

Italian Pavilion at the 14th Gwangju Biennale

Che Cosa Sogna l'acqua quando dorme?
What does water dream, when it sleeps?

WHERE: Dong-gok Museum of Art, Gwangju

DATES: April 7th - July 9th, 2023

PRESS OPENING, WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE ARTISTS:

April 6th, 2023 9:30 am - 10:30 am

The **Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul**, under the auspices of the Italian Embassy in Korea, presents the **first Italian Pavilion at the 14th Gwangju Biennale**, open to the public **from April 7th to July 9th, 2023**, at the **Dong-gok Museum of Art** in Gwangju, South Korea.

The initiative is organized by the **Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul**, in collaboration with the **Dong-gok Art Museum**, and the **Bomun Welfare Foundation**, and is hosted by the **Gwangju Biennale Foundation** and the **Gwangju Metropolitan City**. It is the first of its kind, featuring the first Italian art pavilion in Korea.

The exhibition entitled "**Che cosa sogna l'acqua quando dorme? / What does water dream, when it sleeps?**" is under the curatorship of **Valentina Buzzi** and the project supervision of the director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul **Michela Linda Magri**, and presents the work of five Italian artists: **Camilla Alberti, Yuval Avital, Marco Barotti, Agnes Questionmark, and Fabio Roncato**.

"*Che cosa sogna l'acqua quando dorme? / What does water dream, when it sleeps?*" echoes the main theme of the 14th Gwangju Biennial within which it is hosted: "**Soft and weak like water**", which proposes us to imagine our planet as a place of resistance, coexistence, solidarity, and care, thinking of the transformative and restorative potential of water as metaphor, strength, and method, celebrating a "liquid" model of power that brings change, not with an immediate effect but with resilience and pervasive gentleness, crossing divisions and structural differences.

In turn, **the Italian Pavilion proposes an open discussion on how different interpretations of the concept of "constant becoming" develop in the past, present, and future**, asking us to reflect on the symbolisms that feed our imaginative vocabulary on the relationship between humanity and nature. Themes such as **transformation, sustainability, ecological awareness, and inter-species harmony are investigated through the creative imagination of the five artists presented**, but also through a popular program that sees the synergetic potential of visual art in dialogue with scientific knowledge and social welfare.

Fabio Roncato embraces the revolutionary potential of water in his site-specific installation '**Follow me**' (2023). Inspired by Han Kang's novel about the Gwangju Uprising, "Human Acts", the installation pays homage to the nine days of the May 1980 uprising with a group of nine plaster Onggi vases placed in the waters of Gwangju's main rivers; the plaster is thus molded by the water, becoming an opportunity to unveil the suggestive potential of the processes of slow erosion that trigger change and evolution into new forms.

Yuval Avital's work poetically puts us in front of ourselves, naked, free of any superstructure, and invites us to take note of an interrupted relationship. The cross-media opus '**Foreign bodies**' (2017 - 2022) sees the human body intrude, violate, and make artificial nature, consequently losing its uniqueness and becoming an external element outside the natural realm. Losing our animal state, we have long since entered a civilized state, moving further and further away from our original mother. The dancers animating the screen, placed in the purity of nature, tense and trembling, embody the roots of our dissonance.

The interdisciplinary artist **Marco Barotti** builds his kinetic sound sculpture installation '**Clams**' (2019)' on the property of shells to naturally detect pollutants, acting as filtration systems. Drawing data from water quality sensors and transforming it into sound and movement, the artwork offers an ever-changing



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microtonal soundscape in which each robotic clam sings a melody that metaphorically describes the state of our surrounding waters.

"Clams" invites us to consider the symbiotic human-nature-technology nexus as strongly interconnected, and the possibilities it might entail. At the same time, like sirens, the work plays an unstable melody fuelled by our own actions. We are given the reins: we are the conductors of our own orchestra.

Starting from the center of our ruins - where our means all living and non-living beings - **Camilla Alberti** hypothesizes the possibility of a new post-anthropocentric framework, in which the imagery of monsters can open the contemporary scenario towards the acceptance of complexity, hybridization, and continuous metamorphosis. Protagonists of a new hybrid mythology, the sculptural beings presented at the pavilion are the result of a process of urban archaeology, through which abandoned objects, industrial waste, and anthropic elements are collected on the shores of Korea. The five sculptural bodies of "**Learning in dis-binding**" (2023), which embody the reworking of individuality in favor of plurality, come to life thanks to the collective work conducted with the students of the Seoul Institute of the Arts, an institution that, thanks to the collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul, has hosted the artist since January 2023 in residence at the Ansan campus.

