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La Biennale di Venezia

19. Mostra
Internazionale
di Architettura
Padiglione Italia

Terræ Aquæ

Italy and
the Intelligence
of the Sea

Italian Pavilion
19th International Architecture Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia

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Press release

Venice, May 7, 2025 – From 10 May to 23 November 2025, at the Tese delle Vergini in the Arsenale in Venice, architectural, scientific, and cultural reflections on the sea will take center stage in ***Terrae Aquae. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea***, the title of the exhibition project **Italian Pavilion at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia**, promoted by the **Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity - Ministry of Culture** and **curated by Guendalina Salimei**.

The Italian participation is dedicated to a **Mediterranean extended to the neighboring oceans**: the centrality of the structural relationship between water and land, between the natural and the artificial, between infrastructure and landscape, between city and coast, affects the identity of the country and the delicate balances between environment, humanity, culture, and economy, which must both be protected in their integrity and re-designed for that essential adaptation to a future marked by new and pressing needs. Looking at Italy from the sea implies a shift in perspective, requiring a rethinking of the boundary between land and water as an integrated system of architecture, infrastructure, and landscape.

The exhibition will welcome works from individuals and groups, both established and emerging, triggering an **intergenerational, intercultural dialogue with no gender distinctions**, in which the past and present will be brought together. It will involve designers, scholars, and cultural operators — but also young people, poets, artists, research institutions, and third-sector

organizations — in rethinking the relationship between land and sea, with the display of both completed redevelopment projects and contributions created ad hoc through the use of multidisciplinary and multimodal methods, as well as the outcomes of institutional and academic research.

The listening of different voices, welcomed in an inclusive spirit of people, ideas, and expressive means, aims to stimulate the awakening of a **collective intelligence** capable of triggering a renewal that starts from the Italian coasts and expands globally. Often neglected, degraded, and abused, our coasts are actually places of encounter between ecosystems, cultures, activities, and religions, where human action knows and must also express itself through poetry and respect. A relationship so visceral that it found its highest symbolism in Venice with the ritual of the marriage of the sea, celebrated every year by the Doge aboard the Bucintoro at the mouth of the port of San Niccolò at the Lido, where, after pouring a vase of holy water, he would cast the ring blessed by the Patriarch into the waves, pronouncing the words “Desponsamus te, mare nostrum, in signum veri perpetuæ dominii” (We marry you, our sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion).

The **themes** we are called to reflect on stem from the need to ensure sustainable management and environmental and cultural enhancement of coastal and port areas, essential for the resilience of territories, the preservation of natural heritage, and, in general, a more balanced dialogue between land and sea. Among these themes, some emerge with greater urgency: rethinking the divisions caused by port areas, coastal roads, tourist settlements, and illegal structures that disrupt the continuity between cities and the sea, as well as between natural ecosystems; reinterpreting threshold devices, transitional elements between land and sea such as dams, piers, breakwaters, coastal barriers, lighthouses, and artificial platforms; rewriting waterfronts as a process of urban regeneration that can transform coastal areas, both urban and non-urban, into livable, accessible, and sustainable places; rethinking hospitality and port infrastructures to adapt to climate change, reducing the risk of hydrogeological instability and impact on the natural ecosystem; repurposing industrial, port, and productive archaeology abandoned along the coasts; redefining active protection strategies for environmental heritage and rediscovering submerged, natural, and archaeological heritage.

All of this was the focus of the **selected contributions gathered through a Call for Visions and Projects** launched in January and concluded last March. The call was addressed to designers, scholars, and cultural practitioners, with the aim of **collecting design, theoretical, and multimedia proposals for rethinking the relationship between land and sea** in coastal and port areas. It was an invitation extended across Italy to imagine the “form of the sea,” envisioning futuristic or utopian scenarios, projects, and aspirations for all those border zones between land and sea, where the rules of inhabiting are constantly reshaped by the laws of nature and of humanity.

Over 600 contributions were collected by the Italian Pavilion, demonstrating just how urgent the theme is perceived to be. Ranging from completed projects and structured research conducted within academies or cultural institutions, to highly visionary proposals aimed at imagining alternative and unprecedented scenarios, as well as engineering solutions addressing complex infrastructural issues, the submissions came from both established firms and young architects or students. What emerges is a rich plurality of approaches, perspectives, and levels of design development.

The results of the **call** were organized into three sections. The first is the **Census on the Present**, which showcases completed or ongoing projects in Italy related to the reconversion of abandoned areas, port redevelopment, *waterfront* regeneration, coastal rewilding, and much more. Next is the **Gallery**, the most extensive and dense body of contributions, a collection of *deep data* stemming from established practices across various territorial contexts of the Peninsula. These projects, visions, and reflections offer insights into how to more consciously address the growing complexity of coastal areas, increasingly subject to environmental, social, and economic pressures. Lastly, the **Research Laboratory** serves as a workshop for the interactive exploration of topics related to the intelligence of the sea, in collaboration with universities, research centers, and civil society associations, where scholars from various fields and disciplines present the outcomes of their research.

The exhibition design will articulate the different sections in distinct spaces, interpreting the concept of the “**threshold**” and compelling visitors to actively “**cross**” it.

Upon entering the first Tesa, the visitor is confronted with a wall—a horizontal element that cuts through the space, evoking both large-scale infrastructures and towering cliffs. This is the **Two-Headed Wall**, designed to host two different forms of intelligence. Constructed with tubular frames and canvases, one “head” narrates the history and present of Italy as seen from the sea—its beauty and its fragility—through a video projection. The other “head,” set up like a 19th-century gallery, looks toward the Italy of the future, generating ideas and offering visions through a collection of imaginative projects, maps, and drawings. All the selected design contributions from the **call** are displayed on monitors and within the gallery wall. At the short end of the Tesa, visitors encounter a large **LED wall** showcasing completed and ongoing projects—ambassadors of the change hoped to become standard practice. On the opposite side, from a platform, visitors can view the film work *Via Maris*, a digital fresco on Italy’s maritime culture by visual anthropologist **Francesco de Melis**, created with the support of the **Central Institute for Intangible Heritage** of the Ministry of Culture.

At the center, extending the full length of the second Tesa, is the **Research Pier**: designed as a series of terraced platforms accessible via a long ramp, it features tables equipped with interactive monitors where visitors can watch videos presenting the outcomes of research by universities, institutions, foundations, and numerous other cultural players. The space also includes areas for *talks* and a theater with a screen that will show selected films curated by **Istituto Luce Cinecittà**. Along the walls, **Luigi Filetici’s** photographic narrative *Mare Mosso. Mediterraneo Report* and the geopolitical maps by cartographer **Laura Canali** use two distinct languages to depict the restless present of our *mare nostrum*, offering both analytical and interpretive readings of the shifting strategies, conflicts, and balances shaping the region.

The spaces of the Italian Pavilion are animated by works from **contemporary artists** who interpret the exhibition’s theme through a transversal and unexpected lens. **Thomas De Falco** explores his practice through works and performances using textile materials; for the occasion, he has created a piece representing a dove, displayed inside the Pavilion itself, along with a performance titled *The Earth still Sings*, featuring interdisciplinary soprano

Silvia Colombini, for the opening of the Public Program at the International Sculpture Park of Villa Fürstenberg. **Agnes Questionmark**, whose practice spans performance, sculpture, video, and installation, presents *Draco Piscis*, also for the International Sculpture Park of Villa Fürstenberg—an imposing installation representing a hybrid mythological creature that appears to emerge from the sea, visible in the Italian Pavilion via a video projection. Both artists' works were made possible thanks to the sponsorship of Banca Ifis.

