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Art for the (Host) City: How La Biennale and Manifesta12 Contributions Locally Benefitted Venice and Palermo

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Art for the (Host) City.

How La Biennale and Manifesta12 Contributions Locally Benefitted Venice and Palermo

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MA Arts and Culture (Museum Studies)

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– INTRODUCTION

What can biennials do?

In his critical *The Guardian* article from 2017, writer and journalist Oliver Bennett states that "at best, art biennials can positively transform our engagement with cities."[1] Responding to the announcement of a new upcoming Oslo Biennial, the article questions the high number of art and architecture temporary exhibitions worldwide and the reasons behind their existence, Bennet wonders whether we have reached "peak art biennial."[2] The journalist seems not to be the only one thinking it, as this feeling of disillusion with the perennial format is shared amongst many. Moma architecture and design curator Martino Stierli debates if they are "gymnastic exercises that are in effect vanity projects."[3] In *The Biennale Reader* (2010), curator and scholar Elena Filipovic questions them as "something not far removed from the art fair or Disneyland" for a self-identifying cultural audience.[4] After a flourishing boom that characterised their 1980s and 1990s development, biennials are today at the centre of ongoing criticism and belittling. Scholars Katya Johanson, Bronwyn Coate, Caitlin Vincent and Hilary Glow examine the actual existence of a positive biennial effect for artists.[5] On *Frieze,* journalist Francesca Tarocco asks "How Do Venetian Artists Contend with Mass-Tourism?"[6] Furthermore, *The Art Newspaper* recently published an article calling upon the negative, impactful and "violent" effects of the phenomenon of biennalisation, as local heritage group *Italia Nostra - Venezia* criticised the staging of Spanish artist Manolo Valdés' set of thirteen bronze sculptures, titled *Las Meninas a San Marco*, in Venice's historic centre.[7] In response to these critiques, and starting from Bennets' statement that biennials can, in fact,

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[1] Bennett, "A City's Art Biennial," The Guardian.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Stierli, "Preface," in Szacka, *Biennials/Triennials*, 9.

[4] Filipovic, *The Biennial Reader*, 13.

[5] Johanson et al., "Is There a 'Venice Effect'?"

[6] Tarocco, "How Do Venetian Artists Contend with Mass-Tourism?" Frieze.

[7] Harris, "Velázquez-Inspired Sculptures Spark Outrage in Venice," TAN.

positively impact engagement with cities, I ask what these events can do for their host. What beneficial outcomes can temporary exhibitions bring to the city and the local population?

In this thesis, through the combination of theory and selected case studies, I will explore in what forms Venice and Palermo, as biennial hosts, were positively impacted by the recurring presence and artworks of La Biennale in one case, and the punctual one of Manifesta in its twelfth edition, in the other. I will argue that biennials represent important spaces to exercise the right to the city, through appropriation and participation, and how this is supported by the temporary and ephemeral nature of the site-specific works on show. If temporary art events do indeed potentially bring issues such as gentrification and over-touristisation to the extreme in their host cities, I want to argue in response that they become central in opening a debate on the localised impacts of said issues as well as city-specific ones. The case studies will aim to exemplify how contextual artworks part of La Biennale and Manifesta, built upon the hosts' strengths and shortcomings, can provide concrete solutions. I want to demonstrate that biennials, within their limits, can address and help tackle city-specific problems like material waste cycles and gaps in the urban fabric. Moreover, I will explore how they can provide alternative forms of civic engagement and social participation through their temporary presence.

In *Biennials: The Exhibitions We Love to Hate* (2021), scholar of contemporary art and institutions Rafal Niemojewski notes how the vilification of biennials has been strongly connected to the association made between the latter and a process of homogenisation –hence a flattening of diversity– subsequent of neoliberal globalisation.[8] I do not aim, in this context, to refer to the role they have played in the history of exhibitions – which is an important topic but one that has been more vastly explored, for example in the *Exhibition Histories* series by *Afterall* and Reesa Greenberg and Bruce Ferguson's excursus *Thinking about Exhibitions* (1996). The subject of the artworks on show in biennials is approached in this thesis to understand what type of relationships they form with the urban context of the host city and with local communities. The thesis will be divided into four sections –this introduction, chapter I exploring the specific case of La Biennale in Venice, chapter II focusing on the 2018 Manifesta12 edition in Palermo, and a conclusion.

[8] Niemojewski, *Biennials*, 12.

In Chapter I, I will explore a selection of three case studies from different editions of La Biennale in Venice. The selected case studies are *Open for Maintenance* (2023) curated by summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb and *ARCH+* magazine for the German Pavilion, *The Mosque* (2015) by Swiss artist Christoph Büchel for the Icelandic Pavilion, and Rural Studio's *Theatre of UseFULL* (2016) on show in the 15th Architecture Biennale. Aaron Levy, William Menking, and Vittorio Gregotti's *Architecture on Display: On the History of the Venice Biennale of Architecture* (2010) together with *OBOE Journal I* no. 1 "Why Venice" (2020) will serve as sources to contextualise the history of La Biennale and its presence in the city. The temporary exhibition represents a model of a recurring perennial institutionalised in the cultural scene and city life of its host city. The intrinsic connection between Venice the city, the exhibition, and the consequent brand is at the core of the choice of La Biennale as a site of analysis. Furthermore, the increasing growth of open critique of the event taken out by local heritage groups and citizen associations pushed me to investigate the history of La Biennale to look for moments in which it proved to be beneficial for locals.

In Chapter II, I will provide a counterposition to La Biennale by looking into the European nomadic biennial Manifesta 2018 edition 12 in Palermo. Manifesta12 being located in Palermo will offer the chance to analyse two biennials in a slightly analogue context –both Venice and Palermo are historical cities in Italy and they share a history as a harbour and centre of cultural and economic exchange, due to their strategic locations in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, both La Biennale and Manifesta12 will exemplify how a diffused art exhibition can be woven into the fabric of the host city. I will look at the way in which the lack of recurrency and nomadic character influence the curatorial approach and the relationship with the host city. To explore what beneficial impact this type of event can generate, I will make use of three artworks out of those on show in Palermo in 2018. The selected case studies will be *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa* by Rotor, *Palermo Procession* by Marinella Senatore and *Protocol no. 90/6* by Masbedo. Moreover, to approach the analysis of Manifesta12 in Palermo I will make use of the *Palermo Atlas* (2018), the urban study commissioned by Manifesta to the Dutch architecture office OMA, and insights from the *Final Report* (2018) produced by the biennial after the conclusion of the event. Additionally, I will consult Erdem Çolak's recently published *Manifesta, Art, Society and Politics: Creating a new Europe through Contemporary Art* (2024) to explore the position of the even in terms

of its social influence and the policies that shape its presence in the host city. Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic's *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennales* (2005) will shed light on how the agenda of Manifesta has changed through the years and what choices informed its growth into its contemporary manifestation.

Niemojewski observes that grand expectations overestimate what a biennial can be expected to achieve.[9] I will rely on the notion that it is important for the narrative around biennales to be resized to be able to visualise the type of local benefits they can produce – change does not always have to be 'global' nor follow an absolute model. The case studies will demonstrate that a specific intervention provides a more functional response, as the idea of 'global' action is too generalised to allow for concrete outcomes in a defined location. The term 'global' refers to issues pertaining to the entire world, for example, climate change. The issues though will manifest themselves differently in different sites: climate change in Venice affects the specific flora of the lagoon and the architectural safety of the city. La Biennale will not stop climate change through the artworks on site, but there have been projects approaching the theme in the context of the city –in 2022, the exhibition *Llim* by Lara Fluxà and curated by Oriol Fontdevila highlighted how the fate of Venice is dependant on the state of the sediment/water relationship, now threatened by the rise of water levels.[10] Hence I want to demonstrate that artworks in biennials offer a platform to respond locally with site-specific works that can denounce, build awareness, propose a solution or a model to intervene on the problem, involve local associations and collaborate to respond to shortcomings or requirements identified by the actors involved. Architecture researchers Alessandro Zorzetto, Ángela Barrios Padura, and Marta Molina Huelva see the ephemeral architecture of La Biennale as a key to intervening in the historical fabric of Venice and set off regeneration projects.[11] The case studies will aim to show how ephemerality and temporality become powerful allies of the biennial format both in Venice and Palermo –and potentially in other cities– as they permit a quick response able to keep up with the changing necessities of the host and test multiple alternatives before committing to a permanent intervention.

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[9] Niemojewski, *Biennials,* 51.

[10] Llim, "Llim–Catalonia in Venice."

[11] Zorzetto et al., "Ephemeral Architecture," 717-723.

A city is a composite notion. In its physical manifestation, it is the combination of the buildings, infrastructure, streets and squares that compose its topography and texture – making up its fabric. This conglomerate of urban elements is also the translation of the encounters and social dynamics that take place there. A city also comprehends a perceived layer, made of both the image inhabitants have of it and the one projected to the exterior, and the two may or may not correspond. This is why referring to what is beneficial for the city, both in the context of biennials but also in more general terms, might be controversial and at times appear in contrast to what its inhabitants want in the current moment. What is good for the city might be favourable for the citizens only in the long term, in the same way, there is the risk of hurting the city when giving way to activities and interventions that might appear beneficial to the citizens in the present moment.

In the late 1960s, Marxist urban sociologist Henri Lefebvre theorised "the right to the city" namely the legitimate claim citizens have to partake of the decision regarding the use and formation of public space, which is manifested through participation and appropriation of said space.[12] In *The City on Display, Architecture Festivals and the Urban* (2023), art historian Joel Robinson says that architecture festivals have succeeded in momentarily reclaiming pieces of the city for the collective and using their venues to bolster the right to the city, hence the right to appropriate urban space and to participate in decisions about its use.[13] I will argue that this claim can be applied to the wider category of biennials, not only architecture ones. I will demonstrate that they set in motion the same phenomena of temporary appropriation and participation that turn them into laboratories to test alternative narratives and forms of civic engagement. Moreover, I will show how they lend themselves to become platforms to generate physical changes and conceptual shifts in the city and the way it is inhabited. Due to their temporary nature, biennials' interventions are not final, hence overcoming the risk for longstanding damage pointed out by urban designer and cities researcher Mark Purcell in the article "Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and Its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant."[14]

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[12] Lefebvre, in Purcell, "Possible Worlds," 43–44.

[13] Robinson, *The City on Display*, 95-96.

[14] Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre," 103.

– CHAPTER I

Venice / La Biennale di Venezia

Following the opening of the 2023 Architecture Biennale, for twenty-six weeks, the German Pavilion ran workshops with more than five hundred students from different parts of Europe. It aimed to tackle material reuse and sustainable repurposing practices in Venice, specifically, and to spark dialogue in the architecture field at wide. Inspired by squatters culture in Berlin, *Open for Maintenance* is the result of the joint curatorial vision of architecture practices summacumfemmer and Büro Juliane Greb with ARCH+ magazine.[15] Taken out in collaboration with various European Universities –from Venice's IUAV to AdBK Munich and KU Leuven amongst others– the project involved German and Venetian associations and organisations tackling issues of housing and material cycles locally –for example, *Assemblea Sociale per la Casa* from Venice or Munich-based social cooperative *Bellevue di Monaco*.[16] After their appointment, the curators approached the pavilion with a clear trajectory, re-imagining it as a core space of regeneration from which to intervene on and in the city.

The German Pavilion building [Fig.1] with its neo-classical appearance –already denounced as symbolic of anachronistic imperialism and still bearing traces of Nazi propaganda during the 2022 Art Biennale– has been left almost untouched, preserving the marks of the past edition's display and critique. Minimal architectural interventions were taken out to ensure the building was functional and accessible [Fig.2], thus adding a ramp to the front of the pavilion and installing a working bathroom inside the edifice. [Fig.3] In line with the curators' vision, the additions were realised with repurposed material from past editions of La Biennale. Referred to as Biennale "spolia," a miscellaneous assemblage of leftover material filled the different rooms of the Pavilion.[17] [Fig.4-5] The collection was compiled and amassed in the months leading up to the opening by curators summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb and ARCH+ with the help of local association *R3B/*

[15] The Spaces, "Germany Is on a Recycling Mission."

[16] Frearson, "German Pavilion Becomes Material Bank," Dezeen.

[17] ARCH+, "Open for Maintenance."

Rebiennale, whose main agenda revolves around finding new life and tackling the development of circular practices for Biennale waste.[18] The assortment of leftovers is varied –the blue columns of Israel's 2022 *Queendom* exhibition [Fig.6] stand next to fragments of timber and scraps of metal, colourful plywood comes from the prior year's Austrian Pavilion and golden sheets are from the Uzbekistan one.[19] All objects have been catalogued in a digital archive, the *Open for Maintenance Depot* [Fig.7], and sport a QR code, through which visitors can access their history and provenance.[20]

Inside the building, the curators installed a workshop [Fig.8] where the spolia could be restored and reworked to serve as functioning materials to support the public programme *Maintenance 1:1* of the pavilion. The programme set out to execute a series of one-week-long regeneration projects around the city of Venice and was realised in collaboration with participating European Universities. *Maintenance 1:1 Programme* is well documented on the curators' websites and involved local organisations [Fig.9]. The materials were repurposed in the German Pavilion workshop –which through this also gained a performative element– and then moved to the sites of intervention and their new lives. Once the closing date came by, none of the collected material was left in the Pavilion –it had been all used up. Over the weeks of the programme, the students revitalised neglected squatter apartments in Marghera, replaced roof tiles in the former Monastery of Sant'Elena, repaired flats in social housing complex le Casette on the Giudecca Island, took out critical investigations and set up performances to disclose speculative visions on the future of Venice, restored a boat in one of the few remaining industrial sites in the city, produced better housing conditions for the non-human residents of the lagoon by building bat houses in the Santa Marta area and constructed a new roof and ticket booth for a local football club…[21] [Fig.10-15] After the run of the Biennale, the workshop was relocated to Pandora, a squatted former hospital revitalised by local activists as a space for cultural events, adapted to its new use by the students as part of one of the regeneration projects.[22] The agenda of the 2023 German Pavilion outlasted its

[18] summacumfemmer, "041 La Biennale Di Venezia."

[19] Ibid.

[20] Open for Maintenance Depot, "Open for Maintenance."

[21] summacumfemmer, "041 La Biennale Di Venezia."

[22] Ibid.

Biennale presence, perpetuating its commitment to the maintenance of the urban fabric and a cautious, circular approach to urban renewal.

