



Press Release
5th May 2023
St. George's, Grenada

Grenada at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Walking on Water

Grenada and its archipelago welcome the concepts expressed by Lesley Lokko, curator of the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, and contribute to the Architecture Biennale for the second time (the previous one was in 2021; the country participated in the latter four Art Biennale).

Pavilion Commissioner Susan Mains intends to contribute to the Biennale Architettura 2023's collective workshop showing the specificity of the archipelago cultural traditions, material and otherwise, legacies of forced immigration, voluntary travel and the creolization of many.

At the heart of the exhibition, designed by curator Luisa Flora, are the constructions that best enable us to appreciate a miracle: boats, that allow us humans to float on expanses of water, even if we don't have scales or fins to cleave the waves, legs capable of skating on water or wings to counter gravity. Goal projected into the future or evanescent ghosts in memory, they are the protagonists of the stories that alternate on the screens.

Stories that start from the places where they come into being: shipyards, like construction sites, are able to transform the visions, projects and examples born from the knowledge and skills of previous generations into new artefacts, solid and real - the boats, capable of facing the depths and uncertainties of the sea. Of walking on water.

A product of the island's history, boat-building is rooted in the confluence of knowledge and memories of different origins - of indigenous peoples Kalinago, Scottish immigrants, and the enslaved from Africa - passed down and improved in production units called boatyards. Each boatyard is home to a working group hinged on the talent, technical knowledge and creativity of its founder or conductor, whose secrets the workers, especially the younger ones, try to glean.

But the workshops that give life to typical Grenadian boats are in crisis today: the knowledge, memory and skills that underlie the construction of these evocative artefacts are in danger of disappearing soon.

So, welcome to the regattas, the projects of specific schools, and the shipowners and small societies that continue to keep historic boats alive and call for the construction of new specimens made "the way it used to be."

How can somebody imagine that these colourful and elegant boats, with such bright colours that no fibreglass model, reproduced in mould, will ever boast, will no longer dot the waters of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique?

The collaboration between the Grenada Pavilion and the Associazione Vela al Terzo, which faces the same risks on "this" side of the Ocean, is based on this multiplicity of themes.

These contents are expressed in videos and texts discussed and realized with the support of a vast, multicultural work group, among which: Fredericka Adam, Alexis Andrews, Associazione Vela al Terzo members, Sarah Baker, Oliver Benoit, Arthur Daniel, Jody Daniel, Patricia Hollingsworth, Asher Mains, Reuben Mains, Basie Matheson, Rina Mills.

Videos will present historical contents such as the development of wooden boat building in the Kalinago Caribbean (from an essay by the historian Angus Martin), interviews with Carriacou contemporary boatbuilders Alwyn Enoe, Che MacDonald and Captain Nero and with the expert Everton Peters, videos capturing the excitement from the Workboat Regatta that takes place every year in Grenada (end of January) and in Carriacou (August).

The Pavilion also reminds us the problem of problems, able to impact on all ways of living - and sailing - around the world. Climate changes are a factor that affects any island, whether it is in the Caribbean or the Venice Lagoon; and they have to be addressed from multiple points of view and with different expertise.

That is why the Pavilion wanted to combine the voice of science with that of art and social activism, and put side by side the scientist Jody Daniel with the site-specific installation made by artist Stari Ribar (Massimo Marchiori) starting from discarded plastic collected on beaches and shores of the Mediterranean Sea and the Venice Lagoon. The installation will incorporate the "Little Boats", an interactive group project displayed at the World Expo in Shanghai – China and in Grenada, Barbados, and the Dominican Republic during the Caribbean Triennale. The alternative scenario, in which we don't try to fight climate change, is that the inhabitants of all coastal regions in the world shall learn, and in a short time, to "walk on water".

Vernissage

May 18th at 18:00, free entrance

For the opening, a performance – "Song without words" - has been commissioned to the opera singer Melinda Hughes, who lives and works between London and the Caribbean area. Hughes arranged, together with Jeremy Limb, Mendelssohn's *Venetian Gondola song opus 30 no. 6* and the haunting African slave chant *Massa buy* so to accompany the Venetian poet Chiara Carminati's *A Venezia poem* and *Fleet de la Caraïbe* recited by the Grenadian poet Samuel Ogilvie.

The project is organized by the Grenada Arts Council and can be seen online at <http://grenadavenice.org>.

It is supported by the kind contributions of corporate and private citizens:

- Associazione Vela al Terzo ASD
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