Marya Kazoun, an artist born in Beirut and active between New York and Venice, works with installations and performances. For the Italian Pavilion, she presents *Long Winter*, an installation that reflects on the fragility of human existence through fragmented pieces of ice and glass, assembled to reconstruct a “frozen” *cityscape*—an evocative reminder of the precariousness of our presence on the planet. **Alfredo Pirri** creates works that bring painting, sculpture, and installation into dialogue with space—be it exhibition space, public space, or sacred space. For the Pavilion, he presents an installation from his renowned series *PASSI*, consisting of a floor made of shattered mirrors; in this case, the work is titled *Paradisi*. The works of Marya Kazoun and Alfredo Pirri are made possible thanks to the support of Fondazione Berengo.

Anna Muskardin is an Italian visual artist whose work—ranging from sculpture and video to site-specific installations and photography—places the body, both her own and that of others, at the center of an exploration into multifaceted cultural and spiritual realities, delving into their most hidden aspects and existential implications. For the Italian Pavilion, the artist presents the iconic sculpture *Portrait with the Emperor*, which enters into a silent dialogue with the primary and symbolic essence of the exhibition's theme.

The spaces of the Italian Pavilion are immersed in the sound project *Acque Italiche* by composer and interdisciplinary artist **David Monacchi**: a multi-channel eco-acoustic installation featuring water sounds recorded in lands shaped by human hands for millennia.

At the end of the journey, in the Giardino delle Vergini, stands the **Arca di Ulisse**: a vessel—understood as a device for collecting, preserving, and disseminating materials and data—that is “shipwrecked.” Just as the Homeric hero always returns from his journeys, everything that happens at sea leaves traces along the coast: the transportation of goods becomes, within the context of the Italian Pavilion, a metaphor for the systematic accumulation of data and artifacts through a series of cross-cutting categories. These are organized around eight “stops” inspired by Ulysses' voyages, which structure the contents of the crates as material and immaterial traces of events, even those remote in space and time, collected along the Italian coasts. For the specific installation in the Giardino delle Vergini, the crates are repurposed from special disposable packaging and were recovered from a number of logistics companies, with the support of the nonprofit organization Linaria Rete. In this vision, it becomes important to consider the life of the structures beyond the duration of the Biennale Architettura 2025.

The Italian Pavilion, throughout the duration of the exhibition, is accompanied by a **Public Program** titled *The Sea of Intelligence. Dialogues*, consisting of numerous events—including seminars, conferences, workshops, and lab

sessions—organized in venues significant to both Venetian and international culture. For the second consecutive year, the International Sculpture Park of Villa Fürstenberg in Mestre (VE) hosts the opening event of the Public Program. *The Sea of Intelligence. Dialogues* will open on Sunday, June 1, 2025, with the performance *The Earth still Sings* by artist Thomas De Falco, followed by the presentation of the sculptural work *Draco Piscis* by Agnes Questionmark.

The project ***Terrae Aquae. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea*** is illustrated by a **catalog published by Electa**, which contains reflections from experts in the field, contributions selected through the *Call for Visions and Projects*, photographic essays, artistic incursions, research outcomes, and other cultural and project-related insights. Divided into three volumes and accompanied by special inserts, the catalog is conceived as a navigational chart, designed to guide the reader in discovering the collective design experiences, themes, and outcomes of discussions and debates.

The **Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity**, part of the Department for Cultural Activities of the Ministry of Culture, contributes to the realization of the Italian Pavilion with a sum of 800,000 euros, formalized, as usual, through an agreement with the Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia.

The Italian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2025 is also made possible thanks to the support of sponsors **Banca Ifis, OICE - Association of Engineering, Architecture, and Technical-Economic Consulting Organizations, Fondazione Berengo**, and technical sponsors **Layher and VIBIA**. Special thanks are extended to the official suppliers **Arctic Paper Italia** and **Tenute Navarra**.

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Alessandro Giuli

Minister of Culture

Introducing the exhibition project of the Italian Pavilion, presented on the occasion of the 19th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, I would like to thank President Pietrangelo Buttafuoco, the Director-General for Contemporary Creativity, Angelo Piero Cappello, and, with particular gratitude, the curator Guendalina Salimei.

Terrae Aquae is the title of the exhibition, a Latin title that I like to pronounce according to its archaic diction, in which we would say *Terra-e Aqua-e*. It is a more sonorous pronunciation that evokes the idea of a polysemic singularity that is, at once, a plurality.

Indeed, lands and waters present themselves as active subjects, though we should not overlook their singular interpretations: *to the land, to the water, or of the land, of the water*. Briefly, it is a magnificent multiplicity of meanings that the Latin language, with its innate expressive power, conveys with great vitality.

Equally significant is the project's subtitle, which places emphasis on Italy and its "intelligence of the sea."

Italy was born of the sea and took shape beside it, absorbing its archetypal presence, its immanent transcendence within both our origins and our destiny.

In the continuous interplay between humans, nature and its governing principles, *Thalassa* was the personification the ancient Hellenes gave to a presence endowed with its own divine intelligence, one with which we Italians, with our

endless coastlines, have always engaged.

Venice speaks for itself: the rite of marriage to the sea is something that has always lived on, something that has crossed millennia and continues to repeat itself as a foundational element of both reality and community.

The bond between the sea and *La Serenissima* is inseparable, culturally, historically, architecturally, artistically, in terms of landscape and anthropology. The Italian Pavilion's project underscores and celebrates this connection, offering Venetians, Italians and visitors from every latitude an enlightening experience of discovery.

There is another aspect that *Terrae Aquae* brings to light, inviting further reflection, not without political connotations.

At a time when the global public agenda is dominated by concern for the future of the planet, with its lands and waters, it is worth remembering that humankind, formidable inventor of religions and dogmas, has succeeded in creating a "millenarian church" that has transformed climate change into a kind of paralyzing myth. Crushed by guilt, we are swallowing the stone of despair that David Herbert Lawrence wrote of in *The Plumed Serpent*, as though our unhappy fate were already irreversible.

I believe that a major undertaking such as the one realised in the Italian Pavilion of the 19th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia represents the necessary overturning of this dogmatic and apocalyptic paradigm. And I believe it stands as proof, fittingly in Venice, that nothing is inevitable, except our long-standing inclination to engage with reality not by building "counter-churches of optimism", but by persisting in a wise and loving search for practicable solutions in the service of humanity and its harmonious existence within the cosmos.

«There is no god who fights alongside those who are not already armed», said the ancient philosopher Plotinus, during a time of transition no less uncertain than ours. And our arms, once again, are those of will, intellect and genius, directed towards the good and *pro salute populi*.

Angelo Piero Cappello

Director-General for Contemporary Creativity of
the Minister of Culture

Commissioner of the Italian Pavilion

In a time when knowledge was considered a unified whole of science and art, our national literature began with a “dialogue” (as medieval quaestiones were called), conceived and written by our greatest poet: *Quaestio de aqua et terra* was the title of a small treatise first published in Venice in 1508. It was Dante Alighieri who questioned the crucial matter of the necessary relationship between land and water, imagining a dialogue among scholars who could contribute their thoughts on an issue so vital for our country and the entire planet.

This dialogue remains crucial for Italy, which, with its history and culture, is deeply rooted in these delicate balances. The theme of the Italian Pavilion, *TERRÆ AQUÆ. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea*, revisits today, in light of current scientific knowledge and technological tools, the vital and structural relationship between land and water, as well as between the natural and the artificial. It highlights the urgent need to reconsider these boundaries as integrated systems of architecture, infrastructure, and landscape. Today, it is a pressing issue intertwined with social, economic, and environmental paradigms, engaging in a process of adaptation toward a future that demands concrete answers to the challenges posed by our territories and the environment. Italy's participation in the Biennale Architettura 2025, with the Italian Pavilion curated by Guendalina Salimei, represents a significant opportunity to contribute to the international debate on the future of contemporary design.