Talking about the project to design magazine *Dezeen*, ARCH+ editor and curatorial team member Melissa Makele stated that at the core of the proposal laid the intention "to turn the pavilion into useful infrastructure, rather than a place of national representation".[23] The 2023 German Pavilion serves as a virtuous example of what the art and architecture event can bring to the city and a model of positive collaboration between biennale actors and local realities. According to its curators, *Open for Maintenance* is "an action framework for a new building culture."[24] On the one hand, the project stood as an invite to architects and designers to engage differently with materials and develop an alternative, more sustainable approach to building. On the other, it represented the physical manifestation and symbolic embodiment of how the La Biennale can serve as a workshop to set off a process of regeneration from within –from the Biennale into the city– that expands to Venice, making use of tools and materials the city already possesses.

– Exploring the beneficial outcomes of La Biennale in Venice, aims of the chapter

The laboratory character of La Biennale made manifest in *Open for Maintenance,* and its positive outcome for the city and its inhabitants are at the core of what the following chapter sets out to explore. Through a selection of three case studies –the aforementioned 2023 German pavilion *Open for Maintenance* curated by summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb and *ARCH+* magazine, the artwork *The Mosque* by Swiss artist Christoph Büchel for the 2015 Icelandic Pavilion, and Rural Studio's 2016 *Theatre of UseFULL* installation on display in the Arsenale at the 15th Architecture Biennale– I will examine in what forms artwork and installations in La Biennale have positively impacted the city or its community. I aim to situate myself in constructing antithesis to the allegations in contemporary academia production framing the phenomena as harmful, self-referential and the result of vanity projects, to the point that Moma curator Martino Stierli has come to state that "biennial bashing is part of the very phenomenon."[25] The three case studies highlight the relationships

[23] Frearson, "German Pavilion Becomes Material Bank," Dezeen.

[24] ARCH+, "Open for Maintenance."

[25] Stierli, "Preface" in Szacka, *Biennials/Triennials,* 10.

between the event, the city, the artworks and the interventions, and the effects they had on the urban fabric, both architecturally and socially. Infiltrating the city and its buildings, they will show how the Biennale can give local realities a platform to make their voices heard and explore contemporary issues and thematics relevant to the urban fabrics –such as sustainability and ecology, restoration and repurposing, reclaiming, the creation of new or counter-narratives for the city. The case studies are located in three different sites typologies. *Open for Maintenance* has its main core in the Giardini, in one of the National Pavilions, the most traditional of La Biennale locations. It exemplifies a beneficial intervention that originates inside the architectural boundaries of the Biennale but, via the workshops and public programme, bridges the separation from urban life. It spreads through the city during the run of the exhibition, extracting from La Biennale the materials and tools necessary to positively intervene. *The Mosque*, on the other hand, is sited in one of the satellite pavilions, deeply immersed in the urban context, on the opposite side of Venice from the Giardini and the Arsenale. It shows an intervention built upon the character of the city communities and sited within its fabric. Lastly, *Theatre of UseFULL* was on display in the Arsenale, a traditional Biennale site but not as nationalism-imbued as the Giardini. This project will show how it is possible to provide a positive impact by exploiting the exhibition as an excuse to collaborate with local realities. It will also demonstrate how to make use of La Biennale visibility and economic means to concretely respond to the needs of Venice-based organisations dealing with social inequity. La Biennale exhibition here becomes a transitionary moment in a bigger project oriented towards the requirements of the residents of Venice.

The case studies belong to different editions to reflect the time of the city, which is slower than that of biennials and made of progressive moments. Furthermore, biennials and the city operate on different timelines. While the city lives its present, a biennial is meant to already be focusing on the future. In its nature of laboratory and platform for exploration and discourse-forming within Venice, La Biennale can recognise present challenges and suggest solutions for the future. By permeating the city's fabric, it is made aware of constraining issues that affect it. I aim to demonstrate how La Biennale can go beyond the exhibition element it entails and, through the speculatory and physical possibilities art can offer, give back to the host city. In this chapter, I plan to explore what positive outcomes and

implications have come out of the Venice Biennale favouring the city and its inhabitants, through the analysis of the case studies. To support this claim, I will consult the Venice Art and Architecture Biennale catalogues, media and academic coverage of the events and their legacy, the personal websites of the artists, architects and curators involved and their declarations to journalists and dedicated magazines, such as *DOMUS*, *Frieze* or *The Art Newspaper*. Local and international media, including *the Guardian* and *the New York Times*, will serve as useful outlets to gain insights into the residents' opinions while the websites of Venice-based associations are key to understanding the positions of the local communities.

The research is situated across disciplines, from museum and urban studies to architecture and geography. In the framework of curatorial studies, Rafal Niemojewski, in the book *Biennials: The Exhibitions We Love to Hate* (2021), draws an excursus of the development of the biennale format from the 20th Century to contemporary days and the formation of the negative opinion in the academic field. Elena Filipovic establishes a canon of perennial exhibitions in the book *The Biennial Reader: an Anthology on Large-Scale Perennial Exhibitions of Contemporary Art* (2010). To approach the topic of the role and relevance of architecture exhibitions and critically analyse how the Venice Biennale, as a temporary event, can be beneficial to its host city, I will make use of Léa-Catherine Szacka's book *Biennials/Triennials: Conversations on the Geography of Itinerant Display* (2019) in which she interviews curators of different perennials. Panos Kompatsiaris's *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials: Spectacles of Critique, Theory and Ar*t (2019) positionates the research in political terms, which is important as the city is inherently a political space. The research by Joel Robinson in *The City on Display, Architecture Festivals and the Urban* (2023) and *Festivals and the City, the Contested Geographies of the Urban Events* (2022) by Andrew Smith, Guy Osborn and Bernadette Quinn will provide the framework to analyse the specifics of the relationship between temporary events and urban contexts in recent times. My reading of the Venice Biennale's history, role and relevance in the urban context of its host city will be informed by Aaron Levy, William Menking, and Vittorio Gregotti's *Architecture on Display: On the History of the Venice Biennale of Architecture* (2010) where they recount the history of the architecture exhibition in Venice and the critiques it encountered in time. Articles by art and museum historians Caroline A. Jones and Vittoria Martini in *OBOE Journal* I no. 1 "Why Venice" (2020) –respectively "Event Structures and Biennial Culture:

Oreste at the Biennale" and "How La Biennale as a Brand Was Born: Venice as the Archetype of a Biennial City"– will serve to trace the relationship between the exhibition and the city, in terms of physical and conceptual presence. The work of architecture researchers Alessandro Zorzetto, Ángela Barrios Padura, and Marta Molina Huelva is relevant to understanding the positive outcomes of La Biennale in Venice as it focuses on the role of ephemeral architecture in processes of urban regeneration and growth.

To justify in what form the event becomes beneficial I make use of Lefebvre's notion of 'the right to the city' –mediated and reformulated by architecture scholar Lee Stickells and urban design professor and cities researcher Mark Purcell– and apply it to the exhibition spaces and installations of the Venice Biennale. The right to the city expects citizens to be able to partake in the decision regarding the use and formation of public space through *participation* and *appropriation*, as they are the ones constantly interacting with it.[26] Purcell claims that this could bring dangerous outcomes, as what might appear beneficial to the citizenship in the present moment could in time hurt the city.[27] Building upon art historian Joel Robinson's claim that, as previously quoted in the introduction, architecture festivals successfully momentarily reclaim and appropriate urban areas, as they use their venues to create spaces where the right to the city can be exercised through an alternative engagement with the context.[28] I aim to show that, through the artworks and projects on show, La Biennale creates these spaces in which the right to the city can exercised, as the ephemerality of its temporary presence allows to freely test architectural and social intervention in the urban fabric, as well as alternative systems and infrastructures, without the risk of causing permanent harm. This will be corroborated by the case studies.

– From the Gardens to the city, the urban impact of La Biennale

The establishment in 1980 of the first Architecture Biennale is central to the aims of this chapter. Curated by architect and theoretician Paolo Portoghesi, it introduced the newly restored Corderie dell'Arsenale as a central display space, in addition to the Giardini. Moreover, it formulated a city-focused agenda intending to renew and repurpose more

[26] Lefebvre, in Purcell, "Possible Worlds," 43-44.

[27] Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre," 103.

[28] Robinson, *The City on Display,* 95-96.

abandoned spaces around Venice.[29] With the Architecture Biennale, the exhibition moves into the city, finally creating a physical link with the urban context and turning into an institution able to form a constructive dialogue with its host. Remembering those times, interviewed by independent curator Aaron Levy and architectural historian William Menking, Portoghesi states that he pushed for the Arsenale to become part of the Biennale exhibitionary set-up as he felt that it would have been a step towards the "natural expansion of the exhibition towards the centre of the city".[30] He also noticed how the architectural separation created a chasm between the city and La Biennale and a form of conflict between the latter and the citizens.[31] To move the exhibition closer to the city centre meant to move it closer to the Venetians, creating forms of local collaboration. It allowed citizens to get back ownership over city areas from which they were previously excluded. For a biennial to be beneficial to the city intended in its composite form as the sum of its buildings, inhabitants and socio-dynamics, it has to be grounded in the topography of that same city and not only located there. In 1980, La Biennale turned from an art exhibition taking place in Venice to a diffused event able to permeate and establish links with its urban context and, as a consequence, positively impact it.

Regardless of possible negative outcomes like over-tourism, profit-focus and potential commodification, biennials and big international platforms serve as important spaces to start a dialogue. Many of the issues highlighted as a result of La Biennale are often proper to the city of Venice. While La Biennale might magnify them, they would still exist nonetheless. I hereby want to highlight that what would not exist, if the biennial was not there, is the chance to experiment through ephemeral interventions and art-based media, which do not bear the permanence an architectural intervention would. It is intrinsic to the nature of cities to change, be it by expanding or due to changes in their populations, they are meant to evolve. I want to prove that La Biennale allows thereof the chance to test solutions, reclaim areas of the city and give statements, both through the biennial system and by exploiting the visibility it offers the city on an international stage.

Venice is at times seen as an open-air museum itself, not only a city of museums and cultural venues.[32] This is dangerous, as it risks freezing the identity and processes that

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[29] Levy et al., *Architecture on Display*, 61.

[30] Ibid., 37.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Calcagno et al., "History, Dilemmas and Hopes of Venice," 117-129.

compose a living city. By counterposing said museumification process, the temporary exhibition provides a break from the stillness. La Biennale in Venice shows how perennials can represent an important space of expression for the host city. They are not only important in the history of art and curatorial studies but also for urban and social development as, thanks to their temporality and recurrence, through ephemeral interventions, allow to experiment and test within the fabric of the city. Moreover, through time, relevant and needed changes can be implemented, responding to localised issues and requirements, as demonstrated by the selected case studies –from the maintenance and expansion of the urban fabric to issues of housing and lack thereof, and questions of integration and community formation, amongst others.

– Case studies in context, unpacking positive Biennale effects

How to approach the analysis of the Venice Biennale's positive effects on the city? The focus of the case studies centres on the invisible strings that tie a city together, and the human shifts and nuances that are set in motion by an ever-changing network of social relationships and equilibriums. Numbers and statistics are not able to convey properly said intangible phenomena, while art, as a human practice, is able to permeate and alter them. Urban spaces are constantly formed by social practices and dynamics, and according to Lefebvre this production is manifested in creative terms –argues Stickells– making art a crucial tool to transforming the city, and identifying biennials as fitting sites to keep up with the pace of social and urban changes.[33]

1) *Open for Maintenance* (2023) by *s*ummacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb and ARCH+, 18th Architecture Biennale

As previously explored at the beginning of this chapter, the project *Open for Maintenance*, the German participation in the 18th Architecture Biennale, was more than an exhibition. Rather, it presented the working prototype of an alternative model of building and urban renewal. Located in the Giardini, in the National Pavilion of Germany, it turned the exhibition site into a running workshop. It was fully accessible thanks to the addition of a ramp to the front of the edifice, and functional, with a kitchenette and toilette installed inside

[33] Stickells, "The Right to the City," 217.

to provide for basic needs. The empty pavilion was filled with leftover material from past editions to be reworked and repurposed in the workshop throughout La Biennale as part of the public programme. Students from all over Europe partook in the programme and intervened around Venice using the past exhibitions spolia to maintain and restore different areas and buildings throughout the city, from Mestre to the Giudecca Island. By the end of the 18th Architecture Biennale, all the material collected had been used up and the workshop was transferred out of the biennale, into the Laboratorio Climatico Pandora in the Mestre neighbourhood, to continue playing its part in preserving the urban and social heritage of the city. It outlasted the biennale duration as the link established with local realities was not extinguished by the end of the exhibition and its presence continued to be beneficial beyond the time of the event.

While site-specific, as it makes use of the waste produced by the Venice Biennale system, it can be adapted to different urban contexts, as the disposal of materials and their life cycles are issues concerning the built environment at a global scale. This is an example of the argument I have previously made in the introduction that indicates biennials as spaces where local solutions with global impact can be tested and implemented. What is interesting about *Open for Maintenance* is that while at its core it aims to address –in the words of curator Anh-Linh Ngo– "the resource problem and material cycles of La Biennale," the outcome appears also as a self-critical analysis of the presence of the art event in the city.[34] The project turns the attention in, towards the inner mechanism of the biennial cycle, intervening on the shortcomings of the system locally and projecting the solution it provides towards the city implementing a model of circular reuse. La Biennale is not only the site of the expression of a critique but also the subject of said critical analysis and the format to rethink. Through this shift of focus, the project also answers the question of how the biennale could be beneficial to the city. Instead of producing waste, the constant stream of materials reaching the lagoon every year becomes functional to the well-being and maintenance of the urban fabric of Venice itself, forming an alternative infrastructure and expanding the biennale cycle to positively impact the host city.

[34] Fakharany, "Rethinking the Biennale," ArchDaily.