Continuing the thread of hybridity, we return to look at the water once again, invited by **Agnes Questionmark** on a journey through an underwater investigation of the human being, where the body and consciousness are part not only of a phenomenological process but also of a deeper investigation into the ontology of all living things. Through the act of resistance and resilience against the human body, Agnes Questionmark announces the birth of new species, whose gender and human identity are as yet unidentifiable. In addition to the sculpture '**Draco Piscis**'(2023), on the opening days of the pavilion the artist will present the performance '**Drowned in Living Waters**'(2023) in a specially constructed aquarium.

Camilla Alberti, Yuval Avital, Marco Barotti, Agnes Questionmark, and Fabio Roncato all belong to a generation of Italian artists attentive to issues related to contemporary socio-cultural and environmental changes. The pavilion addresses these issues from different perspectives, through their works, but also through a cross-cultural exchange conveyed by residency programs, and a public program for different audiences and ages, which will offer viewers both physical and digital experiences thanks to the important contribution of the digital & experience partner **Particle**.

FOR PRESS REQUESTS & FURTHER INFO

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NOTES TO THE EDITORS

ABOUT THE ITALIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE IN SEOUL

The Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul is an office of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation devoted to promoting Italian culture in South Korea. With a solid and diverse yearly program, the Institute organizes several events and activities that include every sector of creativity - from performing to visual arts, from music to film, from literature to fashion, without excluding cuisine, craftsmanship, and design: all elements that symbolize the excellence of Made in Italy.

The Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul, under the auspices of the Embassy of Italy in Korea, recognizes the important duty of promoting not only the heritage of the past but also contemporary forms of artistic expression. The Institute is committed to supporting and promoting contemporary visual art, recognizing the leading and inspiring role of the new generations of artists, whose research and practice are consciously attentive to the important issues of our time. Thanks to the established partnerships with leading Korean museum institutions, the Institute has organized a series of exhibitions in renowned venues such as the National Museum of Korea, Seoul Institute of the Arts, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary art - Korea, the Seoul Museum of History, the Sejong Center, the Seoul Arts Center, Asia Culture Center, and Art Sonje Center.

The new partnership established with the Gwangju Biennale and the Bomun Welfare Foundation in early 2023, thanks to the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute - Michela Linda Magri, is an important sign of the ongoing commitment of the Italian Cultural Institute to continue creating bilateral relations with South Korean cultural institutions, in the spirit of mutual recognition and profound respect, aiming to enhance a meaningful cross-cultural dialogue, also in preparation of the 140 years of Bilateral relations between Italy and South Korea, which will be celebrated in 2024.

ABOUT THE PAVILION PROJECT

To expand the network of the planetary art scene, Gwangju Biennale launched the Pavilion Project in 2018. At the city of art, Gwangju, internationally outstanding art and cultural institutions present their distinct project. Through diverse practice, the pavilions convey the faces of contemporary society captured by renowned artists and curators.

The 14th Gwangju Biennale Pavilion Project, 2023 features the work of nine pavilions; Canada, China, France, Israel, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, Netherlands, and Ukraine. The cultural attractions in the city of Gwangju will present international art discourse, not only through art exhibitions but also through symposiums as well as public programs including viewer-friendly lectures and workshops.

ARTISTS

CAMILLA ALBERTI

Camilla Alberti's practice reflects on the concept of *building worlds* and the roles and relationships that each inhabitant/builder, human and non-human defines by their being in the world. Camilla works with abandoned objects, industrial waste, and organic fragments collected in a process of urban archaeology. This process investigates the concept of ruins as active and metamorphic spaces, which may appear abandoned yet they represent what most escape solitude. Abandonment sanctions the erasure of all borders or belongings, transforming these areas into spaces of active construction: plants, animals, molds... each one works tirelessly bringing into dialogue different construction methods to transform, live in, and inhabit the world. The ruin is therefore both a pivotal place to search for a new way of being in the world and narrating it.

Camilla's research moves within these reflections, aiming to define an imaginary that is forged from hybrid spaces in which ruined materials dialogue with each other within decentralized structures that are inspired by plant interconnections and fungal lattices. Through sculpture, painting, installation, and industrial embroidery, the artist constructs micro-worlds based on hybridization and inter-species collaboration.



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Currently, her work focuses on the imaginaries and narrative methods that can alter the human being in the world. Rethinking bodies as spaces and vice-versa transforms them into multiple, hybrid, and monstrous organisms. The aim is to give substance to an imaginary capable of accommodating a *mythology of otherness* through the rediscovery of past narratives, capable of reconstructing an urban contract that tends towards the definition of a multi-species Leviathan.