Aligned with the proposal of Carlo Ratti, curator of the 19th International Architecture Exhibition - La

Biennale di Venezia, the Italian Pavilion fits into a broader context, expanding the Mediterranean towards the oceans and reconsidering the centrality of these elements in the design of our cities and territories. Water is no longer viewed solely as a resource but as a key element in a transformative process that makes the regeneration of places, landscapes, and infrastructures possible. The connection between cities and coasts, between ecology and urbanization, is at the heart of a reflection that challenges the physical and symbolic boundaries of our culture, stimulating the creation of new strategies for sustainable coexistence.

Guendalina Salimei's curatorial proposal presents the Mediterranean as a crossroads of stories, cultures, and civilizations, pushing beyond its traditional boundaries, making water a place of possibilities for imagining new and effective solutions. The exhibition path invites reflection through an immersive and interactive dimension, where architecture not only tells the memory but projects towards the future, utilizing new technologies and innovative approaches.

Through the open call to professionals and design creatives, the Italian Pavilion gathers design, theoretical, and multimedia ideas that place the concept of "threshold" at the center, understood as a space of connection between land and water, between nature and human intervention. This multidisciplinary approach stimulates the creation of solutions to face the challenges posed by climate change, seeing them as opportunities for a sustainable, inclusive, and responsible future.

Promoted by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Italian Ministry of Culture, the Italian Pavilion aims to be a laboratory of ideas and visions, a space for exchange where architecture and urban design are tools of awareness, responsibility, and change. In a time of profound transformations, the dialogue between land and water has never been so important. It is essential to imagine new design solutions that harmonize innovation and sustainability, respecting the integrity of territories, the diversity of communities, and the natural balance that binds us to our future.

Pietrangelo Buttafuoco

President, Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia

The 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia opens with a focus on the dialogue between disciplines, for in order to understand the complexity of our time, the contribution of all knowledge is necessary, with Architecture as the cornerstone. It is in the project and the design that the very meaning and value of this discipline is realized. It is a full humanism to give importance to the phase of ideation, to the reflection before action, to the gathering of minds united in the common aim of finding solutions that benefit humanity. Where the understanding of the surrounding space, the nature of the place, is the primary condition.

For several editions of the Biennale Architettura, the theme chosen by the curator has been embraced by most of the participating countries, becoming a harmonious element between the International Exhibition and the National Pavilions' displays.

In 2014, a further step was taken. Rem Koolhaas, the artistic director of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition, proposed a specific theme to the national pavilions, *Absorbing Modernity 1914 – 2014*, in order to investigate the decisive moments of a centuries-long process of modernization. And following Koolhaas' approach, Carlo Ratti now invites participating countries to confront the theme *One Place, One Solution*, to highlight human ingenuity in the face of contemporary challenges.

This sets the stage for *Terrae/Acquae*, the curatorial project by Guendalina Salimei for the Italian Pavilion this year. Salimei has embraced

the ideas of interdisciplinarity, the agora, and the exchange of ideas, to craft a vision that reclaims the centrality of the Mediterranean, turning it into a future memory within the two Tese in the Arsenale and the evocative Giardino delle Vergini.

We come from the Mediterranean, and only in the Mediterranean can we imagine and build a future. On the “bicephalic wall” conceived by the curator, what we have been and what we might become are projected in simultaneity. And if we are not to proceed through History, let us proceed through Geography. Italy is at the center of the Mediterranean, washed and blessed by three different seas. Until just over a century and a half ago, the sea was still part of its destiny. We have forgotten that the Mediterranean surrounds us, imagining ourselves and assimilating as a collective to experiences that may be virtuous, efficient, productive, but without the sea. In them, it is hard to find a deep sense of identification, because they are not our roots and our landscapes. Reversing the perspective, looking at Italy from the water, not the water from Italy, is an exercise that Salimei invites us to undertake, immersed in virtual waves, to observe the proposals that come from the sea, for the sea.

A place, then, the Mediterranean. *A solution*, therefore: the Mediterranean.

Curatorial text

*«La terra e il verde della selva apparve.
Quinci ei, nôtando, ambi movea di tutta
Sua forza i piedi a quella volta. Come
Presso ne fu, quanto d'uom corre un grido,
Fiero il colpì romor: poichè i ruttati
Sin dal fondo del mar flutti tremendi,
Che agli aspri si rompean lidi ronchiosi,
Strepitavan, mugghiavano, e di bianca
Spuma coprian tutta la sponda, mentre
Porto capace di navigli, o seno
Non vi s'apria, ma littorali punte
Risaltavano in fuori, e scogli e sassi»
(Odissea, V, 507-518)¹.*

In Homer's *Odyssey* the sea is the Sea, painful, teeming with fish, divine, a metaphor for human life, dotted with difficult and pleasant moments, old friends lost and new friends found, passionate loves and faithful loves, a "dear life", which the sea threatens but also rewards with with enthralling experiences.

Predrag Matvejević distinguished between seaside cities and cities on the sea. Unlike in the past, today Italy seems to be simply on the sea because it has forgotten the actions and rituals that allowed it to be the cradle of "a people of poets, artists, heroes, saints, thinkers, scientists, navigators, migrants" but also of fishermen, simple and tenacious ones like Giovanni Verga's Malavoglia, who with their small communities and kind gestures have for centuries have maintained a pact of love with the sea.

The Mediterranean shapes the coasts, hundreds of port cities and a deeply extended hinterland. In Italy, you can breathe the sea from the heights of the Alps and the Apennines. The 10/2020 issue of "Limes", entitled *Italy is the sea*, stitches together the seams of the "meaningful" sociological, political, strategic, anthropological, cultural, infrastructural and natural Mediterranean. We must understand how the sea, the ports, the

¹Translation by Ippolito Pindemonte, 1822

coasts are crucial resources not only for our economy, our security, but above all for our future.

In the delicate environmental balance, the seas are the main victims of climate change. The average level of the Mediterranean is rising. Its water temperature has risen, endangering biodiversity. Storm events have become more frequent, speeding up erosion and endangering lives, fishing, trade and tourism. Populations are moving in search of more favorable conditions, with consequent modification of geopolitical assets. Different situations and strategies see the element of water at the center of a new architectural policy focusing attention on what are actually the “primary gates” of our cities, thus trying to reclaim spaces and places once allocated for public use. Italy’s coasts, its “long road of sand” as Pierpaolo Pasolini defined it, understood as a surface and not as a line, make up its largest land mass, with approximately 8,300 km of human development. With their jagged cliffs, sandy beaches and lagoons, they comprise a natural heritage of extraordinary variety, reflected in local traditions, ancient myths and art. As a counterpoint, the use of its coasts has always oscillated between exploitation and contemplation: on the one hand, ports and infrastructures for fishing, tourism and trade; on the other hand, the choice to live by the sea in multiple forms and ways, from small villages to large cities, from Roman villas to seaside resorts, has generated a discontinuous anthropic morphology, often resulting from irresponsible practices.

Spying Italy from the sea implies a change of perspective, the need to rethink the border between land and water as an integrated system of architecture, infrastructure and landscape, mediated through the “maritime” culture, by which approaching the land is an act that combining rituality and discovery. This border, whose identity is closer to *limen* than to the *limes*², is a privileged place where new practices can be tested, ranging from the experimentation of new uses to the creation of new communities, from the study of new concepts to the assumption of elements of meaning to identify new meanings. The places and spaces of the *limen*, to varying degrees, pass through a phase of transformation, areas whose temporary extraordinary status makes a space for phenomenological, design and economic experimentation.