2) *The Mosque* (2015) by Christoph Büchel, 56th Venice Art Biennale

The resources La Biennale provides are not only financial, nor limited to those given by its visibility on the international stage. A powerful tool of this type of temporary event is the potential to write alternative narratives and imagine new realities for the city and its spaces. Venice, as common to most cities, does present urban and social gaps. Art and temporary architecture can collaborate in identifying these weaknesses and test solutions to respond to them, potentially giving space to social participation analogue to that advocated in Lefebvre's right to the city. Therefore, they can partake in filling these gaps in ways that do not follow a traditional approach, as demonstrated by the 2015 installation *The Mosque*, realised for the Icelandic Pavilion by Swiss artist Christoph Büchel.[35]

Iceland does not possess a national building in the Giardini, henceforth in 2015, the country's Pavilion was housed in the deconsecrated Church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, in the depth of the Cannareggio neighbourhood. This site is far from the Giardini and the Arsenale, relatively close to the Central Station but off the track of the main touristic paths. The area still maintains a relatively local character, situating the work in a context imbued in the local life of residents, placing the artwork and foreign public within the distinctive social dynamics shaping the area. Büchel's artistic intervention interested the interior of the Church, which was altered to resemble a real mosque. The baroque façade – which does not reflect the stripped-down, barely adorned interior of the church– was left untouched. [Fig.16] This choice both enhanced the juxtaposition between inside and outside and the layers of history inscribed in the city fabric of Venice. I would also see it as a commentary on how the building can still harmoniously exist in the surrounding urban context, regardless of its shift in use. Upon entrance, visitors were asked to remove their shoes, as required in Islamic spaces of cult. [Fig.17] The floor of the single nave of the church was covered in its entirety by a red, cream and green carpet, decorated with a pattern of pointed arches of Islamic inspiration and oriented towards Mecca [Fig.18]. The building's interior presented all the physical attributes of Muslim worship, not only the carpet but also the ornated *qibla* wall, with its characteristic *mihrab* niche, and the *minbar*, the pulpit.[36]

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[35] Universes in Universe, "Iceland: The Mosque."

[36] Mousse Magazine, "Christoph Büchel's 'the Mosque'."

[Fig.19] A large chandelier hangs from the timber gable roof, an LED display indicates times of prayer and, at the side, an automatic machine sells *Mecca Cola*. [Fig.20] Inviting the Muslim community to partake in the work, Büchel turned the space around both through temporary architectural alterations like the addition of Arabic decorations and inscriptions [Fig.21], but also through social participation, as the Muslims living in the area were invited to teach the Koran and use the space as a centre to discuss their concerns and the issues the local community faced.[37]

To contextualise, Venice did not at the time have an official mosque on its premises. The first mosque of the city was inaugurated in 2022 in Mestre –on the mainland, not on the islands that form the historical centre–, and to this day it is still subjected to controversies.[38] In a city that features a wide range of sites of religious cults including five synagogues and a Buddhist centre amongst others, the lack of a Muslim centre of worship in Venice looms as an objective urban hole, regardless of political stances. This gap had been noted before by artists and designers, in 2010 IND architects proposed an (unrealised) floating mosque for the Architectural Biennale of the same year.[39] [Fig.22] It stands as an even more unjustified void in the urban conglomeration if keeping into consideration the longstanding commercial relationships that had linked Venice and Byzantium in the past. The traces of this collaboration still lie in the fabric of the city, for example in the aptly named Fondaco dei Turchi, a commercial palace dedicated to the activities of Turkish merchants, today housing the Civic History Museum of Venice. While the religious debate is politically imbued, in architectural terms a space for cult is just another use for a building, yet another typology that partakes of the heterogenous miscellaneous of occupations and urban rituals that shape cities and city life. Although it can not be said that Büchel's work had no political connotation, at core it identified what is an urban and architectural shortcoming of the Venetian administration.

Researcher in contemporary art and cultural studies Panos Kompatsiaris notes that while the work was supposed to critique the debates around migratory movements in Iceland, Büchel created a commentary on the historical links and ties between the Muslim world and

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[37] Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials,* 28.

[38] La Luce, "Inaugurata a Venezia La Nuova Sede Della Moschea Cittadina."

[39] IND, "Venice Floating Mosque."

the city of Venice.[40] He did so by building upon issues of integration, cultural difference and tolerance, all the while highlighting a gap in the contemporary city fabric.[41] In 2015, during the run of the 56th Venice Art Biennale, the Muslim community –until then excluded from practising their religion in the centre of the city– recognised the Icelandic Pavilion's Mosque as their own. It was seen as a space that was able to fix the shortcomings perpetuated by the lack of spaces for worship and started praying inside the artwork. [Fig.23] Beyond the installation, the artwork became a crucial element in the urban fabric and allowed a resident community to find their own space in the city conglomerate. Moreover, it gave concrete proof of the need for the local administration to tackle this issue temporarily fixed by the Icelandic Pavilion.

The installation *The Mosque*, recounts Kompatsiaris, opened on May 8th 2015, to be shut down by the authorities only a couple of weeks later, on May 22nd, on the basis of the claim that it was not art anymore but rather a space to diffuse religious dogmas and ideas.[42] Authorities shut it down, says Kompatsiaris, because they saw it as a threat. The political element of this action is not so relevant to this analysis, but the observation Kompatsiaris makes later is. He states that the artwork "surpassed its role as an apparatus of enabling a non-literary world."[43] This shows how biennials are indeed relevant platforms to test alternative narratives–even though temporary, they feel *real* during the period of the event. Left to the community's own means by Büchel after the opening, the installation worked and was perceived as a real mosque, providing a concrete experience of how that specific area would work should the urban change be implemented. It was so successful to result boring, writes Julie Baumgardner on *Artsy*, as the work was inhabited by "people going about their daily lives, their daily rituals, and their desires to socialize with others in their self-identified community," it became mundane.[44]

Interestingly enough, the work did not only encounter the contempt of xenophobes and right-wing parties like Italian Lega Nord, as the art world was left divided in its reception of the work too. In her review on *The Art Newspaper*, founding editor and former curator

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[40] Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials,* 28.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Baumgardner, "What's Been Missed," Artsy.

Anna Somers Cocks claims the work not only left her feeling uneasy but also made her angry.[45] A critique moved to the installation by independent art magazine *Hyperallergic* claimed that Büchel's work was nothing more than an empty provocation, without real social foundations nor justified by the artist having personal connections to Islam.[46] Yet, Mohamed Amin Al Ahdab, a local architect and president of the Islamic Community of Venice, commended the installation expressing the wish that "the project, or some version of it, could outlast the duration of the biennale" meaning that the local community appreciated the message perpetuated by the installation and the form in which it was expressed.[47] Now, almost ten years later, the Muslim community of Venice has –in some way– gotten a mosque, and even though it is not located in the historic centre, the gap was partially filled. Of course, the Icelandic Pavilion will not have been the only advocate for this, but it materialised a need. La Biennale not only managed to provide a temporary solution and an alternative proposal for an existing disused space, the Church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, but it also acted as a platform for the needs and requirements of a local community to be voiced and, especially, heard.

3) *Theatre of UseFULL* (2016) by Rural Studio, 15th Venice Architecture Biennale

"How can an important event be installed without wasting resources?" – that is the central question around which Rural Studio developed *Theatre of UseFULL,* their entry to the 2016 Architecture Biennale, *Reporting from the Front*, curated by Alejandro Aravena and focused on the sustainable practice of architecture, and environmental justice.[48]

Located in the side aisle of the Corderie building in the Arsenale, Rural Studio's intervention is a temporary theatre defined by classical proportion and elegant composition of space. Built upon a rectangular plan, the walls enclosing *Theatre of UseFULL* hang from the ceiling, a box floating above the ground. [Fig.24] The structure conveys a fleeting character, enhanced by the translucent quality of the wall panels. [Fig.25] Inside, short videos by filmmakers Claire Dub and Randy Rubin are projected on a loop showing the work of Rural Studio as an "off-campus design-build program" at the School of Architecture of Auburn

[45] Somers Cocks, "Artist Christoph Büchel's 'Mosque'," TAN.

[46] Vartanian, "Why I Don't Buy the Premise," Hyperallergic.

[47] Higgins, "Artist Draws Controversy," The Guardian.

[48] Zorzetto, "The Theatre of Usefull," DOMUS.

University.[49] [Fig.26] As classical as the layout of the space is, what stands out immediately upon first sight is the unconventional choice of materials. Two rows of spring-coil beds make up the walls, the benches are composed of stacked insulation panels, wool-wood pieces hang from the ceiling providing makeshift acoustics regulation, while the theatre space is accessed through an intermediary corridor of lockers, lying on the side and piled upon each other. [Fig. 27-29] All the items are still packaged, as this is not their final destination. Describing the installation for Architecture and Design magazine *DOMUS*, architect and researcher Alessandro Zorzetto explains how the work is an exercise in architectural transformation.[50] He claims that there is a difference between using everyday items in an installation and turning them into building material. In this case, he says, "the act of hanging turns a bed into a wall," placing active intentionality at the heart of architectural change.[51]

None of the unconventional items utilised as building materials in the exhibition are there by chance, nor were they fully chosen by Rural Studio. In line with their Alabama-based research on local communities and focus on housing, Rural Studio approached the work by looking for local cooperatives and organisations dealing with analogue issues in Venice, to localise and contextualise their intervention and form an active collaboration with actors in the city. They selected two –*Assemblea Sociale per la Casa,* the same cooperative managing homeless people shelters that will also partake in the aforementioned *Open for Maintenance* restoration programme in 2023, and *Cooperativa Caracol*, an organisation restoring abandoned former social housing.[52] They inquired with these collaborators to know what kind of goods and resources they required for their projects so that they could request them to use in their Biennale participation. Rural Studio then received a list of items from the two associations and picked the building materials among those indicated –spring-coil beds, cabinets, insulation, wool-wood panels… All the objects utilised in the display were in transit, as La Biennale was not intended to be their final location of use, but rather an in-between moment intended to build awareness and draw attention to the real issue taking place outside of the walls of the Arsenale. The items remained packaged all through the duration of the exhibition to later be delivered, pristine, to the intended shelters and social houses.

[49] Rural Studio, "About."

[50] Zorzetto, "The Theatre of Usefull," DOMUS.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Zorzetto et al., "Ephemeral Architecture," 720.

Through this peculiar use of mundane items as construction material, *Theatre of UseFULL* also approaches the question of Biennale-produced waste in an original way. "There's no re-cycle here –claims Rural Studio in conversation with Zorzotto– it would be better to call it a passage."[53] The project does not deal with notions of material re-cycle as the items were not really 'in use' in the display, as they remained packaged and did not serve their intended purpose (see beds as walls). Rather, it explores and questions alternative life paths of objects within the system of La Biennale and with the city in mind. Rural Studio members commented on this particular process by claiming they "want to be a source of resources and not waste them."[54] This involved physically providing tools and materials, acting as facilitators and offering their expertise and platform to local communities, in what becomes an equal exchange.

Rural Studio gave voices and help to local realities bringing their needs inside the Biennale in a sensible and unconventional form. Rather than building an exhibition about the issues the Venice-based associations face, or raising awareness by simply recounting their work, they used the installation to concretely ease the mission of the two. *Theatre of UseFULL* provides an example of how the exhibition can become an excuse to take out localised research and identify social and urban spaces to concretely intervene in positively, in collaboration with locals. In a sense, it is not only a question of art and architecture installations being taken out of a limiting walled context –as the Biennale and the Giardini can represent– to freely flow through the city, both via physical installations and theoretical exchange. Favourably impacting the city also implies understanding which ones of the local communities can and should be taken *inside* the exhibition. An intervention in the social sphere can happen in steps, and bring benefits in the aftermath of La Biennale. Furthermore, *Theatre of UseFULL* is a type of project that can be read at different levels. People are fighting for shelter all over the world, not only in Venice. Thus, it works along the theory that global issues can be approached locally, bringing concrete outcomes, while still informing debate at a wider scale.

Rural Studio did not produce a work that tested new purposes for existing buildings nor created a physical structure that remained in use past the exhibition, yet their proposal too

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[53] Zorzetto, "The Theatre of Usefull," DOMUS.

[54] Ibid.

outlasted the biennial. After the exhibition's end, the materials acquired to be temporarily displayed in the Arsenale were given to the organisations, an action which represented the core aim of the project. Rural Studio's approach, says Zorzetto, methodologically reconsidered the exhibition process, visualising the Biennale as a tool rather than the final aim and placing the inhabitants at the centre of the investigation.[55] In this case, we cannot speak of regeneration or reclaim, as much as of a re-formulation of the role of the exhibition and its participants. The Biennale system was questioned, dismantled, rethought and exploited to raise awareness and generate a concrete return in response to a local problem.

– Venice the city, La Biennale and the benefits of institutionalised recurrency

The Venice Biennale has always been actively involved in writing and rewriting the narrative of the city. La Biennale was already relevant to the city at the time of its creation, as it served as a form of statement of independence and power in the face of the newly formed Regno d'Italia and the establishment of Rome as its capital and main city.[56] Beyond branding strategies, La Biennale became a defining element of Venice, also through its physical presence in the urban fabric. By moving physically beyond the architectural boundaries of the Giardini, first into the Arsenale and later through the city, in 1980 the Venice Biennale started to express a new artistic voice, shaped by the written and unwritten politics of the city and set in motion a series of interventions beneficial for the urban and social context. From 1999 onwards, the Biennale implemented a program for the "improvement and reintegration" of the fabric of the city, restoring and reopening different areas of Venice as part of the Biennale agenda.[57] These spaces outlast the exhibition and can be used and inhabited when it is not running.

Yet it is not only a question of repurposing and regeneration, but rather of space being reclaimed, for the city and cultural purposes. Urban researchers Zorzetto, Barrios Padura and Molina Huelva have identified a model of regeneration specific to Venice, affecting the evolution of the city. This model is based on La Biennale being an event able to generate the necessary resources later invested in the maintenance of buildings, suggesting a virtuous

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Jones, "Biennial Culture," in Filipovic, *The Biennial Reader,* 75.

[57] Levy et al., *Architecture on Display*, 61.

effect.[58] They see ephemeral architecture in the Venice context as a tool able to both show what spaces might be and give the input to start working on abandoned edifices, lying empty in the city. Furthermore, La Biennale represents a space for innovation and experimentation, a true laboratory. Formulating global issues in the form of their local manifestation brings them closer and makes them more understandable, allowing to tackle them in their specificity while still intervening on the global problem. This is the case, for example, of what happens in regards to issues of sustainability and ecology, as due to the city's delicate nature and ecosystem, Venice represents an ideal site to discuss unsustainable living and pollution, especially considering that its very existence is in peril due to the rise of water levels. This strategy of 'closeness' was also exemplified by Rural Studio's presentation of the issue of housing shortage and homelessness in their work *Theatre of UseFULL*.

