuvalu tried, with the artwork of Taiwanese Vincent Huang *Crossing the tide*, to draw attention to the rising sea level, which dramatically endangers the existence of this and other Pacific islands. In order to raise awareness and sensitize visitors to this reality, the artist put some boardwalks on a large tank filled with water - with the passage of people, the boardwalks hands over a little and could get wet the visitors' feet: a symbolic representation of how the this country is in danger of extinction as a direct result of climate change.

Other countries choose to make the pavilions reflect their problematic geopolitical situation. In 2015 edition, the artworks of the selected artists of the Georgia and Kosovo pavilions have focused on the concept of border<sup>13</sup>, mirroring the recent history of their countries independence: Georgia was recognized independent from the former Soviet Union only in 1991, while Kosovo proclaimed itself independent from Serbia in 2008, although it is not yet recognized by almost half member states of the UN.

Finally, in Venice there are also representations of nations that no longer exist<sup>14</sup>. The artist, Ivan Grubanov, selected to represent the Serbian pavilion in 2015 through his installation *United Dead Nation* brings into discussion the concept of nation, using the flags of state that have disappeared from the political map of the world, but that still stay alive through traditions, memories and the geographical areas they represented. The flags, which are the symbol and the image of a country, are used as a medium and instrument to reflect on the meaning of nation in a global and postcolonial era, where the states are subjugated by transnational powers.

The examples described above are necessarily only a limited representation of the different ways in which various pavilions tried to question the Biennale format. My choices reflected the cases which I consider most representative or that I had the opportunity to see in person. Along with the presented cases, however, there are pavilions where artists and curators are still chosen according to the nationality criterion and/or where the artworks displayed do not call into question the concepts of nation, identity or boundary. But couldn't one actually argue that this is in fact an accurate representation of reality<sup>15</sup>, where some artists and curators are more or less committed and others more or less critical on these issues?

Even if many of the criticisms directed to the Biennale seem pertinent, one should however acknowledge its resilience, its ability to have passed through artistic, political and social transformation over more than 100 years. It may have slowly reacted to changes, but the truth is that the Biennale never stopped to question its features and its format. Also, in the last editions, national pavilions have changed profoundly. These began to reflect on the meaning of a national participation in an international art exhibition of the XXI century. This same opinion is shared by other researchers Angela Vettese, professor at the IUAV Venice University stated that

"the much-deprecated national pavilions are now seen for their true worth: they oblige us to keep a constant eye on geopolitical history as reflected in the arts and, from the '90s onwards, have caused us to reflect anew on such issues as the concept of

Also Caroline Jones, art history professor at MIT – Massachusetts Institute of Technology, believes that the national pavilions continue to play a conceptual and political role and that the nation concept is necessary to understand the artworks therein presented. While recognizing that it is essential to permanently criticize the terms 'nation', 'internationalism' and 'global exhibition', she thinks that the Biennale is the best place to experience, reflect and to make critical analysis of these issues<sup>16</sup>.

Summing up, the national pavilion model of the Venice Biennale, despite being an anachronistic exhibition model, with connotations drawn from the universal exhibitions of the nineteenth century, also have positive aspects: it (i) provides an opportunity for many artists from peripheral countries to be present in an international art biennial; (ii) offers a chance for several curators to simultaneously present their artistic / curatorial choices, transforming the Biennale in pluralistic event as no other; (iii) puts in question, probably in more depth than in other exhibitions, what it means to "represent" a nation in the twenty-first century especially thanks to the changes implemented by the national pavilions in the last editions. This new trend represents a real possibility for the Biennale to become truly contemporary and, above all, directly as a consequence of its organizational structure to be a privileged place for discussion of those issues which it is accused being unable to represent.

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<sup>1</sup> For example the Canada Pavilion "was built by the Italian government as part of Italy's WWII reparations to Canada. Similarly, the Biennale granted its storage building to the Uruguayan government to function as its pavilion. In both of these cases, the Canadian and Uruguayan governments did not have to invest in the construction of their pavilions, enabling them to achieve a more solid national representation through a web of political, international diplomatic relations surrounding the world of art" (Moreno V. 2010, 10)

<sup>2</sup> The quote refers to a book published in 1988 about the participation at the Venice Art Biennale of Yugoslavia, when it still was a federal unitary state. This pavilion, since its opening in 1938, was the national representation building of: the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1938-1940); the Federative National Republic of Yugoslavia (1950-1990); the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1995-1999); the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (2001-2005) and the Republic of Serbia (since 2007).

<sup>3</sup> This decision was also facilitated due to the architectural differences between Venice and São Paulo. The latter has always housed its general exhibitions and pavilions inside one single building, while in Venice the pavilions are located in different venues that are the property of the countries that built them. The Biennale always justified the inability to change its format because it is not the owner of the pavilions and could not destroy or use them in a different way. Moreover some buildings are protected by the Italian government and they could not be demolished. See also Afonso, Lúcia, and Ughetta Molin Fop. "Pavilhão!?. A determinação espacial no discurso curatorial sobre representações nacionais nas bienais de arte de Veneza e São Paulo". *Jornal Arquitectos J-A* 253 (2016). Accessed July 29, 2016. <http://www.jornalarquitectos.pt/pt/jornal/representacoes-nacionais/teste-articulo>.