What makes it useful for our ideas to associate the Mediterranean Sea and its shores with the concept of *limen* is transitivity, the liminal state that represents the change of state in an adaptive cycle. Rebecca Solnit in *History of Walking* defines the liminal state as “the state of the individual suspended between his past and future identity and therefore outside the established order, in a condition of potentiality”³. It is in this attitude to change that the project finds its field of action. These threshold spaces offer an abundance of opportunities, balanced between a difficult revelation and processes of

² “Probably the idea of the retrieval of the Mediterranean cultural area can be best described by a term that has a phonetic similarity with *limes*, namely *limen*, which, although it also means, by metonymy, border, frontier, properly indicates a threshold and, in a figurative sense, a beginning. While *limes* is usually, from a conceptual viewpoint, understood as similar to *terminus*, *limen* has an affinity with *principium*, as a threshold that allows passage, and therefore it can be a condition of relationship, encounter, communication. *Limes* is exclusive, while *limen* is inclusive”. Cfr. Anna Maria Campanale, “Mediterraneo: limes o limen?” in: *Jura Gentium. Rivista di filosofia del diritto internazionale e della politica globale*, 2006, ISSN 1826-8269.

³ Cfr. Rebecca Solnit, *Storia del camminare*, Bruno Mondadori, Milan 2005, p. 36.

transformation, constantly evolving and therefore inviting reflection and research for new design strategies. These spaces can overcome their original exclusion by promoting the birth of new centralities, renewed creativity, able to branch out like a viral and positive echo. They can respond well to a need born from the constant cultural and physical evolutions and transformations, where individuals manifest new needs and unexpected demands. Overcoming the condition of *fracture* is made possible through the application of the concepts of *complexity* and *stratification* which, when employed in the field of architecture, enable us to operate across multiple layers, to superimpose signs and traces while intensifying their meanings. The notion of stratification allows for the creation of public spaces characterised by a profound spatial and functional complexity—effectively reifying a *city upon the city*. These are natural or anthropised landscapes—reinterpreted, imagined, shaped, and superimposed—which convey an intense and shared perceptual complexity. Such themes and strategies, highly relevant to the present discourse, place the sea at the centre of a renewed architectural agenda—one that seeks to refocus attention on what are, in effect, the *primary thresholds* of many of our cities. The aim is to reclaim spaces and places once experienced as neglected or degraded public realms. The task of investigators of habitation becomes a multidisciplinary research work in an attempt to interpret (and anticipate) the evolution of the zeitgeist, which also includes a new awareness of environmental respect, sustainable tourism, and containment of coastal and underwater exploitation. Thus coastal and port architecture must develop pinpointed projects for constant transformation. The commitment of the architectural and landscape project for the threshold between land and water lies in finding a balance between different needs and constraints, an expressive form of a plurality of requests and issues.

The regeneration of waterfronts represents, in many parts of the world, a significant opportunity—a valuable resource for development and a crucial occasion for the transformation of both the territory and the economic and productive fabric. Waterfronts constitute an intermediary space between two distinct realities, both active, both dynamic, both vital. There exists an *economy of water*, a *port economy* capable of expanding towards the city; there are threshold areas that may be enhanced, integrated into the urban fabric, thereby contributing to the emergence of a new spatial quality, new forms of wealth, employment, and—indeed—new models of economic activity. The centralities generated by the intersection of multiple infrastructures and by the flow of people perform a significant aggregative function, substituting for the traditional square and street in an urban context characterised by physically expanded spaces. What is it that allows such places to be regarded as *linear micro-cities*⁴? Primarily, it is the complexity of their functions and uses, and the fact that, beyond the mobility that defines them, they are capable of offering a wide array of activities—ranging from leisure to cultural exchange between natures, religions, and peoples. The strategic role played by the *terrae aquae* relationship in recent years demonstrates the extent to which this theme has become central to the debate on urban renewal dynamics. More broadly, this kind of intervention possesses a potential that remains largely unexplored and yet to be fully realised: it entails the reclamation of public spaces and the reintegration of extensive portions of urban and territorial fabric into the civic realm; it establishes close ties between the site in question and both neighbouring and more distant contexts; and it possesses the capacity to translate

⁴ Understood as spaces that encompass within themselves all the complexities of the city in its totality.

surrounding conditions into true catalysts—or deterrents—for architectural and urban change, thereby acquiring a distinct strategic value.⁵ Indeed, projects of this nature have affected specific urban portions, triggering far broader and more fruitful regeneration processes than initially anticipated. A chain reaction—a phenomenon akin to an *architectural echo*—has emerged, positioning the discourse on the edge between sea and land as a powerful driver of landscape, urban, and architectural transformation across entire stretches of territory.

Issues

Among the many issues that emerge in the planning and management of coastal areas, some problems are particularly urgent and require careful design and theoretical reflection.

First of all, it seems essential to reconsider the spatial breaks generated by port infrastructures, coastal roads, tourist settlements and illegal constructions that interrupt the physical and perceptual continuity between the city and the sea, as well as between the different natural ecosystems. The resolution of these discontinuities implies adopting an integrated design approach, in which urban landscape architecture and natural landscape architecture contribute to redeveloping the sea-land interface. Targeted renaturalization can be an effective tool for re-establishing ecological connections, by creating parks and green corridors that preserve biodiversity and limit land consumption. At the same time, architectural and urban reformulations must operate for a functional and symbolic reorganization of coastal spaces.

Another line of investigation is reinterpreting threshold devices, i.e. transition structures between land and sea, such as dams, piers, breakwaters, lighthouses and artificial platforms. Innovative design solutions based on permeable structures and “soft engineering” principles would allow these elements to be transformed from mere technical infrastructures to multifunctional devices with a strong iconic and symbolic value. These could be configured as habitable spaces for hosting cultural activities and unique sensory experiences, in which the architectural element is charged with a metaphysical and scenographic function, contributing to the construction of a new coastal imaginary.

Redefining coastal and port infrastructures is also a priority in adapting to climate change and mitigating hydrogeological risk. This rethinking must be oriented towards greater integration with responsible tourism and less impactful commercial activity, while also promoting effective strategies for managing emergencies and hospitality. The design of new infrastructures must aim for a balance between the protection of natural resources and the intensification of economic activities, through a sustainable development model that enhances the coexistence between nature and human intervention.

A crucial aspect is the reconfiguring of waterfronts for urban regeneration, aimed at transforming coastal areas into livable, accessible and sustainable spaces. This implies redesigning public spaces by integrating green and blue infrastructures, and promoting mixed uses combining economic dynamics and quality of life. The waterfront, understood as a mediation space between city and sea, is configured as a point of connection and disconnection, dialogue and cooperation, and as an area of constant transformation, full of design and speculative opportunities. Its redevelopment can help overcome the current marginality of these areas, by generating new centralities and new spaces for creativity and socialization. As Françoise Choay suggests,

⁵ Cfr. AA.VV., *Remaking urban waterfront*, ULI – Urban Land Institute, Washington 2004

a cognitive function that engages both mind and senses can be fulfilled by the park⁶. In this light, the waterfront, conceived as an urban park with its horizontal development—a linear configuration running parallel to the coastline—becomes an urban centrality. It takes the form of a new backbone, connecting sea and city, or sea, port, and city. Through its economic and functional dimensions, it has the potential to enhance the value of the liminal territory, and, as seen in certain instances, to generate a powerful charge of energy, transformation, renewal, and thus, of comprehensive valorisation. Much like traditional parks—where integral protection is implemented to preserve specific areas—the *waterfront as park* may feature zones dedicated to operative functions alongside others that are “preserved”, that is, intentionally separated from spaces of direct interaction with the city. Yet, separation does not equate to invisibility: the port, with its vibrant life and continuous activity, may still be observed and understood through elevated pedestrian and cycle paths, panoramic viewpoints, and a system of touristic-educational boat services⁷.

