

SAN GIACOMO DI PALUDO

Patrizia Sandretto's Venice venue nears completion

San Giacomo di Paludo is expected to open next year, but visitors to this year's Biennale can still take in a performance. By Georgina Adam

The island of San Giacomo di Paludo in the Venice lagoon is a short boat trip away from San Marco, but had been abandoned since the 1960s. In 2018 it was bought by the Turin-based collector Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and her husband Agostino, with the aim of turning it into a cultural and research centre, hosting discussions on art, music, theatre and contemporary culture.

While initial hopes that it might be open to visitors during the Biennale have been dashed, that does not mean that nothing is happening on the island. On 18 April the Korean dancer and choreographer Eun-Me Ahn, along with her company of ten artists, will present a transformative performance embracing the entire island.

According to Sandretto, the performance – entitled *Pinky Pinky 'Good': San Giacomo's Leap into Tomorrow* – will revolve around the colour pink; it will be a “multi-dimensional experience intertwining art, spirituality, and community engagement”, she explains. She and the curator Hans Ulrich Obrist jointly chose Eun-Me Ahn, and the public will be welcome to attend and indeed will be encouraged to engage with the ritual.

San Giacomo has a long history. “The island



Patrizia Sandretto in front of the buildings that will become her foundation's third permanent venue



Tie me up, tie me down: the artist Jota Mombaça in her performance piece in the tired watering at San Giacomo di Paludo during the 2022 Biennale

has over the centuries been a monastery, a stopping point for travelling pilgrims, a vineyard, a vegetable garden and finally a fortified military site; the restoration is guided with respect for the history and values of the place and attention to its ecosystem,” Sandretto says. Three powder magazines were built by Napoleon in 1810 on the site of the former monastery, and these buildings are being restored as part of Sandretto's project. “We hope to open to the public in 2025,” she says. “Our plan is to turn it into a garden, to restore the ruined buildings, the former powder magazines, and to repurpose them as exhibition spaces. The island of San Giacomo will be completely energy self-sufficient, an eco-sustainable centre, where the crucial issues of climate change and the environment can be addressed through art.”

Climate concerns

Renewable energy is very much part of the project, as Sandretto's husband Agostino is the founder of the renewable energy company Asja Ambiente Italia, as well as being co-founder and vice-president of the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. San Giacomo will be the third venue of the foundation, along with Guarone in Cuneo, Piedmont, which opened in 1997, and Turin, inaugurated in 2002.

This is not the first time the island has been used for performances since Sandretto and her husband bought it. During the 2022 Biennale, Obrist also organised in the *tired watering*, a performance by the artist Jota Mombaça. This entailed ritual chants and unravelling of fabric. “I wanted to express what water has to say about the current planetary condition,” Mombaça explains. And the concern about water is already a reality on the island of San Giacomo and indeed the whole of Venice, due to rising sea levels and climate change.

• Eun-Me Ahn's performance will be at 11am on 18 April. Check @fondazione sandretto on Instagram for more details

More to see

➔ In the absence of an official Indian pavilion, the world's most populous nation is in effect being represented by a show of **M.F. Husain**, organised by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art. Husain, who died in 2011, was one of India's most prominent 20th-century painters, whose first exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1953. It runs at Magazzini del Sale in Dorsoduro until November.

➔ Works by **Julie Mehretu** broke the auction record for an Africa-born artist twice last year. Her exhibition at the Pinault Collection's Palazzo Grassi venue (until 6 January 2025) looks back over 25 years of her abstract paintings and prints. Titled *Ensemble*, it also includes works by her friends and colleagues, including Nairy Baghramian, Tacita Dean and David Hammons.

➔ The whimsical sculptures, furniture and objets d'art by the husband-and-wife duo **Les Lalannes** have become sought after in recent years. At Venice, they have taken over the Palazzo Rota Ivancich (17 April-3 November), “highlighting their ingenious functionality and surrealist whimsy”, according to a press statement.

➔ Female breasts makes a regular appearance in the work of the Venetian painter Titian, so where better than Venice for an exhibition exploring their iconography and symbolism. Curated by Carolina Pasti, **Breasts** includes works by more than 30 artists, including Cindy Sherman, Marcel Duchamp, Allen Jones, Sarah Lucas and Laure Prouvost. It runs at ACP Palazzo Franchetti from 18 April to 24 November.

➔ Eight newly commissioned video installations will be on show at Complesso dell'Ospedaletto as part of the exhibition **Nebula** (17 April-24 November). Following in the footsteps of *Penumbra*, which was held at the venue in 2022, it is organised by Fondazione In Between Art Film, conceived by collector Beatrice Bulgari to promote moving image art.