The case studies explored provide virtuous examples of the way the Biennale institutional network can be infiltrated by its own actors and create a return for the host city. The economic outcomes of La Biennale are important for the city of Venice and represent a valuable platform on many fronts. While keeping into consideration the negative impacts of the La Biennale system, a Biennale-less Venice does not represent a desirable case scenario as it provides a secure audience, a strong marketing presence, a network appealing to the creative and cultural fields, and a space to exercise appropriation of spaces and participation, in line with the right to the city of Lefebvrian inspiration. As the examples have demonstrated, artworks and temporary installations stand as spaces to build a dialogue and active laboratories to locally explore urban and social issues, testing solutions. There is a counter-narrative running along La Biennale and there is space for the host city in its agenda. La Biennale is a powerful medium for the city of Venice in terms of social and urban development. A strategic reworking of the event vision, shifting towards providing an outcome for the city in terms of living conditions and city growth, rebalances its role and re-evaluates the phenomenon in the context of urban and cultural studies. The Venice Biennale has the visibility, the network and the format that allows experimentation to happen, and the platform element to be successful, as it permeates the fabric of the city to the extent required to influence it, as shown by the case studies. Its institutionalisation and recurrency, furthermore, provide a certain level of security and a vaster timeframe to take out the

[58] Zorzetto et al., "Ephemeral Architecture," 717–723.

interventions. The Biennale institution assures the process will keep going beyond the time of the exhibition itself, without ever leaving the city completely on its terms. In a sense, it represents a cultural safety net for the city of Venice.

Now the question emerging from this chapter and leading into the next is what happens when a biennial takes place as a punctual in time, singular event. I will take the example of the twelfth edition of Manifesta Biennale, which took place in Palermo in 2018, to explore how an art-based event can positively impact a city also through one single iteration. In addition, I will question what type of links and connections it is able to establish with the host city within the defined span of its presence on the territory.

– CHAPTER II

Palermo / Manifesta12

North of the city of Palermo, between the maritime suburbs of Mondello and Sferracavallo, rise the hills of the natural reserve of Capo Gallo, overlooking the sea and the valley, where the Sicilian capital stretches out. [Fig.30] Regardless of its state of wildlife sanctuary, forty years ago the face of the central hill, Pizzo Sella, was disconcertingly altered by abusive housing development. Nowadays, after concrete pours, aborted construction and endless lawsuits, the promontory symbolises "the poster child of real estate corruption" in the public eye.[59] Referred to by locals as *la collina del disonore*, "the hill of dishonour," it stands as a reminder of the process of property speculation and unregulated building perpetuated in Palermo and adjoining areas by corrupted local administrations and interested parties from the 1950s to the 1980s.[60] To this day, the city bears the traces and scars of that process in its appearance.

Behind the housing development in Pizzo Sella was the money and activity of Mafia boss Michele Greco, whose sister Rosa was married to the owner of the construction company taking out the building work.[61] When the abusiveness of the project was uncovered by law enforcement in the mid-1980s the works were stopped and the structures halted at different levels of incompleteness. They have remained untouched since, if not for a short-lived demolition project in the late 1990s that only interested five of the houses.[62] Today, the barren landscape of Pizzo Sella is dominated by more than 170 finished buildings and incomplete concrete skeletons scattered through the side of the hill, a dystopic ghost city looking over the sea and Palermo.[63] [Fig.31] Its story, location, and the visual and conceptual relationship it establishes with the city, landscape and the sea, have made Pizzo Sella the ideal site of intervention to start a process to make peace with the nearby history of Palermo. Belgian

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[59] Rotor, "Da Quassù è Tutta Un'Altra Cosa."

[60] Marsala, "Pizzo Sella," Artribune.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Cammarata and Giordano, "Re-Interpreting Pizzo Sella," DOMUS.

[63] Ibid.

architecture and design collective Rotor was invited "to reflect on this controversial area and to explore scenarios of interventions and resignification" as part of the program of the 2018 nomadic biennale Manifesta12 *The Planetary Garden–Cultivating Co-existence* in Palermo.[64] In line with their research on material cycles and their life flows, Rotor's response *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa* (2018) was a site-specific project in three parts –a workshop, an urban intervention and an installation on-site in Capo Gallo.

Made exceptionally open to the public on the occasion of Manifesta, Pizzo Sella is easily reachable from Palermo by car or –with slightly more effort– via public transport. Different paths run from the bottom to the top of the hill, left by bikers, hikers, and animals, drawing alternative routes through the wildlife and the concrete structures. According to Rotor, these traces and hidden tracks were used "to stitch back together" the hill.[65] Amongst these one stood out, an ancient mountain path that connects the abandoned residential complex to the top of Capo Gallo promontorium, and that is the route the visitor is invited to take in *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa*.[66] [Fig.32] Walking up the hill, the skeletons of the buildings slowly start to merge into the landscape, turning into an unconventional thicket of concrete and metal, encasing views through their empty window frames. [Fig.33] The path wraps around the hill and the view of the landscape can be taken in at different moments, furthermore creating occasions for contemplation and interaction with the site.

Approaching the top, the route steers towards one of the empty structures, connected to the path via a short bridge overlooking the valley. [Fig.34] Most of the walls are missing, leaving the edifice to its stripped-down structural frame. The scaffolding that used to cover the building has been removed and the space has been made safe with the addition of thin metal rails that limit the risk of falling off from the open structure and add to its distinctive ghostly feeling. A ramp has been added and the viewpoint can also be reached by car, as it was important for the work to be accessible to everyone and not only those able to brave the four to five hours walk up the hill.[67] The architectural interventions were taken out prior to

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[64] Rotor, "Da Quassù è Tutta Un'Altra Cosa."

[65] Ibid.

[66] Saraceno, "Pizzo Sella," Manifesta12 Palermo.

[67] Peluso, "Rotor in Palermo," DOMUS.

the biennial opening during an open workshop –shared on social media– that invited locals and non to partake in the transformation of the building.[68] [Fig.35]

At the top, the air is humid and salty, urbanisation is far yet very close by. The building at the end of the path, with its view over the sea and Palermo, stands as the core of *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa.* The original Italian title means "from up here, the story is completely different," a direct translation of what the project aims to achieve. Physically providing a different point of view, it symbolically suggests that there are alternative ways to look at the city of Palermo and its history. This was furthermore perpetuated by a series of urban walks that Rotor organised and took out in the city centre. As central as the project was to the Manifesta12 programme, Capo Gallo was nonetheless a detached site; hence Rotor had to come up with a way to re-establish and reimagine the relationship between Pizzo Sella and Palermo also from within the city. The intervention on the promontory was permanent, leaving a new mark–one intended to positively impact its viewers upon encounter, inviting people to "restore their relationship with the hill," to make peace.[69] Playing with existing and conceptual perspectives, the project turns the hill into a "healing device" according to Rotor.[70] By visually reconnecting the urban context to nature it is possible to find acquittal and imagine a new positive narrative to build upon the history of the abandoned residential development –a landmark for alternative futures not defined by a shameful past. [Fig. 36-37]

This attempt to re-imagine spaces both in terms of physical appearance and identity is in line with what the local administration of Palermo asked Manifesta Director Hedwig Fijen when carrying out the invitation to host the biennale in the city.[71] Fijen recalls that the main concern was for Manifesta "to create instruments for Palermo's citizens to claim back their own city" in light of a recent history defined by corruption and shame they aim to distance themselves from.[72] This request indicates that Manifesta was recognised as a catalyst for city-grounded and context-specific social dynamics, offering a creative and culture-centred alternative to regeneration projects from above. In the following chapter, I aim to explore the

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[68] Rotor, Facebook Post, 5th April 2018.

[69] Peluso, "Rotor in Palermo," DOMUS.

[70] Rotor, "Da Quassù è Tutta Un'Altra Cosa."

[71] As per Manifesta's own policy, the biennale always chooses the city in which the next edition will take place on the basis of propositions from the possible hosts.

[72] Pestellini Laparelli et al., *Palermo Atlas*, 8.

potential of intervention a punctual event has in terms of benefits for the host city and its inhabitants, in counterposition to the prior analysis of what the Venice Biennale, as institutionalised and recurring, brought to Venice. Architectural historian Léa-Catherine Szacka claims that biennials are not places to display what it is but rather generate new things, these "things" might not materialise physically but take the form of processes.[73] Through the aforementioned *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa* by Rotor and two further case studies –*Palermo Procession* (2018) by Marinella Senatore and Masbedo's *Protocol no. 90/6* (2018)– I want to explore how, and in what forms, the presence of a temporary art event as Manifesta12 has brought tangible and intangible beneficial effects to the host city Palermo by intervening on the way it is inhabited, its urban and social growth and its identity formation processes, within the limits of a defined timeframe.

– The local potential of Manifesta12 and aims of the chapter

Manifesta stands apart from most of the contemporary biennials and recurring temporary exhibitions because of its intentional choice not to have a host city–or, more precisely, not to have a recurring one. Every iteration takes place in a different location, and the varying hosts will inform new layers that change with every edition. The relationship with the city still exists, and to a certain extent it could be seen as even stronger than in other biennials, but it happens punctually and only one time. In this chapter, I ask what the time-defined presence of Manifesta brought to the host city and residents of Palermo –through its artworks and installations– before, during and after its twelfth edition, from June to November 2018.

Manifesta12 was curated by what was presented as "an interdisciplinary group of Creative Mediators" composed of architect and OMA partner Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli, documentary filmmaker and journalist Bregtje van der Haak, architect and Columbia University professor Andrés Jaque, and Mirjam Varadinis, art curator at Kunsthaus Zurich, together with Manifesta Director Hedwig Fijen.[74] This edition, while not the first to display an interest in architecture, introduced an extensive urban study in its curatorial strategy, taken out on-site by the Dutch architecture office OMA. The collected knowledge informed the brief and was published in the book *Palermo Atlas* (2018), where the research is presented

[73] Szacka, *Biennials/Triennials*, 24.

[74] OMA, "Manifesta12 the Planetary Garden."

through critical texts, interviews, maps, photographic reportages and graphic representations. The *Atlas* hence appears in between a visual archive and a working document. I want to explore how this intention to contextually ground Manifesta in the topography and history of the host city benefitted Palermo. Talking of 'city' and 'urban fabric', I refer to the combination of the physical translation of the city –its buildings, streets, squares and so on–, the inhabitants, and the relationship and socio dynamics established and taking place amongst them.

The selected case studies –*Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa* by Rotor, *Palermo Procession* by Marinella Senatore and *Protocol no. 90/6* by Masbedo– will show how the artworks in Manifesta12 tackled localised issues. The projects are grounded in the topography and character of Palermo. They developed from a search for new narratives and acquittal for Rotor, to explore city activation and ritual formation in the case of Senatore, and from Masbedo's commitment to opening and making accessible buildings and histories previously negated to the citizens. All the case studies are part of the same sub-section C*ity on Stage* of the curatorial program, divided into three categories –*Garden of Flows*, *Out of Control Room*, and *City on Stage*– defined by thematics and intent of the works and informed by the urban study taken out in Palermo. The artworks, strongly impressive and communicative, offer three distinctive perspectives of what the city is and in what forms its character and necessities can be approached by contemporary art as displayed in a biennial. They exemplify what positive insights and outcomes this interaction can bring.

The main literary sources applied to guide the analysis are Rafal Niemojewski's *Biennials: The Exhibitions We Love to Hate* (2021), Elena Filipovic's *The Biennial Reader: an Anthology on Large-Scale Perennial Exhibitions of Contemporary Art* (2010) and Léa-Catherine Szacka's *Biennials/Triennials: Conversations on the Geography of Itinerant Display* in their readings of the contemporary biennial phenomena and its implication on local realities in host cities. These sources help explore how Manifesta12 fits in the canon of temporary exhibition, as explored by Filipovic, and while Niemojewski discloses the contemporary debate and critique of the format, Szacka's conversations with curators explore how biennials can still be relevant and how should they be reinventing themselves according to the involved actors. Filipovic also worked with Barbara Vanderlinden on the book *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennales* (2005) that,

even though not covering up to Manifesta12 edition in Palermo in 2018, is nonetheless a valuable source to trace the development of the biennial's character and the relationship in which it poses itself in regards to the host cities.

Erdem Çolak's recently published study on Manifesta's history and social agenda, *Manifesta, Art, Society and Politics: Creating a new Europe through Contemporary Art* (2024), expands on the specific political implication of a nomadic biennale and how Manifesta's vision and approach changed and adapted in time. In addition to that, Joel Robinson's book *The City on Display, Architecture Festivals and the Urban* (2023) grounds the relationship between the city and temporary festivals in art history and architecture studies and makes some interesting claims on the positive impacts they bring in terms of social participation and space re-appropriation. In line with Robinson, I am to argue that biennales can become propellers of urban change for their host cities, to support this claim I have made use of readings of Henri Lefebvre's theory on the right of the city and its re-formulation by geographer David Harvey and architecture scholars Mark Purcell and Lee Stickells, to explore what relationship can be established amongst temporary art events and in times of urban crisis, the control citizens can exert over their urban context and the pursuit of new forms of civic engagement.

The *Palermo Atlas* book serves as a guide to understanding how Manifesta12 approached Palermo, the knowledge and characteristics of the city the curatorial team was interested in and how that informed both the curatorial strategy and the works on show in the biennial. It gives an insight into the foundational work of Manifesta12 and the processual development and decision-making behind the links established with the host city. I will expand my analysis of the biennial's presence in Palermo through newspaper articles, interviews with Manifesta12 curators and team, as well as the media coverage of the event, the preparatory process and the post-biennial. Manifesta's Final Reports, kindly provided by the Biennale educational department, and the public survey of the event taken out by Fondazione Fitzcarraldo serve as sources to understand the a posteriori perception of the event.

Posing myself in constructive antithesis to the critique of biennales as only negative and impactful for the local realities due to the over-tourism, detachment and spectacularisation they produce, with Palermo's Manifesta12 I want to show that it is possible

to identify beneficial outcomes that invite to reconsider and reformulate the potential of biennales' presence in cities. Politically and socially informed in an intentional and stated way, the artworks will demonstrate that Manifesta presented itself in Palermo as a discursive exhibition, a platform for experimentation, and a space to formulate questions and look for answers. This is also due to the fact that artworks dispose of a certain level of freedom in terms of topics and form –aided by their ephemerality and the fact that they are seen as the expression of a personal view– that also allows them to rapidly respond to challenges.

– An urban approach, Manifesta's new curatorial strategy for Palermo

The title given to Manifesta12, *The Planetary Garden. Cultivating Co-existence* successfully synthesises the aims of the biennial and the curatorial approach taken in Palermo. It was inspired both by the heterogeneity and the vast number of foreign plant species populating –*coexisting* in– the city's botanical garden and the work of biologist and garden designer Gilles Clement, partaking in the biennial, that conceives the word as a "planetary garden" of which humanity has to take care.[75] The title also indicates what the biennial aimed to achieve through its presence. Palermo is a city where cultures and populations have crossed and mixed ever since its foundation, described by Manifesta12 co-curator and architect Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli as "a complex mosaic of fragments and identities emerging out of centuries of encounters and exchanges between civilisations."[76] Coexisting with local realities, Manifesta set out to plant seeds for new collaborations and practices to foster a diverse and flourishing future for the city and the different ecosystems inhabiting it. In this sense, Manifesta becomes yet another thread enriching this weaved collection of cultures, stories and influences that make up its identity.