Further food for thought regards reconverting the heritage of ancient and contemporary industrial archaeology along the coasts and in cities. Redeveloping these often degraded spaces offers the opportunity of reducing the environmental impact and generating new public spaces through a design approach favoring integration with the context and using eco-friendly materials and sustainable technologies. Transforming abandoned industrial infrastructures, such as shipyards, warehouses and customs can restore vitality to marginalized territories by reducing urban pressure and promoting new cultural, recreational and productive uses. This process must take place with all due respect for the testimonial value of pre-existing structures, by encouraging solutions that combine historical memory and innovation, with a view to a circular economy and enhancing local resources. Within this broader theme, particular attention is warranted by certain service buildings—such as the Stock Exchange, the Fish Market, the Maritime Station, the Harbour Master’s Office, the Customs House, and the Lazaretto—all of which have historically been closely tied to the activities of port life. Today, these spaces are undergoing profound transformations. Some no longer serve their original purpose, as their functions have become obsolete; others are undergoing comprehensive redevelopment, emerging as key agents in the radical redefinition of urban, social, and economic relations between the city and the port, as well as in the overall reorganisation of waterfront areas. In the context of the sweeping transformations currently underway, the opportunity presented by the reinterpretation of these large, outdated complexes—strategically positioned and deeply intertwined with the waterscape—invites new forms of architectural expression. It calls for a reimagining of these objects in typological and morphological terms, as well as a reconsideration of the variety and scale of functions they might accommodate.

Thus, we are witnessing a transition from fortress-like buildings—whose façades once conveyed authority and inspired awe—to a new generation of structures capable of inventing coastal and urban contexts simultaneously. These are no longer merely spaces of waiting or transit, but rather emerging territorial and landscape polarities: vibrant hubs open day and night, hosting

⁶ Cfr. Françoise Choay, *Espacements*. Figure di spazi urbani nel tempo, ed. it. Skira, Milano 2004

⁷ Cfr. Rosario Pavia, Matteo Di Venosa, *Waterfront*. Dal conflitto all’integrazione, ed. Listlab, Trento 2012

a wide spectrum of activities, and offering spaces for encounter, exchange, and collective growth.

When the waterfront seeks to “conquer the sea,” the strategy—dating back to the nineteenth century—has often involved the construction of piers which, extending into the water, form a distinctive and compelling continuation of the equipped seafront. These are unique places, imbued with an undeniable charm; *piers* constitute centralities capable of hosting or attracting high-profile tourist and cultural activities such as dining venues, leisure and sports facilities, sailing clubs, hospitality structures, bathing establishments, thermal centres, and more. Rooted in a long-standing historical tradition that spans from the Mediterranean to the Northern Seas, piers have always represented an attraction, a moment of leisure—true public squares on the sea where people can meet, linger, and enjoy uncommon views. Particularly intriguing is their suspended condition over the water: they offer unprecedented promenades where one may be *on* the sea without getting wet, granting access to a multiplicity of vantage points and emotional experiences. Water becomes an immense landscape—visible, yet untouchable. Piers, with their strong geographical presence, offer an intriguing solution to the reorganisation of coastal areas, especially in territories with limited capacity for expansion other than toward the sea itself.

In light of the pressures exerted by climate change and human activities, it is essential to redefine the strategies for active protection of the environmental and landscape heritage in coastal areas. Conserving and restoring natural coastal ecosystems, such as marine forests, salt marshes and lagoons, are fundamental for safeguarding biodiversity and mitigating hydrogeological risk. These environments, with their dynamic limits in constant evolution, not only act as natural barriers against erosion and flooding, but are also an essential identity factor for local communities. Therefore, integrated design strategies must be developed to combine ecosystem protection with architectural enhancement and the improvement of social well-being, through sustainable solutions able to respond to contemporary challenges with an innovative vision and environmental sensitivity. Along this trajectory, *piers* once again emerge as a valuable design instrument—this time conceived as lightweight, timber bridges, suspended like stilt structures. These elements provide walkways, viewpoints, and terraces over the water, in perfect harmony with the surrounding habitat. They evoke a return to traditional construction techniques and the restoration of ancient equilibria, offering a delicate architectural presence that respects and resonates with the natural environment.

The waters that bathe the coasts and extend beneath the surface harbor fragments of hidden civilizations: submerged cities, sunken ships, finds that tell stories of ancient trade, epic battles and everyday life. As Jules Verne imagined that the unknown depths of the sea that never changes, while the earth’s crust is incessantly transformed, could host prodigious creatures⁸, we know with certainty that every seabed is an invisible museum that risks disappearing from erosion and invasive management of subsoil resources that include violent drilling, unregulated installations of necessary technologies and looting as the last brutal act of exploitation. Studying and protecting the seabed is not only an act of preservation, but a way to keep alive the memory of a heritage that is an integral part of our history and

⁸ Cfr. Jules Verne, *Twenty-thousand Leagues under the Sea* [Pierre-Jules Hetzel, Parigi 1870], RBA Italia, Milan 2018, p. 17.

identity. Every underwater discovery is a bridge between past and present, an invitation to reflect on the beauty and fragility of our marine world.

The exhibition

The exhibition *Terræ Aquæ. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea* is distinguished by its transition from a system of preselection to an open call, with the aim of offering an equitable opportunity for all. It seeks to provide space for a plurality of voices, experiences, and expressive languages, fostering a broader and more representative dialogue in which the quality and relevance of proposals emerge through comparison and collective participation. In doing so, it endeavours to recover, in a widespread and inclusive manner, rigorous and insightful research that may otherwise remain hidden or little known. The exhibition welcomes works by both individuals and groups—established and emerging—based on the belief that only through intergenerational, intercultural, and gender-inclusive exchange can a truly fertile dialogue be structured. Such a dialogue lies at the heart of the design-based antinomy between progress and the preservation of memory—a tension that is essential for Italy's maritime and coastal heritage to maintain a delicate balance between an inevitable past and a possible future.

The *Terræ Aquæ. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea* exhibit launches a *Call for Visions and Projects*: “where there is no vision, the people perish”⁹.

Among completed projects and speculative research, the call is also open to Vision projects, in the belief that it is essential as an absolute push towards the future, a workshop of innovative ideas that challenge the limits of the present without compromising utilitarianism. Visions enable us to imagine better and more sustainable and inclusive spaces, but also imaginative ones, anticipating the needs of society and nature by placing ourselves as a starting point to experiment with new solutions, inspire changes and redefine the way we live and interact with the built environment even through provocation, irony and paradox. Without Visions, architecture risks being just a technical exercise, devoid of vision and ambition, betraying the yearning for the infinite that has characterized human beings ever since they became two-legged creatures.

In this openness to what is possible and the probable, the challenge of the curatorship has remained hidden, acting with the spirit of an orchestra conductor, weaving fabrics of meanings to combine a harmony each of whose elements finds its own voice without sacrificing the unity of the whole. Just as a conductor guides the instruments so that each instrument resonates in its right balance, the curatorship of such a broad and polyphonic exhibit has ensured that each contribution becomes a note in a larger score, a fragment of a visual discourse that rises in a symphony of ideas and emotions, masterfully orchestrated so that the whole works in perfect chorality.