Camilla Alberti (Milan, 1994) currently lives and works in Milan. Her work was recently exhibited at Akademie Graz (2023); Palazzo Vecchio and Museo Novecento (2022), Palazzo Strozzi (2021) in Florence; Archaeology Museum Schloss Eggenberg in Graz (2021). She won the public notice *Cantica21. Italian Contemporary Art Everywhere - Under 35*, promoted by MAECI-DGSP / MiC-DGCC (2021). Camilla was selected by Hyundai Europe to produce a work for the *#inspiredbybayon* launch campaign of the new vehicle 'Bayon' (2021). Art collections: Farnesina Collection, Rome; Nctm per l'Arte, Milan; la Permanente Museum, Milan; Cornelian Collection, Milan.

YUVAL AVITAL

Born in Jerusalem in 1977 and living in Milan, the Israel-Italian multimedia artist and composer Yuval Avital develops his works in a variety of spaces, including public venues, industrial archaeological sites, theatres, and museums, challenging the traditional crystallized categories that separate the arts. In his exhibitions, performances, immersive installations, total operas, large-scale musical 'rituals', and concerts one can find dancers, contemporary music ensembles, masters of ancient cultures, recruited individuals or communities, multi-video projections, meditative tactile ambients, advanced technological instruments, archive materials, scientific data, Sound-Sculpture, painting, and printed artworks. Each of Avital's artworks is a unique experiential, poetic, and emotional microcosm with its own identity, the fruit of meticulous research carried out in a carefully coded language, confronting the recurring themes of archetype and structure; the ancestral and current global-era human condition; nature and hybridity; ritual and science.

Avital's sound and visual artworks have been presented in museums, art foundations, venues, and art events such as MANIFESTA Biennial, GAM - Torino, LOOP Festival - Barcelona, Palais de Tokyo - Paris, One World Trade Center, New York, MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art Rome; OISTRALE Dresden Biennial, La Fabbrica del Cioccolato Foundation in Switzerland, Saint Antoine Church Istanbul, Marino Marini Museum in Florence; National Science and Technology Museum "Leonardo da Vinci" in Milan. In 2022, he was chosen by the Reggio Parma Festival, one of the largest festivals in Italy, as Artist of the Year and created a meta-opera including four major monographic exhibitions, an iconic-sonic installation, a mural, and a multimedia work with performances, video-art, and installations, in different museum venues and theaters in Parma and Reggio Emilia. In February 2023, the artist inaugurated with a three-days immersive performance, the solo show "Lessico Animale. Mysterion" in the underground spaces of the Terme di Caracalla in Rome.

MARCO BAROTTI

Marco Barotti (b. 1979) is a media artist based in Berlin. After music studies at the Siena Jazz Academy, he began merging sound with visual art. His work is driven by a desire to invent an artistic language in which a fictional post-futurist era is expressed through kinetic sound interventions in natural and urban environments. His installations merge audio technology, consumer objects, and waste into moving sculptures triggered entirely by sound. The primary focus of his work is to create a "tech ecosystem" that plays with resemblances to animals and plants. These artworks serve as a metaphor for the anthropogenic impact on the planet and aim to make people aware of environmental and social issues.

Barotti has been awarded the NTU Global Digital Art Prize (Clams) the Tesla Award (Swans) and the Delux Colour Award (Sound Of Light). His work has been exhibited internationally at Ars Electronica (Linz), Saatchi Gallery (London), Science Gallery (Melbourne), Futurium (Berlin), Polytech Festival (Moscow), Zer01ne, (Seoul), Fact (Liverpool), Wro Art Center (Wroclaw), Picknick (Seoul), Isea (Montreal), ARCAM Architecture Center (Amsterdam), silent green (Berlin), Dutch Design Week (Eindhoven), NTU (Singapore), Stuck,



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(Leuven), Kikk Festival (Namur), Emaf (Osnabrück), Lisboa Soa (Lisbon), La Boral, (Gijón), New Holland Island and Sevcableport (St Petersburg).

Barotti has received grants from bbk Berlin, Stiftung Kunstfonds, Emap / Emare and Music Board Berlin. He has been selected for prestigious residency programs such as Art of Entanglement, Science Gallery Berlin / BIFOLD at TU Berlin (2023), Zer01ne Creators project, Seoul (2022), Re:Searching IT Security CASA - Horst Görtz Institute for IT Security Ruhr-Universität Bochum (2021) and WRO Center for Media Art, Wroclaw (2019).

AGNES QUESTIONMARK

Agnes Questionmark (b. 1995) was born in Rome and graduated in London from the Fine Arts program of Camberwell College of Arts (2018) and is now living and working in New York, where she is attending an MFA at the Pratt Institute (New York) for which she has been awarded a Merit Scholarship. Using performance, installation, sculpture, and photography, Agnes Questionmark creates immersive habitats that question the human body and its relationship with the sea. Through placing her body in an environment that is unnatural, Agnes Questionmark brings the viewer on a journey toward their root, questioning their genesis and presenting uncertain future potentialities of becoming.