In Palermo, Manifesta aimed to become part of an existing network of organisations, artistic realities and creative production, fostering a web able to create valuable connections. Fijen claims that it set out to act as an incubator at the service of the future of the city, to analyse and empower all those dynamic processes that already exist there.[77] To properly permeate the urban context and infiltrate its fabric, it became critical to understand –*unlock*

[75] Pestellini Laparelli et al., *Palermo Atlas*, 398.

[76] Ibid., 12.

[77] Ibid., 9, 12.

says Fijen– its specificity and individuality. As nomadic, it is asked to respond to the city and it has to work with the existing topography, individuating the empty spaces and the potential ones that can create an interesting site for the artworks. The extensive urban study, introduced in this edition and that informed the *Palermo Atlas,* represented a new foundation for this process and a weapon for Manifesta and the curators to intervene locally with a consciousness of the composite reality being permeated. Above all, the *Palermo Atlas* is indicative of the shift undergone by Manifesta in terms of curatorial approach and aims as a biennale. Palermo, more than the artworks on display, is the core of Manifesta12, where art becomes a tool of city appropriation and urban participation rather than the subject of the exhibition. The urban study set the basis for the development of a three-sided program defined by commoning thematics and aims: as described in the curatorial statement, *Garden of Flows* explores toxicity and gardening in the botanical garden; *Out of Control Room*, delves into topics of power and contemporary flows; *City on Stage*, builds on existing opportunities in the city and aims to catalyse internal change and display possibilities of use already in-scripted in the city fabric.[78]

– Permeating the city, the case studies

Mayor Leoluca Orlando argued, during a press conference, that the entire city of Palermo had turned itself into an amazing artwork in the course of the biennial.[79] Beyond the factual success of the edition, as reported by the Fondazione Fitzcarraldo study, I would indicate the capability to produce works and performances that seemed to grow out of the city as the great victory of Manifesta12.[80] This could happen by virtue of a curatorial approach directly derived from the *Palermo Atlas* and, subsequently, from the city itself. Localised and grounded in the identity and history of Palermo and permeating existing visible and invisible urban networks, the nature and stated aim of the *City on Stage* section creates the framework for artworks intended to foster interaction with the urban network and its social and topographic nature. Opening up spaces both practically and theoretically, by taking place in areas and buildings normally either closed to the public, shut down or intended for alternative

[78] Ibid., 400.

[79] Manifesta12 Final Report, “Booklet 1,” 13.

[80] Carnelli et al., *Evaluation Research on Manifesta12.*

use, the section also gave access to the vast range of histories and information embedded in the city.

1) *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa*, Pizzo Sella, by Rotor

Without any regard for the ecologies disrupted, in the second half of the 20th century, uncontrolled speculation and mafia-funded urban expansion left visible traces on the landscape of Sicily and irremediably damaged, both in practice and figuratively, the image of the city of Palermo and the whole island. To still be renowned for this shameful history is an open wound for the Palermitans, who, like most Sicilians, are pushing through all media to change this narrative in the eye of the wider public and to reclaim their present without the constant influence of that recent history. As described above, re-writing narratives and exploring acquittal are processes at the core of Belgian design practice Rotor's *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa*, the site-specific project realised for Manifesta12. Rotor invites the audience, but mostly the Palermitans, to challenge the way they look at Pizzo Sella and the past. They do not imply that it should be forgotten or its shameful characters hidden, rather they attempt to create, with as little alteration as possible, a new present not defined by guilt. Rotor's practice is focused on the creation of circular architecture and giving new life to materials, an approach they applied to the skeletons and ruins of Pizzo Sella as well. Palermo has a shameful history and the city bears very visible traces of it but, to Rotor there is a remedy to this and it lies in light interventions.

Rotor's project relied extensively on the mind, rather than being purely artistic or architectural. In practical terms, they focused on making the path through the hill more easily accessible, and chose one of the skeleton structures of the complex to be cleaned up and turned into the final stop of this reinvented pilgrimage. They turned what was a source of shame into what can be seen as a cathartic experience–walking up the hill, visitors were able to rebuild their relationship with this area and with the city by looking at it from a different position. The project hence invites Palermitans to consider their present differently, to reclaim it regardless, and to write a new narrative for its future, conscious of the past it stands upon.

The physical restoration of spaces taken out by Manifesta as an integral part of its agenda in Palermo was of primary importance, especially in the context of how biennials can benefit their host cities. The project by Rotor though highlights another side of restoration

that concerns the reputation of places. It is a more subtle process, that happens in the realm of perception and discourse formation, rather than through architectural addition or making safe. Nonetheless, it is relevant to reclaim ownership over the urban context, as successfully restoring the name and narrative plays a crucial role in re-establishing a positive relationship between the city and its inhabitants.

2) *Palermo Procession*, Palermo Historic Centre, by Marinella Senatore

On June 16th 2018, the historical centre of Palermo was taken over by a parade of over 300 professional performers and individuals –children, dancers, musicians, members of local communities– they all filled the streets dancing, playing music and engaging with each other in an all-out celebration of togetherness. Not everybody was aware of what was going on, yet what was perceivable to all was the festive atmosphere of the event. Italian artist and choreographer Marinella Senatore's contribution to Manifesta12, the site-specific performance *Palermo Procession* (2018) set out to revisit social and religious rituals to reawaken the locals' awareness and challenge them to reconsider values of community and sharing.[81] The procession included –amongst its miscellaneous collection of participants– local kids from the multicultural Ballarò neighbourhood, majorettes coming from the neighbouring town of Capaci and a marching band.[82] [Fig.38-39] Some were wearing matching clothes, others holding banners and signs –hand-drawn, printed or embroidered– of local associations and communities, bearing statements and mottos in English and Sicilian. [Fig.40] The procession began in Piazza Santa Chiara, in Ballarò, to then flow into via Maqueda, towards the Quattro Canti, at the heart of the historical centre of Palermo.[83] From here, it moved –or rather *danced*– through the streets and alleys towards the seafront, picking up new members along the way, charmed in by this merry collection of people. [Fig.41-42]

Senatore was at the lead of the procession yet left the choice of route to the participants. Interviewed by independent curator Salvatore Peluso, she revealed her reasoning behind this decision claiming that to successfully realise a site-specific public work it needed to come from the locals, without Senatore imposing her point of view.[84] Rather she limited

[81] Maida, "Marinella Senatore," Artribune.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Poltz, "Borderless," Manifesta12.

[84] Peluso, "Marinella Senatore and the Choreography of a City," DOMUS.

herself to mapping interesting urban "situations" able to propel engagement, dialogue and movement–the central focus of her work.[85] These situations could be specific architectural juxtapositions between the street and the buildings, statues forming interesting relationships through their location in space, terraces and balconies from which people would look out and interact with the procession, or musical performances interrupting the flow of the movement… [Fig.43-44] The colourful procession came to an end at the Foro Italico, the seafront area running alongside the Mura delle Cattive in the Kalsa neighbourhood. Senatore recalls that extra participants –which even included a group of blind people taking temporary lead of the group– diluted the performance, to the point that it lasted five hours instead of the planned two.[86] This will to become part of the event stands as an indicator of the success of the work and the potential of a participative project to positively re-engage communities, and remind them that as individuals they are still part of a bigger whole, the city. [Fig.45]

Activating the urban context and forming new rituals were two clear outcomes of *Palermo Procession*, as the streets and squares became not only the stage and backdrop of the performance but were turned into active participants, as they are as important in the life and character of the city as its inhabitants. The procession, with the energy of its participants, gave new life to Palermo and set a precedent for an alternative form of civic engagement, grounded in local practices. Life on the street and encounters shape the urban context, both socially and physically. Moreover, the format of the procession –of the ritual in general– is deeply ingrained in the history and traditions of Palermo. Only on Easter Friday, eleven processions take place in the city.[87] The most significant moment of the year for the city of Palermo is July 14th, when Santa Rosalia, affectionately known as *la Santuzza*, is celebrated as the patron saint who saved the city from the plague. The procession of Santa Rosalia is no simple business, as the centre is shut down to make way for the procession that, carrying the statue of the saint, goes from the cathedral to the sea. Along the road it halts at different times, offering space for spectacle and public speeches, and ends with an extravagant pyrotechnic display above the harbour.

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Longhi, "Ritualistic Legacies," BerlinArtLink.

[87] Immesi, "Le Processioni Del Venerdì Santo," Porta di Servizio.

Stefano Edward, the spokesperson of the Tamil community in Palermo at the time of Manifesta, sees in Santa Rosalia the true embodiment of syncretism in Palermo, as all the communities living in the city recognise and celebrate her.[88] The procession of Santa Rosalia, as a shared ritual, discloses insights on Palermo as a lived-in city, beyond its physical form, through its communal traditions and collective moments. Local traditional processions are today joined by the customs of the other communities in the city, bringing their festivities to the streets.[89] [Fig.46] During *Ganesha Chaturthi,* the Hinduist celebration of the deity Ganesha, a procession culminating with the participants bathing in the sea with the god's statue is held in the Arenella neighbourhood.[90] [Fig.46] On the occasion of *Thaipoosam Cavadee,* the Tamil community festivity, a wooden arch, from which hang vases full of milk, is transported in procession towards the temple to honour Murugan, son of Shiva.[91] [Fig.47] The fact that these processions are becoming woven into the local calendar highlights the plurality of traditions that interculturalism has brought to Palermo.[92] In the wake of the opening of Manifesta, *DOMUS* reporter Martina Angelotti writes of Senatore's work that it was particularly successful as "it responded in a spontaneous and emotively captivating way to the *genius loci* of a city that has based its form of cohesion on 'the parade'," and in so doing turned Manifesta into a moment of collective interaction and belonging for the locals.[93]

Reflecting on *Palermo Procession*, Senatore makes an interesting point stating that "we artists will not change the world, our responsibility is to provoke thought and generate small movements" which is also in line with the objectives a biennale can practically perpetuate through its presence in a city –it might not bring about revolutionary changes or architectural masterplans because it is not its place, but it can induce dialogue and initiate small but beneficial changes.[94] Senatore's work, part of her ongoing project *The School of Narrative Dance* provided an alternative way to interact with the city, reawakened through performance and human interaction. [Fig.48] It also gave Palermitans a living image of their

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[88] Pestellini Laparelli et al., *Palermo Atlas*, 119.

[89] Ibid., 124-125.

[90] Guttilla, "Palermo Multiculturale," Balarm.

[91] D'Alfonso, "Thaipoosam Cavadee–Palermo."

[92] Pestellini Laparelli et al., *Palermo Atlas*, 124-125.

[93] Angelotti, "Manifesta12 Goes for Performance," DOMUS.

[94] Peluso, "Marinella Senatore and the Choreography of a City," DOMUS.

history and reality by bringing together the multiplicity of communities that make up the contemporary city, as well as joining them through the use of a new shared ritual. *Palermo Procession* created an event that brought people back to the street, energising the city and tying communities and urban context together. Narration becomes an experience and the citizenship is made active through dance and movement, which are seen as languages facilitating the encounter of bodies.[95] [Fig.49]

As public space in cities keeps being negated to its own inhabitants by varying policies of heritage protection and an ever-growing focus on privacy and personal space, *Palermo Procession* represents an interesting way to decline the concept of site-specificity in art. It is made in collectivity and through a negotiation of forms and meanings with local communities.[96] As a participative performance grounded in the city history and context, it provides the locals with signs and inputs they can recognise and immediately identify with to regain agency over their own space. Being open for takeover is inscribed in the nature of public space and is part of a citizen's right to the city of Lefebvrian inspiration. Without rituals, the city is automatically negated occasions to perform life together and engage with the surroundings. Manifesta and Senatore provided an alternative form of commoning based on movement, alternative urban storytelling and existing multiplicity to explore coexistence and shared histories with and within Palermo, through the local language and longstanding tradition of processions in the city.

3) *Protocol no. 90/6*, State Archive, by Masbedo

Located in the Sala delle Capriate of the State Archive, *Protocol no. 90/6* (2018) is a multimedia site-specific installation, comprising of a video, its location and the relationship between the two. Realised by Italian artist duo Masbedo, formed by Nicolò Massazza and Iacopo Bedogni, it was part of a composite project that, together with the itinerant piece *Videomobile* (2018) [Fig.50-51], was presented as an exploration of the relationship between Palermo, the city's inscribed histories and cinema.[97] *Protocol no. 90/6* specifically

[95] Longhi, "Ritualistic Legacies," BerlinArtLink.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Fondazione In Between Art Film, "Protocol 90/6."

investigates the legal and political controversies that afflicted Palermitan director and screenwriter Vittorio de Seta, while at the same time acting as a tribute to him and his work.[98]

The State Archive of Palermo is housed in the former Convent of the Teatini, on the north-eastern end of Via Vittorio Emanuele, close to the seafront and in between the historical La Kalsa neighbourhood and the Cala harbour. On the upper floor, the Sala delle Capriate develops on three levels, with bookshelves covering the walls almost in their entirety, except where they leave space for windows. [Fig.52] Free-standing lines of shelving occupy most of the flooring area. [Fig.53] The high roof is characterised by the *capriata,* a timber truss structure to which the space owes its name. The collection of ancient books stored here gives the space a distinctively sepia-ish hue. Light seeps in from windows left ajar, while at the back, opposite the room entrance, the bluish figure of the typical Sicilian puppet, a *pupo,* appears in video, rising above the low furniture. [Fig.54] The installation is described as "an imposing, suspended curtain of cables and LED lights," here the *pupo* moves according to "the invisible strings pulled by master puppeteer Mimmo Cuticchio."[99] [Fig.55] The reference to Cuticchio is not casual, as its workshop has been crafting the puppets for decades and is recognised as an excellence and symbol of the city's artisanal tradition – his presence in the video and the participation of its family in the creation of the *pupo* on show weave the project even more tightly to its site and cultural context.

The *pupo* was chosen to represent Vittorio de Seta, as it was seen by the artists as a "sculptural object able to convey a sense of mystery and emotionality."[100] De Seta was many times the subject of investigations and legal persecutions during his life as, in the 1960s, his art was often accused of concealing a secret agenda to the benefit of "communist subversive societies."[101] The records of said trials are stored in the dusty folders piled on the bookshelves of the Sala delle Capriate, where the exhibition takes place. According to Masbedo, the puppet stands as a metaphor of the artist, whose role is that of "a man who frees things even when he is himself tied up and controlled."[102] In the case at hand, within the boundaries of a biennale commission and the latter's curatorial brief, as artists, Masbedo were able to rescue

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98 Saraceno, "Prorogata Protocollo No. 90/6," Manifesta12 Palermo.