Future horizons

In 1969 Leonardo Benevolo, while noting the lack of a “systemic” environmental and infrastructural program for Venice, actually used a synecdoche to express the importance of considering seaside cities as organisms in which it is necessary to address the problem as a whole, defining and protecting the ecological balance that finds in water the *raison d’être* for the very life of cities, to produce new functions, adequate to both

⁹ Frank Lloyd Wright, *La città vivente* [1958], Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Turin 1991, p.218

the characteristics of the city and the needs of modern life¹⁰. This lucid and concise thought implies the need that the “Terræ Aquæ. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea” exhibit fulfills, in which the critical assessment of the Italian coastal territory is combined with the essentiality of maritime travel literature, by which the fate of man from that of the sea and the lands that are lapped by it cannot be separated: “Odysseus did the land and the wood seem welcome; and he swam on, eager to set foot on the land. But when he was as far away as a man’s voice carries when he shouts, and heard the boom of the sea upon the reefs—for the great wave thundered against the dry land, belching upon it in terrible fashion, and all things were wrapped in the foam of the sea; for there were neither harbors where ships might ride, nor road-steads, [405] but projecting headlands, and reefs, and cliffs” (*Odyssey*, Book V). Our ambition is to question ourselves on the possibility of reconstructing a new relationship between man, earth and water projected towards a future of beauty and respect to find, in the multitude of intelligences, a “substance of hoped-for things”. The Italian Pavilion—and, more broadly, the entire Biennale Architettura 2025—thus becomes a powerful device for both intellectual and operative dissemination. The ideas that circulate within it find in the lagoon setting a fertile and intense laboratory; yet it is in their ability to transcend this context that their deeper impact is revealed. When these instances take root in distant territories, reaching small communities and marginal realities, they trigger processes of cultural regeneration and social transformation.

In this way, the exhibition transcends its temporal condition to become a catalyst for new design trajectories—capable of influencing local practices, activating shared knowledge, and enhancing latent resources. Within this dynamic, the notion of the “Biennale beyond the Biennale” emerges as a tool of cultural democracy and a vehicle for innovation conceived as a collective endeavour—opening our gaze towards broader, bluer horizons to come.

10 Cfr. Leonardo Benevolo, “Manca un programma per Venezia [1969]” in: Idem. *Le avventure della città*, Universale Laterza 1977, pp. 108-118

Biography of the curator

Guendalina Salimei

Architect, PhD in Architecture. Theory and Design, Professor of Architectural Design at Sapienza University of Rome. With the Tstudio, founded in Rome, he combines ethical design practice with experimental research to improve quality of life and living conditions in complex natural and human ecosystems.

At Sapienza University of Rome, he directs the Master's Program in the Design of Buildings for Worship and is a member of the Academic Board of the PhD program; at the Pontifical Athenaeum of Sant'Anselmo, he is a member of the Academic Board of the Master's Program in Architecture and Arts for the Liturgy. He is a member of the scientific committees of the *Città in Scena* Festival in Rome, the Villa Vigoni Italy–Germany Center of Excellence, the Giovanni Michelucci Foundation, Inarch, and the Angelica Costantiniana Academy of Letters, Arts and Sciences.

The research is carried out in Italian and international academic institutions, such as: MIUR Research and the European Commission; CNR – National Research Council of Italy; Technische Universität Darmstadt; National University of Civil Engineering of Hanoi; Fondation Kybernetik; DAAD – German Academic Exchange Service; DFG – German Research Foundation.

There are many publications of a scientific,

academic, and popular nature in the form of monographs, essays, articles, radio and television interviews, and in specialized journals. Among the main ones are: *Percorsi del sacro. Piccole architetture spirituali nella natura* (METAMORFOSI, LetteraVentidue: Siracusa 2020); *Architettura dialogo religione. Nuovi luoghi per il Terzo Millennio* (LetteraVentidue: Siracusa 2020); *Hanoi: La Città Tra Due Fiumi. Storia e Contemporaneità* (Quodlibet: Macerata 2020); *Contemporary Caravanserais - New model for public spaces and city squares* (ListLab: Trento 2019); *City Landscape* (Bari: Ilios 2014); Luigi Moretti. Terme Bonifacio VIII a Fiuggi (Ilios Editore: Bari 2012).

The research on the themes of architecture and the city is expressed in an intense design activity that has produced numerous works based on the triple principle of environmental, economic, and ethical sustainability, often working in conditions of urban decay and social distress. It combines innovation and tradition with a sensitive awareness of the local habitus. Among the most significant projects in various fields are the redevelopment of Crypta Balbi and other archaeological areas in Rome; the Egyptian Museum and the Concentrico of Stupinigi in Turin; Via Sparano and the former Rossani Barracks in Bari; the San Benedetto Convent and Michelucci Market in Ferrara; the redevelopment of *waterfronts* in Mola di Bari, Bari, Naples, Taranto, and Cagliari; the *social housing* projects in Ceccano (FR) and the Primavalle district in Rome, the Km Verde in Corviale, Rome, and the intervention on Isola Madre in Taranto; the Museum of Contemporary Art in Foligno (PG) and the Market of Cagliari.

The projects have received national and international awards and recognitions, including: Regula Prize; Iconic Design Award; German Design Award; The Plan Award; IN/ARCH Prizes; Gentile da Foligno Prize; Luisa Minazzi Prize – Environmentalist of the Year; Oscar of the City of Rome; 100 Italian Excellence Award.

She is invited to participate in exhibitions and events in Italy and around the world, including: International Architecture Exhibitions – La Biennale di Venezia; MAXXI in Rome; Pavilion de l'Arsenal in Paris; Sofia Triennale; and also in Moscow, Kazan, Astana, Beijing, Tokyo, Singapore, Hanoi, and others.

In 2014, director Riccardo Milani directed the film *Scusate se esisto!*, starring Paola Cortellesi, which brings to the big screen the complex story of the Corviale Building in Rome and the redevelopment project Il Km Verde, showcasing the original designs and referring to Guendalina Salimei as the actual designer. The film won the Dedalo Minosse Cinema Award in 2016.

Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity

The Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity (DGCC) is the office of the Ministry of Culture (MiC) dedicated to contemporary affairs and is part of the Department of Cultural Activities.

The main mission of the DGCC is to promote, support, and enhance contemporary art and architecture, cultural and creative industries, photography, design, and fashion, as well as to promote urban regeneration and the revitalization of peripheral areas.

To promote Italian creativity in the international context, the DGCC organizes and supports Italy's participation in the International Art Exhibitions and the International Architecture Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia, one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world. Our country also has its own space, inaugurated in 2006, at the Tese delle Vergini in the Arsenale: the **Italian Pavilion**. The Commissioner is the Director-General for Contemporary Creativity, while the Curator is appointed annually by the Minister of Culture.