<sup>4</sup> Email from Lisette Lagnado to Ulrike Groos, May 15, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> "Non è più possibile, infatti, il riconoscimento della purezza del nucleo nazionale, ma piuttosto il positivo apporto di una transnazionalità, intreccio di popoli che produce eclettismo culturale e necessario interrazzismo. [...] Da qui il mio invito al superamento dell'autarchia ai padiglioni nazionali, (...) a favore di un'ospitalità di artisti di altri paesi. Questo produce inevitabilmente l'esaltazione del valore della coesistenza, particolarmente significativo nel presente momento storico che pone l'accento sulle differenze".

<sup>6</sup> Intervention in a roundtable entitled Defining Contemporary Art. 25 Years of Pivotal Artworks, organized by Phaidon at MoMA, New York in May 2012. Available at [http://youtu.be/tXqnGI2\\_b2c](http://youtu.be/tXqnGI2_b2c) (excerpt to 2m55s). Accessed June 7, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> France was represented by French-Albanian Anri Sala, who currently lives in Berlin. Germany chose the Chinese Weiwei, the Indian Dayanita Singh, the South African Santu Mafokeng and the Franco-German Romuald Karmakar. The four have bond with Germany, resulting from several projects that they have been developing with several institutions of that country.

<sup>8</sup> Glenda León, Lazaro Saavedra, Tonel, Liudmila Velasco, Nelson Ramírez de Arellano Conde, Magdalena Campos-Pons&Neil Leonard, Sandra Ramos (Cuba); Hermann Nitsch (Austria); Wang Du (China); H.H.Lim (Malaysia); Pedro Costa, Rui Chafes (Portugal); Francesca Leone, Gilberto Zorio (Italy).

<sup>9</sup> Grethell Rasúa, Luis Edgardo Gómez Armenteros, Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo, Celia and Yunior (Cuba), Lida Abdul (Afghanistan), Giuseppe Stampone (Italy), Lin Yilin (China) e Olga Chernysheva (Russia).

<sup>10</sup> <http://bit.ly/Maurituspavilion>; <http://bit.ly/SanMarinopavilion>; <http://bit.ly/Syrianpavilion>. Consulted on March 14, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Artists: Kivuthi Mbuno, Chrispus Wangombe Wachira (Kenya), Fan Bo, Luo Ling, Liu Ke, Lu Peng, Li Wei, He Weiming, Chen Wenling, Feng Zhengjie (China) César Meneghetti (Italy/Brazil) and Armando Tanzini (Italy); curators: Paola Poponi and Sandro Orlandi (Italy).

<sup>12</sup> The same situation was nearly repeated in 2015 (Serubiri, Moses. "Outrage over Chinese artists chosen to represent Kenya at Venice Biennale." *The Guardian*, April 15, 2015, <http://bit.ly/VBCnKe-TGd>) but the strong criticism of the Kenya artistic community prevented the realization of the country's national participation (Barluzzi, Riccardo. "Kenya Backs Out from 56 Venice Biennale." *My Art Guide*, July 2015, <http://bit.ly/VBCnKe-MAG>; Vourlias, Christopher. "Kenya disowns pavilion at Venice Biennale." *Al Jazeera America*, May 7, 2015, <http://bit.ly/VBCnKe-AIJ>). Articles consulted on March 14, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> <http://bit.ly/Georgiapavilion>; <http://bit.ly/Kosovopavilion>. Consulted on March 14, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918); Ottoman Empire (1299-1922); Yugoslavia (1918-2003); German Democratic Republic (1949-1990); USSR (1922-1991); Czechoslovakia (1918-1922); Gran Colombia (1819-1831); Tibet (1912-1951); United Arab Republic (1958-1961) and South Vietnam (1955-1975).

<sup>15</sup> The artist Jonas Salas, considering that art realised in the context of the Venice Biennale is a more accurate presentation of the world than is often represented, created on the occasion of the 2013 Biennale a mobile application called *The Ideological Guide to the Venice Biennale*. The intention was to "to provide these visitors with the tools to read into the global-political hardware of this manifestation". This guide offers to each pavilion, beyond artists and curators' information, data on the political context of the country, the funding and the selection process of the participation. Among many other features, this application also allows to plan a visit to the different pavilions on the basis of the geopolitical alliances. More information is available at <http://venicebiennale2013.ideologicalguide.com/>. Consulted on March 14, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> See Jones A. Caroline. "Biennial Culture: A Longer History". In *The Biennial Reader: An Anthology on Large-Scale Perennial Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*, edited by Filipovic Elena, van Hal, Marieke and Øvstebø Solveig. Bergen: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010.

## Short bio-note

Ughetta Molin Fop is a PhD student at the *Instituto de História da Arte*, FCSH, Nova University of Lisbon. Her research project, financed by *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia*, focuses on the participation of Portugal at the Venice Art Biennale. Her project aims not only to reconstruct an essential part of Portuguese contemporary art history, but also to collect memories, tell new stories, and provide new insights into questions such as the cultural life and policies of a nation or the influence of international biennials on the Portuguese art context. Ughetta has received a B.A. in Public Relation (University of Udine, Italy), a M.A. in Organization of Cultural Events (University of Ferrara, Italy) and a M.A. in History of Art (University of Padua, Italy). Her first two dissertations focused on management and public relations systems in museums and the third on artists with ecological concerns. Her research interests include contemporary art (international and specifically Portuguese), museum studies, representations of 'national' art, art biennials, ecological art.