99 Fondazione In Between Art Film, "Protocol 90/6."

100 MASBEDO, "Protocol No. 90/6."

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

De Seta's story from the grip of oblivion. Moreover, they recovered the Archivio di Stato from its island-like closed-off detachment and disjunction from the dynamics and everyday life of Palermo. They reclaimed it as a space to display art, inviting Palermitans to re-appropriate the space and tales contained therein.

De Seta's is just one of the hidden stories concealed and stored in the Archivio di Stato. Unhearted by Masbedo while they were taking out on-site research for their work for Manifesta12, it belongs to a bigger collection. It was contained in a folder dating back to the 1950s, redacted by the police of Petralia Sottana, a small town close to Palermo.[103] The file included many more dossiers and reports specifically against artists, film directors, writers and journalism of the time.[104] This folder is stored amongst the numerous documents and papers collected in the archive, whose content goes unrecognised in the build-up of uncatalogued knowledge that comprises it. Binders on binders of unclaimed memories, lines of old books and tall, overflowing bookshelves on multiple levels standing against the walls, preserving forgotten local stories. Masbedo described their site of intervention, the Sala delle Capriate, as "a place of absolute mystery and silence, […] dedicated to the preservation of a non-organisable memory," organised according to "the non-rules of time and chance," where the thousands of documents have become "stratified matter, paper fossils, dust and ink."[105]

The State Archive is not the only collection of inaccessible knowledge in the city identified by the biennial. The high number of sealed, private archives present in Palermo is an argument the *Palermo Atlas* focuses on at length and it represents a central topic of interest to Manifesta12 curators. Mostly family-run, the archives are recognised in the *Atlas* as crucial tools to reinterpret the history of Palermo, as they shed light on the interrelationship amongst culture, industry and public institutions in the city.[106] Amongst others, the collection of architects Damiani, Almeyda, Scibilia and Palazzotto preserve the memory of an Art-Noveau Palermo; the images of years of fights against the Mafia and political turmoil can be found in photographer Letizia Battaglia's own personal archive and queer activist and poet Nino Gennaro's one; while Anna Maria Fundaro's collection highlights the links between

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[103] Fondazione In Between Art Film, "Protocol 90/6."

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Pestellini Laparelli et al., *Palermo Atlas*, 331-332.

Palermo and Milan in terms of architectural culture in the post-war period.[107] The Atlas indicates twelve of these private collections as precious "archives of modernity."[108] As these collections are custodians of local histories and knowledge, the curators believed it was important to disclose them to the public as an integral part of the biennial programme. Opening these archives, which are material places, brought said negated stories back to the citizens, who became able to come in contact with another side of their legacy they were either unaware of or kept out of. This was part of a wider procedure of disclosure, both physical and mental. Made up of books, photos, prints and other devices of knowledge storage and mostly located in private residences, the archives are the tangible manifestation of the intangible heritage made temporarily accessible to Palermitans by the biennial.

This process brings the argument back to the core intention of the agenda of Manifesta12, namely that citizens would be able to reclaim Palermo through its programme. Opening and making accessible areas of the city that stay closed and forgotten –in terms of palaces and contents– means making people aware of the potential that exists around them. During Manifesta, buildings were given back to the residents and enhanced by the artworks, to the point that art seemed to almost turn into an excuse to finally engage with these spaces. During most of Manifesta, art became a manifesto for the city, for the potentiality hidden behind the many closed doors. Masbedo were able to understand their site in a form that created an active dialogue with the location. Through this intervention, they temporarily transformed the space, while its long-standing history remained perceivable in the architectural elements. It does so by introducing one recognisable foreign element –the projection screen. The building is still the state archive, custodian of knowledge, but it is now also a theatre, unveiling those stories hidden in the piles of antique books occupying the space. Palermo's history is made accessible to the visitor through a site-specific and context-informed artwork. The use of video as a medium is relevant as cinema connects different moments of the history of Palermo, in and outside of the screen. Masbedo turned the Archivio di Stato into a stage for projection, with its architecture and collection's content becoming an integral part of the artwork experience and influencing its narrative. It is an installation that unfolds at different layers of reading, inviting the visitor to engage with the site within the

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 335.

context of the city, the projection and the connection between the two. New insights are made accessible thanks to knowledge uncovered by Manifesta12's intervention as a diffused and site-informed event.

– Opening doors and reimagining, the benefits of Manifesta's presence

Abandoned, unfinished, unrealised–according to the *Palermo Atlas,* these are the three adjectives that define most of the architecture of Palermo of the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the city centre, where ruins persist and vast parts of the city are closed off to its residents.[109] Henceforth, the contemporary relation between Palermo and its inhabitants is one of distance, where Palermitans do not feel entitled to certain areas of their city and whose recent memory of corruption and abusiveness they do not want to identify with. Here is where Manifesta was propelled to intervene and individuated an opening to approach the site, acting as a tool to overturn this situation. The biennial and the art on show were subjected to Palermo and its needs, not in a forceful or limiting manner but aiming to respond to existing issues and provide a concrete beneficial impact in the present, exploring alternative forms of civic agency and engagement.

Opening and restoring areas of the city is a common fixture on the agenda of biennials worldwide, but it is nonetheless relevant when exploring what benefits they can bring to their hosts. In this sense, Manifesta12 gave back to Palermo the Teatro Garibaldi in Piazza Magione [Fig.56-57], renewed to serve as headquarters for the biennial, and indirectly also the Church of SS Euno e Giuliano [Fig.58] and, partially, Palazzo Butera. [Fig.59] The two buildings were restored as part of public and private investments and opened up again on the occasion of Manifesta12. Furthermore, by staging artworks and events in those sites, the biennial brought back the Arena la Sirenetta [Fig.60] and opened to the public Palazzo Forcella de Seta [Fig.61], the Monte dei Pegni in Palazzo Branciforte and more. [Fig.62]

As Manifesta is born as a critique of itself, the choice of not having a set location partakes of a wider dialogue challenging what a biennial is and the role it can play, both through the work and curatorial methods displayed but foremost presenting itself as a platform for dialogue.[110] It questions contemporary issues and relevant social thematics,

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[109] Ibid., 279.

[110] Vanderlinden et al., *The Manifesta Decade*, 13-19.

through art and beyond. The biennial is a space to explore and test innovations, speculating on the future of art practices, offering itself as a workshop. It is with this chosen narrative that the Palermo project was approached by the biennial team. As also analysed when addressing the Venice Biennale, art has the temporality and flexibility to turn around spaces through small interventions. This makes it so that Manifesta did not only put artworks on show but rather created small pockets of experimentation in-scripted in the fabric of the city, to explore accessibility, engagement and inter-societal relationships in the urban context.

It is undeniable that the 2018 event was successful in making Palermo with its buildings and its history the central star of the event, to a central extent to the detriment of the art on show. "Given such a setting, contemporary art can at best aspire to witty commentary" says Venice-based artist and museum researcher Arseny Zhilyaev of his visit to Manifesta12.[111] Such was the focus on giving new life to the image of Palermo and its narrative in the public eye that art became secondary. The interaction with the city was defined by an intention to unveil and re-engage. While Manifesta's area of influence is indeed limited by that same temporality that is also its strength, with the *Palermo Atlas* it gave Palermo a lasting tool that can be re-applied, expanded and reiterated to intervene in the city. Furthermore, in looking for ways to permeate the existing topography of the city, Manifesta took out an analysis and overview of the city that identified the strengths and weaknesses of its buildings and public spaces. It handed Palermo a map of possible sites of growth, together with tested trials of alternative use of space. Moreover, Manifesta brought its structure, expertise and a model created especially for the city. It provided a replicable, Palermo-specific example of how to intervene in the social fabric through art practices by making use of the spaces, networks and potentialities already present on the territory.

[111] Zhilyaev, "Revisiting Manifesta12," Eflux.

– CONCLUSION

What biennials do

A biennial that successfully permeates the fabric of the host city creates spaces of experimentation within the urban boundaries, physically opening up and repurposing spaces. It gives way to explore through temporary installation and discursive localised projects what processes of participation and appropriation of Lefebvrian inspiration bring to the city. It calls in different actors from those generally partaking in urban life while also inviting different forms of agencies and strategies for discussion and creation. In a platform like the biennial, intended as a laboratory, stillness is not an option, as creative production is the driving force. At the same time, its ephemeral nature gives space to change and freedom of speech and language, which are not found as easily in disciplines like traditional architecture or urban planning, defined by permanence and informed by city policies. "Their core format offers the reliable repetition of unpredictable difference," says art historian Terry Smith of biennials, and this ensures they stay relevant.[112] So the art biennial becomes, for its host, the chance to fight the risk of city life being flattened.

In Venice, La Biennale became a relevant actor in the context of the city in the moment it expanded beyond one single institutionalised location, through the inclusion of the Arsenale as an exhibition site in 1980 for the first Architecture Biennale. This was followed by a positive migration towards more sites scattered around the city, which brought restoration and reappropriation of said sites. The Venice-based cases have provided examples of interventions that are item and project-focused, concerned with concrete outcomes. The recurrence of La Biennale institution allowed it to establish a continuous connection with its urban context and the local associations operating there. Its influence is not limited to its exhibitionary run but also covers the time before and after the event, through local collaborations and projects exploring material circularity and waste reuse. La Biennale provides a break from the stillness that the *museumification* of the city brings. This claim seems at odds with the accusation often levelled at the exhibition of being one of the major

[112] Smith, "Biennials: Four Fundamentals," Biennial Foundation.

causes of said process. With museumification, I intend the phenomena by which, instead of being a living entity, the city is turned into an object on show. This happens at the expense of the residents, who –says anthropologist Michael Herzfeld– find themselves displaced and negated possession over their urban context.[113] While I have chosen not to focus specifically on the issue of over-tourism –which would be an interesting topic to further investigate through an analogue analysis of La Biennale contributions– the case studies provided have demonstrated that the city and its inhabitants are not negated participation in the exhibition, instead localised problems –as city maintenance and urban gaps– have been addressed in the event.

In the case analysed in the context of Manifesta12 in Palermo, it is clear that the works all belong to the same edition and curatorial brief as they are aligned towards a common goal. Both due to the character of Manifesta as a nomadic biennale and as a consequence of the collaboration with the local administration, the Palermo examples focus on the intangible outcomes of the biennial. The projects all work towards a theoretical shift in the way locals engage with the urban context. In so doing they provide space for social engagement, participation and challenge processes of identity formation in cities. While physical renovation projects took place both as part of the biennial agenda and contemporary to it, the real focus of the restoration was the relationship between Palermo and its inhabitants. This was achieved through a process that concerned Manifesta in its projectual form, as it adapted to respond to the host city. The introduction of the urban study gave depth and grounded the event, allowing the artworks to emerge and develop from the character and history of the city rather than simply being staged there.

As art and film historian Johanne Lamoureux claims in her critical text "The Museum Flat", art can make spaces "extraordinary" producing new layers of meaning that enrich the city narrative and create "a new exchange between histories and images and between participating viewers/readers."[114] This notion summarises the beneficial potential of perennials in the urban context. Biennales are not only important in the history of art and curatorial studies but are functional for urban and social development. Thanks to their temporality and recurrence, they allow to experiment and test, within the fabric of the city,

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[113] Michael Herzfeld, "Heritage and the Right to the City," 3.

[114] Lamoureux, "The Museum Flat," 81-93.

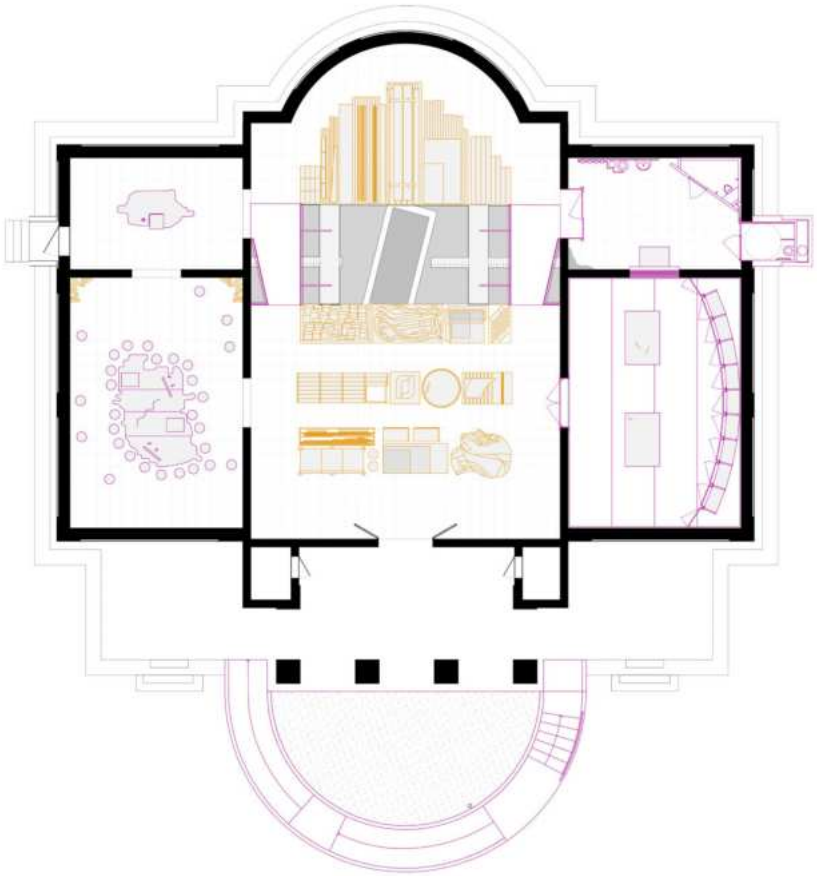
changes to the urban context they operate in, which might in time be implemented. Biennials allow the citizens to gain back ownership over areas of the city from which they were previously excluded and present localised translations of global or specific issues - from climate change, or the housing crisis, social inequalities, to the preservation of local vegetation, the issue of funding for local realities and the lack of life supporting facilities in the centre of towns. This happens through physical and theoretical rehabilitation, renovation and reclaim. Biennials become tools able to exploit the capability of art and creative practices to write alternative narratives and imagine new realities for the city and its spaces.

16.255 incl. subtitles
(16.000 + 5% = 16.800)

– ILLUSTRATIONS

[Fig. 1] The German Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Biennale.