Among the **main projects** of the DGCC are: the ***Festival Architettura*** to promote contemporary architecture in Italy and abroad; ***Architettura Sostenibili X***, a research program aimed at fostering a sustainable mindset in the study,

commissioning, and realization of architectural interventions; ***Donne in Architettura; Laboratorio di Creatività Contemporanea*** (formerly ***Creative Living Lab***), to support and promote new Italian cultural centers born from participatory regeneration projects; ***Italian Council*** for the promotion and dissemination of visual arts abroad; ***PAC – Piano per l'Arte Contemporanea***, aimed at increasing the public collection of contemporary art; residence awards and international mobility support dedicated to art, architecture, design, performance, and fashion design; ***New Grand Tour***, dedicated to the international mobility of young artists and creatives, supported by the DGCC in collaboration with the Institut Français Italia / Embassy of France in Italy and the Italian Cultural Institute in Paris, MAECI; ***Bel Paese. Promoting Italian Art around the world***, a three-year program promoted by the DGCC and the Committee of Contemporary Art Foundations to support the internationalization of Italian art and promote dialogue between invited curators and selected artists; ***IT Out OFF***, a program aimed at the internationalization of contemporary creativity during major international events, carried out in collaboration with the General Directorate for Public and Cultural Diplomacy of the MAECI; ***Italian Design Day*** in collaboration with the MAECI to promote Italian design internationally.

Furthermore, the DGCC participates in the implementation of the **PNRR** (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) within the framework of the **Next Generation EU** program; it oversees, as the implementing body, the intervention called ***Capacity building for cultural operators to manage the digital and green transition***. In 2022, four public notices linked to PNRR funds made a total of 155 million euros available: the funded projects are currently ongoing and will be completed by 2026.

As part of the institutional actions aimed at promoting and supporting the practice, talents, and excellence of Italian photography and in implementation of the **Strategic Plan for the development of photography in Italy and abroad 2024-2026**, the DGCC launched the fourth edition of the public notice ***Strategia Fotografia*** in 2024 for the selection of proposals related to the acquisition, commissioning, and promotion of photography, with the goal of creating new opportunities for the sector, strengthening its identity and international visibility. In accordance with the guidelines of the Strategic Plan, the Directorate-General has published a **public notice to promote Italian photography abroad**, aimed exclusively at the Diplomatic-Consular Network and the Italian Cultural Institutes of the MAECI, in order to fund project proposals for cultural and exhibition events related to the promotion of Italian photography abroad. Additionally, the DGCC, together with the MUFOCO - Museum of Contemporary Photography and in collaboration with the Eredi di Luigi Ghirri Archive, promoted the **exhibition *Viaggio in Italia***, curated by Matteo Balduzzi, organized on the occasion of Paris Photo and hosted at the Italian Cultural Institute in Paris (November 8, 2024 - January 8, 2025); at the Italian Cultural Institute in London (February 12 - March 28, 2025); and at the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum in Istanbul (April 25 -

May 28, 2025), thanks to the involvement of the Italian Cultural Institute in Istanbul.

Additionally, in collaboration with the National Roman Museum - Palazzo Altemps, the MUFOCO – Museum of Contemporary Photography, and the Basilico Archive, the DGCC has promoted the exhibition **Gabriele Basilico. Roma**, open to the public in the rooms of Palazzo Altemps in Rome (December 12, 2024 - May 4, 2025), and at the Italian Cultural Institute in Prague (February 21 - May 10, 2025).

The action of the DGCC also focuses on enhancing and facilitating knowledge of the places where contemporary art and architecture are produced, proposed, and experienced. Surveys, mappings, and censuses are cognitive tools that highlight important experiences for the development of creativity. Among the various projects, we highlight: the platform **Censimento delle architetture italiane dal 1945 ad oggi** (Census of Italian Architecture from 1945 to the present), a national mapping of architecture that is part of the contemporary heritage, with over 5000 records created in collaboration with universities and research centers; **Atlante Architettura Contemporanea**, which focuses on a selection of works included in the Census, viewed through the lens of photographers specialized in architecture, offering online thematic itineraries that are continuously updated; the platform **Luoghi del Contemporaneo**, an ongoing survey available online of public and private non-profit organizations that exhibit, enhance, and promote contemporary art across the country; **VARIA - Video ARte in Italia**, which presents the results of the Census of video art archives and artist films in Italy, promoted by the DGCC and the Universities of Turin, Milan Bicocca, Udine, and Sapienza University of Rome, in collaboration with ICCD, with the aim of cataloging the collections and contents of video and film works (from 1965 to today) distributed across the national territory in public and private institutions; the DGCC supports the **RAAM project – Ricerca Archivio AMACI Musei** (Research of the AMACI Museums Archive), which aims to raise awareness of the scope and quality of the contemporary art heritage of the AMACI museum network and serves as a valuable tool for knowledge and research on the public contemporary heritage.

The DGCC also coordinates the **Creative Europe Desk**, dedicated to promoting the European program that supports cultural sectors.

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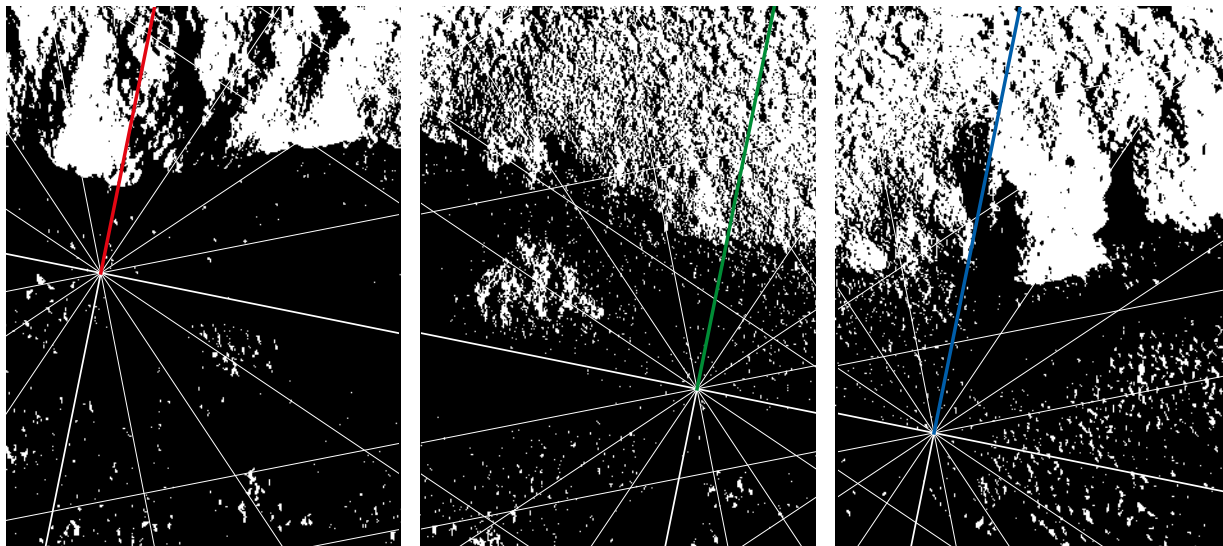
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Catalog sheet



On the occasion of the 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (May 10 – November 23, 2025), **Electa** is the publisher of the catalog for the Italian Pavilion, promoted by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Ministry of Culture and curated by Guendalina Salimei.

The editorial project ***Terræ Aquæ*** is divided into **three distinct yet complementary volumes**, each conceived as a stage in a knowledgeable and sensitive journey. It is designed as a contemporary portolano, inspired by ancient medieval nautical charts that, with skillful and imaginative strokes, represented the complexity of the known world at the time.

The project is dedicated to an expanded Mediterranean, including neighboring oceans: the centrality of the structural relationship between water and land, between the natural and the artificial, between infrastructure and landscape, between city and coast, impacts the identity of the country and the delicate balances between environment, man, culture, and economy that must be both preserved in their integrity and re-imagined for the essential adaptation to a future shaped by new, pressing demands. Viewing Italy from the sea implies a shift in perspective, requiring a rethinking of the boundary project between land and water as an integrated system of architecture, infrastructure, and landscape.