Adhering to this posthumanist dialectic, if our biological makeup is defined by our complex relationship with the environment and the inevitable genome mutation, Questionmark poses the following questions: Will we evolve according to environmental events? Will organic posthumanism, or rather, the idea of transformation through biological means become a viable future?

Through her long durational performances, Questionmark performs an act of resistance and resilience against the human body, announcing the birth of a new species, whose gender and human identity are yet undefinable. Agnes Questionmark has exhibited in several cities in Europe, including Rome, Istanbul, Barcelona, and London. Her most recent projects include a group exhibition Chrysalis: The Butterfly Dream at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève curated by Andrea Bellini, a performance at FOROF curated by Soundwalk Collective, a site-specific performance at Casa Flash Art (Milan), her solo show TRANSGENESIS presented by The Orange Garden in partnership with Harlesden High Street and Underground Flower (London) and the performance Il Cappello del Polpo at Palazzo Massimo in Rome.

In 2022 she was selected as a finalist of Circa Art prize x Dazed and was invited to participate in PerformIstanbul's residency program. In 2019 she was selected to be part of the Midwater Residency in collaboration with Studio Forlane on the island of Poros, Greece. In the same year, she exhibited in the Ancient City of Cosa, Ansedonia, for the second chapter of HYPERMAREMMA, The Submerged City. In 2017 she was awarded the "Lorenzo Il Magnifico" prize at the Florence Biennale in the Performance Art category.

FABIO RONCATO

Fabio Roncato's artworks are part of a research path thought to rethink the relations between the knowledge of our surroundings and artistic practice, starting from two key principles: the limitations to which the description of phenomena are subject due to our existence as observers and our incapability of acquiring them in their full complexity through our senses. This reflection is developed through an attitude towards matter, which consists of understanding its potential and placing it in a critical reference system in order to wake it up from its state of sleep.

The aim is to place the sculpture in such a position as to develop its own behavior and identity, not only during the emergence of its aspect but also in its relationship with the observer. In this way, Fabio Roncato's practice pushes boundaries and investigates the possibilities of sculptural matter and artistic as an autonomous expression of phenomena on processes, beyond the stable form to reflect natural metamorphoses and transformation of energies and matter. The right place to host this artistic practice is the space left by the limits of the knowability of phenomena. The aim is to transform both the creation of the work and later its fruition into a path of exploration that attempts to construct knowledge based on the exercise of the imagination.



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Born in 1982, he studied painting at Accademia di Brera, Milan, followed by two residencies at the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht (2018) and at the East China Normal University, Shanghai on the occasion of the “Premio Shanghai” (2017). He held solo exhibitions at Platea – Palazzo Galeano, Lodi (2022), Museo Civico di Scienze Naturali di Brescia (2022), Sečovlje Salina Nature Park, Slovenia (2021), The Open Box, Milano (2019) and Musei Civici di Bassano del Grappa (2018). His group shows include Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa, Venice (2021); Fondazione Imago Mundi, Gallerie delle Prigioni, Treviso (2021), GAMeC, Bergamo (2020); MUSE, Trento (2020) and TRA, Treviso (2015).

VALENTINA BUZZI

Curator

Valentina Buzzi (Genoa, 1995) is an Italian independent curator and critic of contemporary art based between Italy and South Korea, currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Socio-Cultural Studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. Prior to moving to Korea in 2020, Valentina worked at the Arts at Cern residency program, at the National Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, where she helped develop a research and analysis plan on the potential of the intersection of contemporary art and scientific research, which also informed her MA thesis at the University of Warwick. Driven by her interest in the interdisciplinary possibilities that contemporary art entails, Valentina has defined a line of work that aims to bridge the gap between the dichotomous aspects of our society and knowledge and nurture the permanence and understanding of complexity as a paradigmatic framework.

Valentina works as an independent curator and consultant with various art galleries, artists, companies, and institutions between Europe and Asia; she writes for important international magazines such as Artsy & Plus Magazine and has contributed critical essays to various catalogs. She also works as an external consultant for Asian development for the startup Reasoned Art, which uses digital art based on artificial intelligence as a tool to support and activate cultural heritage. She holds an MA in International Cultural Policy and Management from Warwick University and a BA in Art, Design & Media from IULM University. As an academic, Valentina has been a visiting lecturer in art theory at the ELISAVA School of Design in Barcelona and has an active collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute in Seoul for which she conducted several lectures as part of the Giornata del Contemporaneo (2021;2022). Valentina is also an academic member of the International Council of Museums.



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