[Fig. 2] The new access ramp to the German Pavilion in *Open for Maintenance.*



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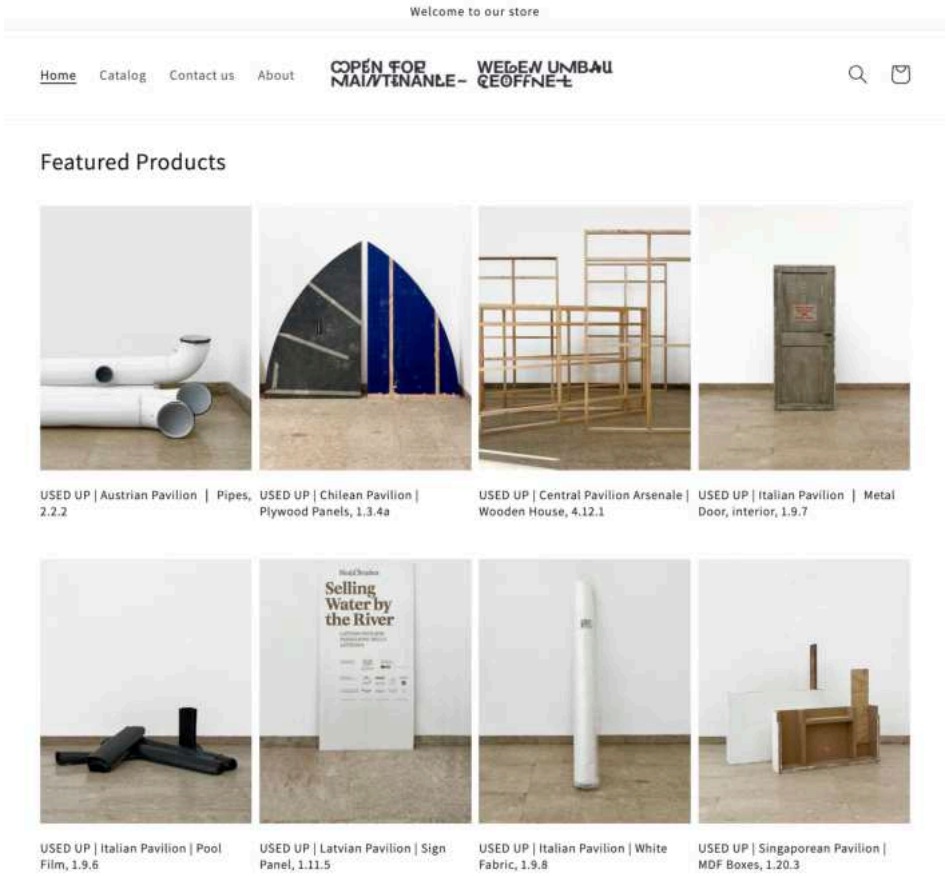
[Fig. 6] The blue column being transported from the Israel Pavilion to the German one.



[Fig. 7] *Open for Maintenance Depot.*

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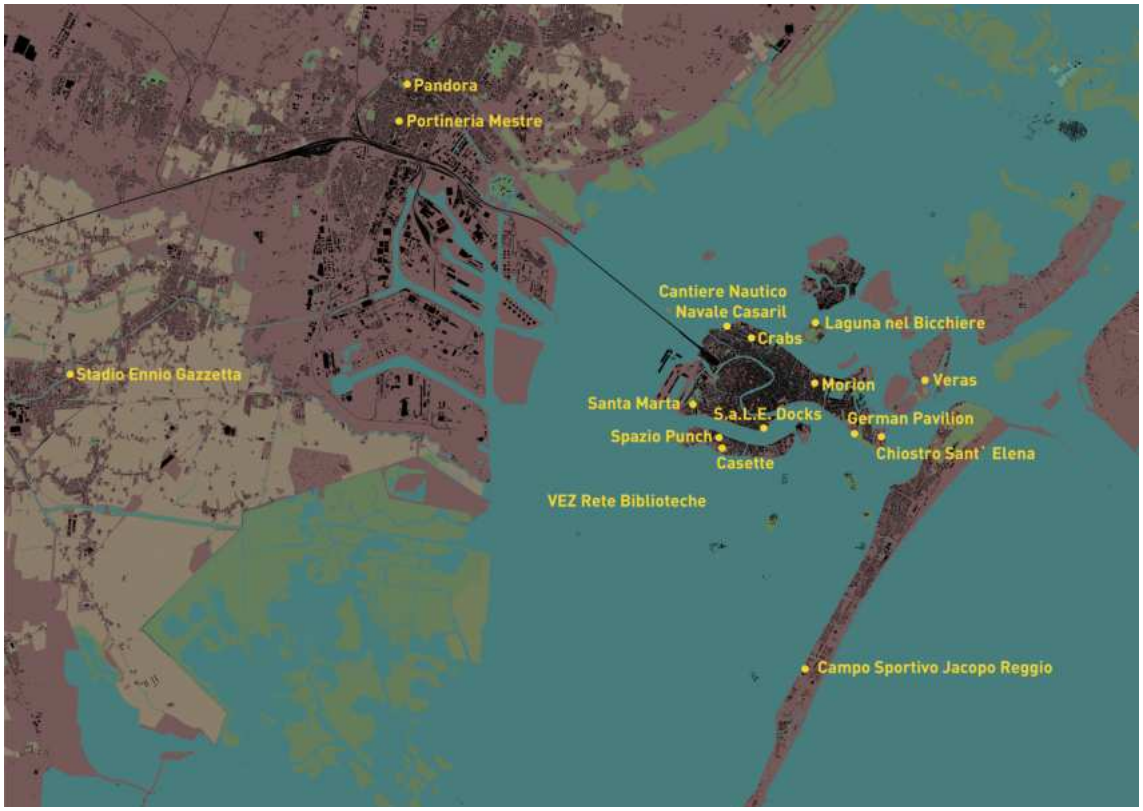

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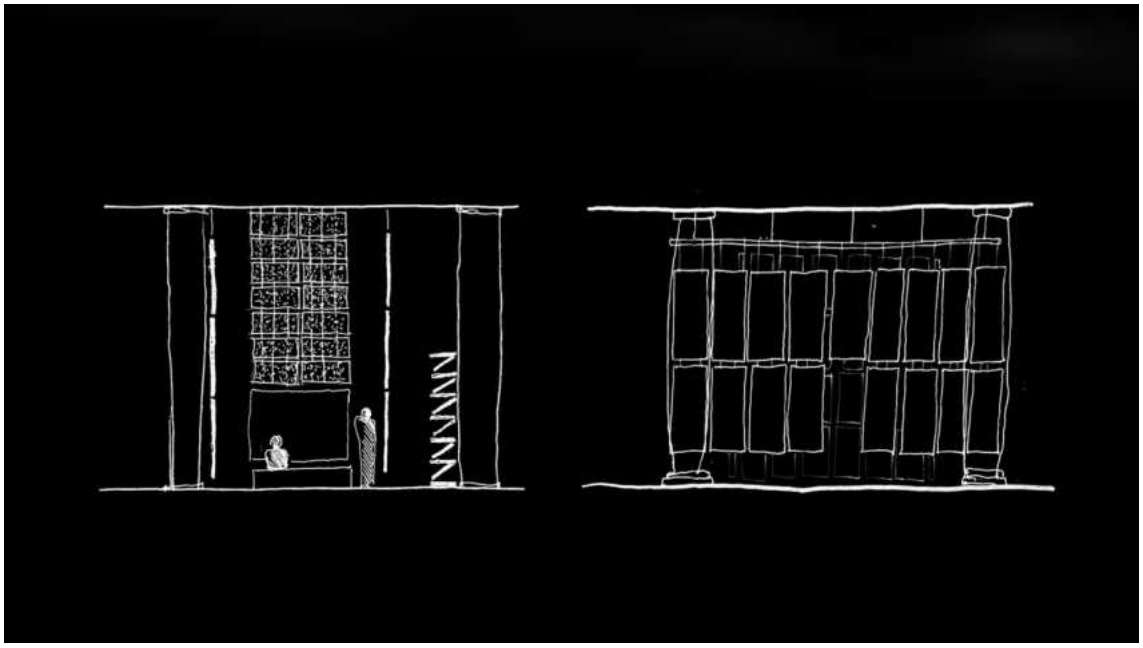

[Fig. 24] *Theatre of UseFULL* section sketch.

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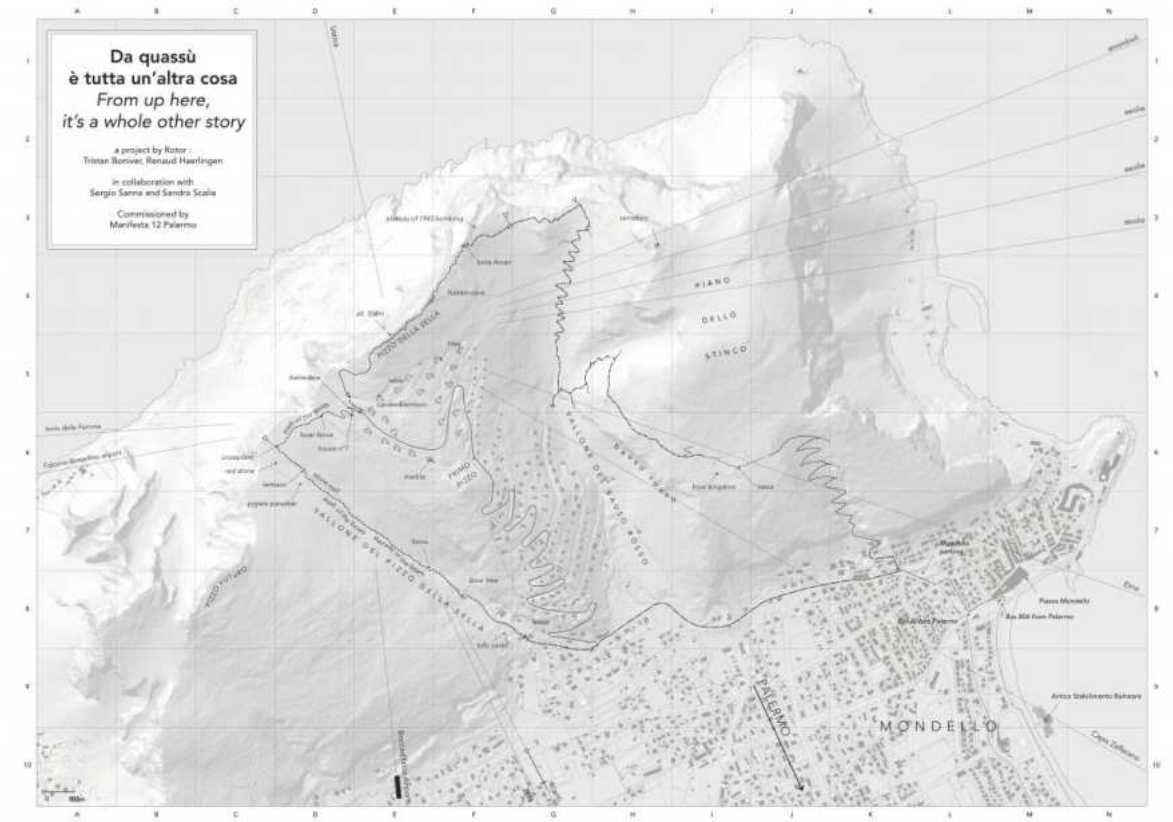

[Fig. 30] Map of Pizzo Sella and topography.

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[Fig. 50] Detail of *Videomobile* by Masbedo.

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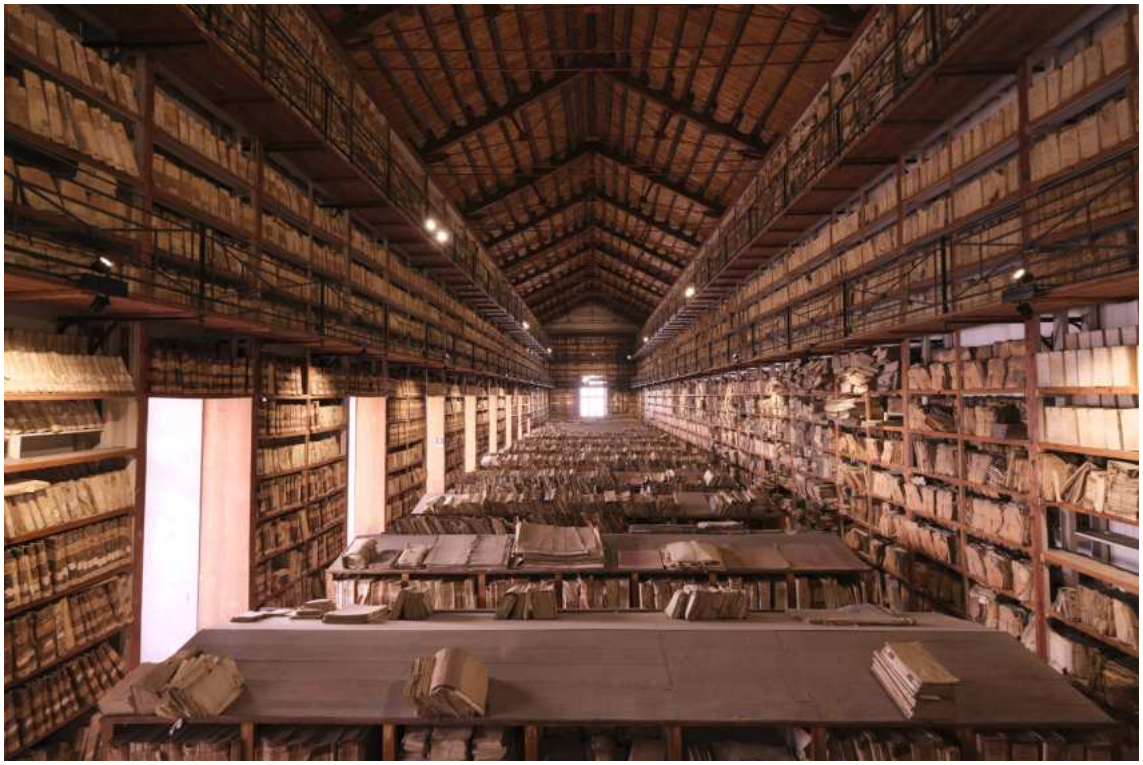

[Fig. 52] Sala delle Capriate in the State Archive of Palermo.