The catalog tells the story, **through the voices of designers, scholars, and cultural operators** – as well as young people, poets, artists, research institutions, and organizations from the third sector – of the rethinking of the

relationship between land and sea, born from the need to ensure sustainable management and environmental and cultural enhancement of coastal and port areas. This is essential for the resilience of territories, the conservation of natural heritage, and, more broadly, for a more balanced dialogue between land and sea.

The **first volume** gathers **theoretical essays and critical reflections**, accompanied by **authorial photographic narratives** that engage with the themes of the exhibition, suggesting interpretive and conceptual routes.

The **second volume** offers a **mapping of the plurality of languages and practices** that inhabit the Padiglione Italia, through an exhibition design made up of **display machines** that work with universal archetypes, wunderkammers capable of welcoming the visitor on a journey through memory and landscape, visions, research, and projects of a possible Italy, the result of the country's collective intelligence.

The **third volume** collects **contributions from the public program** and **further visual stories** from the workshops, events, and debates that arose inside and around the Padiglione Italia, live testimonies of an open dialogue with the present.

Together, the three volumes form an intellectual and emotional map, a critical device to navigate through the "currents of the sea" of contemporary times.

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Guendalina Salimei

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Banca Ifis supports Italian culture and is a sponsor of the Italian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2025

Banca Ifis is strengthening its commitment to building a public-private bridge aimed at expanding access to Italian art and culture. From May 10 to November 23, 2025, the Bank, chaired by Ernesto Fürstenberg Fassio, will **sponsor the Italian Pavilion** at the **Biennale Architettura 2025** in Venice. The event is promoted by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Ministry of Culture and curated by Guendalina Salimei with the curatorial project *TERRÆ AQUÆ. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea*. This marks the third consecutive year (2023, 2024, and 2025) that Banca Ifis supports the Italian Pavilion, and the fifth time it has partnered with La Biennale di Venezia, including its sponsorship of the Venice Pavilion in 2021 and 2022.

As part of its sponsorship, **Banca Ifis** will open its International Sculpture Park in Mestre (VE), which will host the opening event of the Public Program of the Italian Pavilion at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. Opening *The Sea of Intelligence*. Dialogues on Sunday, June 1st, will be a performance by artist Thomas De Falco, followed by the unveiling of *Draco Piscis*, a sculptural work by Agnes Questionmark.

The promotion and enhancement of Italian culture and its social impact represent one of the main areas of action of *Kaleidos*, the Bank's Social Impact Lab (a hub for social initiatives). To bring together all of the Bank's projects in the fields of art and culture, **Ifis art** was launched in April 2024 — a brand that encompasses all initiatives undertaken by the Bank to promote art, culture, contemporary creativity, and their values. Among these, the most significant is the creation of the **Banca Ifis International Sculpture Park**, a project launched in 2023 to celebrate the Bank's 40th anniversary and open to the public since 2024. The Sculpture Park extends across the 22-hectare garden of Villa Fürstenberg in Mestre and hosts 24 sculptural works by 14 masters of contemporary sculpture, both Italian and international: Fernando Botero, Annie Morris, Park Eun Sun, Igor Mitoraj, Manolo Valdés, Pablo Atchugarry, Pietro Consagra, Roberto Barni, Julio Larraz, Philip Colbert, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Nico Vascellari, and Davide Rivalta. During 2025, the Park will be enriched with two new works, which will also be on view during the opening event of the Italian Pavilion's Public Program. Throughout the year, the Park is open to the public free of charge, with visits bookable via the Ifis art app, and it already stands as an international case study in the field of corporate collections and cultural and social *responsibility*.

The Ifis art program also includes the acquisition and restoration of twelve previously unseen plaster busts by **Antonio Canova**, of exceptional artistic value, discovered at Villa Canal alla Gherla in Treviso. Lastly, the Bank has sealed a partnership between the Pinacoteca di Brera and the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome with a major exhibition dedicated to **Mario Ceroli** (Castel Frentano, 1938). The Bank has acquired the artist's collection housed in his Roman residence, which, starting in 2025, will be transformed into a House Museum open to the public.

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Public program

The Sea of Intelligence. Dialogues

Guendalina Salimei, curator of the **Italian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2025, promoted by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Ministry of Culture**, has placed the theme of the sea at the center of her reflection. She expands the vision of the Mediterranean to include the neighboring oceans, presenting it as a powerful element of Italian culture—one that defines its coasts and territory. She has chosen to focus the analysis on the design of the boundary between land and water as an integrated system of architecture, infrastructure, and landscape. This perspective is crucial in an era marked by the consequences of climate change, which are also profoundly affecting the Italian coastline.

The Mediterranean shapes the coastlines with hundreds of port cities and a territory that reaches deep inland—you can sense the sea even from the heights of the Alps and the Apennines. Looking at Italy from the sea means adopting a different perspective. Based on this premise, and thanks to the presence of an outstanding multidisciplinary team of designers, researchers, and artists, the Italian Pavilion will not only be a physical space but also a vast laboratory of ideas and projects for the future. At the heart of the discussion around the project *Terrae Aquae*. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea will be the public program entitled: ***The Sea of Intelligence. Dialogues***.

A schedule of events will accompany *Terrae Aquae*. Italy and the Intelligence of the Sea throughout the duration of the Biennale Architettura 2025, **from June to November 2025**. These events will animate the spaces of the Italian Pavilion or take place in other Italian cities, featuring **lectures, presentations, and workshops** with influential voices in the international debate and the sea-related project. The appointments have been **conceived and curated directly by the team of the Italian Pavilion**, led by Guendalina Salimei, **or proposed by Institutions and bodies such as cultural foundations, port**

authorities, municipalities, regions, territorial associations, universities, and research centers. Additionally, there will be short **showcases organized by leading figures from the design sector and specialized publishing.**

The public program ***The Sea of Intelligence. Dialogues*** will launch on **Sunday, June 1st, in the International Sculpture Park of Villa Fürstenberg, Mestre (VE)**—the historic headquarters of Banca Ifis, sponsor of the Italian Pavilion—with a performance by **Thomas de Falco.**

The program will continue with a series of **study days dedicated to the sea**, involving curators and national pavilions participating at the Biennale Architettura 2025. These will be accompanied by **in-depth workshops** on the research featured in the Italian Pavilion's exhibition project, as well as **labs and specially designed activities for children** coinciding with the start of the school year. **Conferences and symposiums** will be hosted or co-organized with leading Italian universities, including **Sapienza University of Rome, the Marche Polytechnic University—during the Ancona Waterline Lab Reconnections—IUAV University of Venice with (In)Visible Borders. Workshop,** and **Politecnico di Milano for the second edition of Port Clusters in Transition.** Collaborations will also extend to maritime cities such as **Messina, Taranto, Crotone, and Olbia**—which will host a gathering at the Michelucci Theater focused on local initiatives and municipal efforts to promote and enhance marine-related research and engagement. There will be **book presentations in partnership with Limes – Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica**, as well as participation in national events like the **Festival del Mare at the Auditorium Parco della Musica in Rome** and the **60th anniversary celebrations of OICE—the Association of Engineering, Architecture, and Technical-Economic Consulting Organizations**, a sponsor of the Italian Pavilion. Many more initiatives are currently in development. In the coming months, events promoted by the **Central Institute for Intangible Heritage** will present the outcomes of research on Italy's maritime culture. Through public talks, screenings, and open discussions, stories, practices, and knowledge from coastal communities will be shared, with the aim of valuing and transmitting an intangible heritage deeply rooted in the country's history and identity.

All events of the public program ***The Sea of Intelligence. Dialogues*** will be detailed in upcoming dedicated communications, released on a monthly basis.