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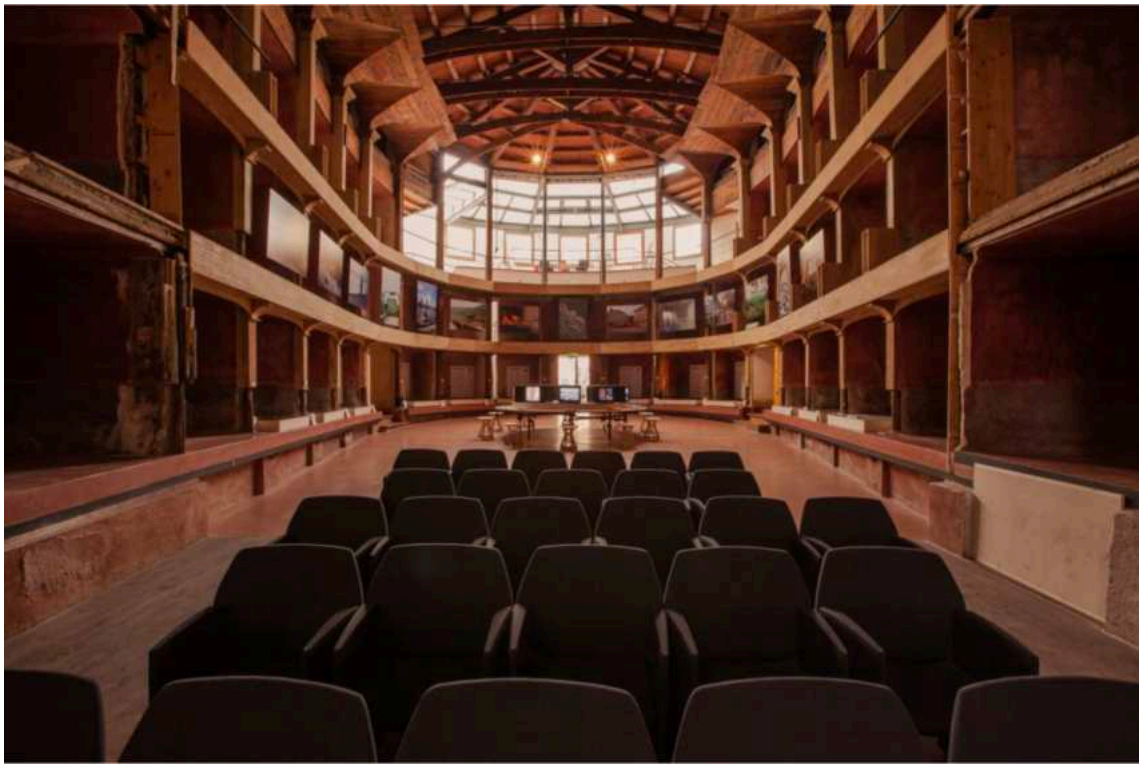

[Fig. 57] The interior of the Teatro Garibaldi during Manifesta12.

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[Fig. 1] View of the German Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Biennale, Exterior view, Giardini, Venice. Photo Jan Bitter and Felix Torkar, (c) GRAFT Lab. Downloaded June 5th 2024. https://graftlab.com/en/projects/unbuilding-walls-german-pavillon-at-venice-biennale-2018

[Fig. 2] The new access ramp to the German Pavilion *Open for Maintenance*, Exterior view, Giardini, Venice. Photo from BerlinArtLink (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.berlinartlink.com/2023/06/02/german-pavilion-venice-architecture-biennale-2023-exhibition-review/

[Fig. 3] *Open for Maintenance* plan, working drawing of exhibition space, by ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From Büro Juliane Greb website (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://julianegreb.com/

[Fig. 4] Biennale "spolia", *Open for Maintenance,* 2023, ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From *Deezen Magazine* (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.dezeen.com/2023/05/26/german-pavilion-material-bank-venice-architecture-biennale/

[Fig. 5] Biennale "spolia", *Open for Maintenance,* 2023, ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From *Deezen Magazine* (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.dezeen.com/2023/05/26/german-pavilion-material-bank-venice-architecture-biennale/

[Fig. 6] The blue column being transported from the Israel Pavilion to the German one, *Open for Maintenance,* 2023, ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From *Deezen Magazine* (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.dezeen.com/2023/05/26/german-pavilion-material-bank-venice-architecture-biennale/

[Fig. 7] *Open for Maintenance Depot,* 2023, ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Screenshot of Website Home (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://openformaintenance-depot.net/

[Fig. 8] The workshop, *Open for Maintenance,* 2023, ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From *Deezen Magazine* (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.dezeen.com/2023/05/26/german-pavilion-material-bank-venice-architecture-biennale/

[Fig. 9] *Open for Maintenance 1:1* programme workshops, map of interventions and collaborations, by ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From Büro Juliane Greb website (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://julianegreb.com/

[Fig. 10] Photos from programme workshops, *Open for Maintenance*, 2023, by ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From Büro Juliane Greb website (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://julianegreb.com/

[Fig. 11] Photos from programme workshops, *Open for Maintenance*, 2023, by ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From Büro Juliane Greb website (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://julianegreb.com/

[Fig. 12] Photos from programme workshops, *Open for Maintenance*, 2023, by ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From Büro Juliane Greb website (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://julianegreb.com/

[Fig. 13] Photos from programme workshops, *Open for Maintenance*, 2023, by ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From Büro Juliane Greb website (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://julianegreb.com/

[Fig. 14] Photos from programme workshops interventions, *Open for Maintenance*, 2023, by ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From Büro Juliane Greb website (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://julianegreb.com/

[Fig. 15] Photos from programme workshops interventions, *Open for Maintenance*, 2023, by ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. From Büro Juliane Greb website (c) ARCH+, Summacumfemmer, Büro Juliane Greb. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://julianegreb.com/

[Fig. 16] Church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, External View, Campo dell'Abbazia della Misericordia, Venice. Photo by Alex John Beck for *Artsy* (c) Artsy. Downloaded June 5th, 2024.https://www.artsy.net/show/56th-venice-biennale-icelandic-pavilion?sort=partner_show_position

[Fig. 17] Shoes at the entrance of *The Mosque* by Christoph Büchel, 2015, Venice Art Biennale. Photo Sophie Kitching for Art Observed. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. http://artobserved.com/2015/05/venice-christoph-buchel-the-mosque-at-the-icelandic-pavilion-during-the-venice-biennale-through-november-22nd-2015/

[Fig. 18] Interior of Santa Maria della Misericordia, *The Mosque* by Christoph Büchel, 2015, Venice Art Biennale. Photo Christian Sinibaldi on *The Guardian*. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/may/08/biennale-artist-turning-church-into-venices-first-mosque

[Fig. 19] Features of Muslim worship in Santa Maria della Misericordia, *The Mosque* by Christoph Büchel, 2015, Venice Art Biennale. Photo Sophie Kitching for Art Observed. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. http://artobserved.com/2015/05/venice-christoph-buchel-the-mosque-at-the-icelandic-pavilion-during-the-venice-biennale-through-november-22nd-2015/

[Fig. 20] The Mecca Cola machine, *The Mosque* by Christoph Büchel, 2015, Venice Art Biennale. Photo Bjarni Grimsson and Cristoph Büchel (c) Cristoph Büchel and The Icelandic Art Centre. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/foundation-icelandic-venice/

[Fig. 21] Arabic inscription at the entrance of Santa Maria della Misericordia, *The Mosque* by Christoph Büchel, 2015, Venice Art Biennale. Photo by Alex John Beck (c) Artsy. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.artsy.net/show/56th-venice-biennale-icelandic-pavilion?sort=partner_show_position

[Fig. 22] *Venice Floating Mosque* proposal by IND architects, visualisation, 2009. (c) IND architects. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.internationaldesign.nl/filter/floating-architecture/Venice-Floating-Mosque

[Fig. 23] The local Muslim community praying in *The Mosque* by Christoph Büchel, 2015, Venice Art Biennale. Photo Bjarni Grimsson and Cristoph Büchel (c) Cristoph Büchel and The Icelandic Art Centre. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/foundation-icelandic-venice/

[Fig. 24] *Theatre of UseFULL*, section sketch, Rural Studio for the 2015 Venice Architecture Biennale. Rural Studio on *Rebiennale* Website (c) Rural Studio. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://rebiennale.org/it/the-theater-of-the-usefull/

[Fig. 25] *Theatre of UseFULL* by Rural Studio in the Arsenale, 2015, Venice Architecture Biennale. Photo Timothy Hursley for DOMUS. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2016/10/26/the_theatre_of_the_usefull.html

[Fig. 26] *Theatre of UseFULL* by Rural Studio, Interior View, 2015, Venice Architecture Biennale. Photo Timothy Hursley for DOMUS. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2016/10/26/the_theatre_of_the_usefull.html

[Fig. 27] Spring-coil beds walls, *Theatre of UseFULL* by Rural Studio, Interior View, 2015, Venice Architecture Biennale. Photo Timothy Hursley for DOMUS. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2016/10/26/the_theatre_of_the_usefull.html

[Fig. 28] Insulation benches and wool-wood panels, *Theatre of UseFULL* by Rural Studio, Interior View, 2015, Venice Architecture Biennale. Photo Timothy Hursley for DOMUS. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2016/10/26/the_theatre_of_the_usefull.html

[Fig. 29] Stacked lockers corridor, *Theatre of UseFULL* by Rural Studio, Interior View, 2015, Venice Architecture Biennale. Photo Timothy Hursley for DOMUS. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2016/10/26/the_theatre_of_the_usefull.html

[Fig. 30] Map of Pizzo Sella's topographical relationships, *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa* (2018), Rotor, Manifesta12 Palermo. Graphics by Rotor (c) Rotor. Downloaded June 5th 2024. https://rotordb.org/en/projects/da-quassu-e-tutta-unaltra-cosa-here-its-whole-other-story-manifesta-12

[Fig. 31] View of Pizzo Sella, *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa* (2018), Rotor, Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo from Rotor (c) Rotor. Downloaded June 5th 2024. https://rotordb.org/en/projects/da-quassu-e-tutta-unaltra-cosa-here-its-whole-other-story-manifesta-12

[Fig. 32] The path through Pizzo Sella, *Da Quassù è Tutta un'Altra Cosa* (2018), Rotor, Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo from Rotor. Downloaded June 5th 2024. https://rotordb.org/en/projects/da-quassu-e-tutta-unaltra-cosa-here-its-whole-other-story-manifesta-12

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[Fig. 44] Musicians and performers in one of the stops along the route in *Palermo Procession* (2018) by Marinella Senatore, Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo Simona Cantavenera, Giovanni Fontana and Leandro Lembo, DOMUS. Downloaded June 5th 2024. https://www.domusweb.it/en/speciali/manifesta/2018/manifesta-12-marinella-senatore-and-the-choreography-of-a-city.html

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[Fig. 46] Bathing in the sea, the procession of *Ganesha Chaturthi* in Palermo. Photo Massimo Brizzi, Balarm, 24 August 2020. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.balarm.it/news/palermo-multiculturale-il-rituale-del-bagno-in-mare-per-il-tradizionale-omaggio-al-dio-ganesh-119867

[Fig. 47] Part of the procession of *Thaipoosam Cavadee* in Palermo. Photo Mario d'Alfonso, Mario d'Alfonso. Downloaded June 5th, 2024. https://www.mariodalfonso.com/thaipoosam_cavadee_palermo-r3972

[Fig. 48] Raising awareness through performance in *Palermo Procession* (2018) by Marinella Senatore, Manifesta12 Palermo. Production photographs, Marinella Senatore. Downloaded June 5th 2024. https://marinella-senatore.com/project/palermo-procession-performance/

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[Fig. 50] Detail of *Videomobile* by Masbedo, Produced by *In Between Art and Film*, Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo Masbedo. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://masbedo.org/videomobile/

[Fig. 51] *Videomobile* by Masbedo, Produced by *In Between Art and Film*, Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo Masbedo. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://masbedo.org/videomobile/

[Fig. 52] Sala delle Capriate, State Archive of Palermo, Soprintendenza Archivistica della Sicilia - Archivio di Stato di Palermo. Photo © 2021 MiC. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://cultura.gov.it/luogo/archivio-di-stato-di-palermo-1

[Fig. 53] View of the State Archive of Palermo, Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo by author, 2018.

[Fig. 54] View of *Protocol no. 90/6* by Masbedo in the Sala delle Capriate, State Archive of Palermo, Masbedo, Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo by author, 2018.

[Fig. 55] View of *Protocol no. 90/6* by Masbedo in the Sala delle Capriate, State Archive of Palermo, Masbedo, Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo Francesco Bellina. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://masbedo.org/protocol-90-6/

[Fig. 56] The restored Teatro Garibaldi during Manifesta12, Piazza della Magione, Palermo. Copyright Manifesta12. Photo by CAVE Studio. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://m12.manifesta.org/teatro-garibaldi-2/index_lang=it_.html

[Fig. 57] The restored Teatro Garibaldi during Manifesta12, Interior view, Piazza della Magione, Palermo. Copyright Manifesta12. Photo by CAVE Studio. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://m12.manifesta.org/teatro-garibaldi-2/index_lang=it_.html

[Fig. 58] Memorabilia from *Palermo Procession* by Marinella Senatore on show in the Church of SS. Euno e Giuliano, Piazza Magione, Palermo. Manifesta12, Palermo. Photo Wolfgang Träger. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://www.schirn.de/en/magazine/schirn_tipps/2018/manifesta_in_palermo/

[Fig. 59] Installation *Notte di San Lorenzo* (2018) by Renato Leotta on show at Palazzo Butera, Via Butera, Palermo. Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo by CAVE Studio. A-Desk Magazine, María Muñoz. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://a-desk.org/en/magazine/manifesta-12-palermo-jardin-planetario-cultivando-la-coexistencia/

[Fig. 60] Cinema Arena La Sirenetta during Manifesta12, Mondello, Palermo. Copyright Manifesta12. Photo by CAVE Studio. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://m12.manifesta.org/arena-la-sirenetta/index_lang=it_.html

[Fig. 61] *The Soul of Salt* (2016) by Patricia Kaersenhout on show at Palazzo Forcella de Seta during Manifesta12, Palermo. Copyright Manifesta12. Photo Wolfgang Träger. Downloaded June 6th, 2024. https://m12.manifesta.org/the-soul-of-salt-2016/index.html

[Fig. 62] Banco dei Pegni, Interior, Palazzo Branciforte, Largo Gae Aulenti, Palermo. Photo by author, 2018.

[COVER IMAGE] Performance *TUTTO* (2018) by Matilde Cassani, June 16th 2018, Quattro Canti, Palermo. Manifesta12 Palermo. Photo by author, 2018.

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