

# Biennale of Venice: not a conventional art fair





**1895: The King and Queen, Umberto I and Margherita di Savoia at the first International Art Exhibition of the City of Venice**

## ***1895: the 1st International Art Exhibition of the City of Venice was opened***

- **1907:** the first national pavilion was opened: Belgium
- **1910:** the first name of international reputation appeared on show: Klimt, Renoir, Courbet – Picasso was removed not to shock the public
- **1920:** the first presence of avant-garde (impressionists, post-impressionist, Die Brücke)
- **1948:** after the 2nd WW the Biennale reappeared with a major exhibition: the Impressionists and many important contemporary artists: Chagall, Klee, Braque, Delvaux, Magritte. The first retrospective of Picasso was presented.
- **1964:** Thanks to the Biennale, Europe is introduced to Pop Art
- **1980:** the Architecture sector was set up
- **1998:** The reas of activity became 6 (Architecture, Visual Arts, Cinema, Theatre, Music, Dance)

# ***Biennale Gardens: the area hosts the Central Pavilion and 29 national pavilions***

The pavilions were built over the years, in the following chronological order (name of the architect in brackets):

- 1907** Belgium (Léon Sneyens);
- 1909** Hungary (Géza Rintel Maróti);
- 1909** Germany (Daniele Donghi), demolished and rebuilt in 1938 (Ernst Haiger);
- 1909** Great Britain (Edwin Alfred Rickards);
- 1912** France (Umberto Bellotto);
- 1912** Netherlands (Gustav Ferdinand Boberg), demolished and rebuilt in 1953 (Gerrit Thomas Rietveld);
- 1914** Russia (Aleksej V. Scusev);
- 1922** Spain (Javier De Luque) façade renovated in 1952 by Joaquin Vaquero Palacios;
- 1926** Czech Republic and Slovak Republic (Otakar Novotny);
- 1930** United States of America (Chester Holmes Aldrich and William Adams Delano);
- 1932** Denmark (Carl Brummer) enlarged in 1958 by Peter Koch;

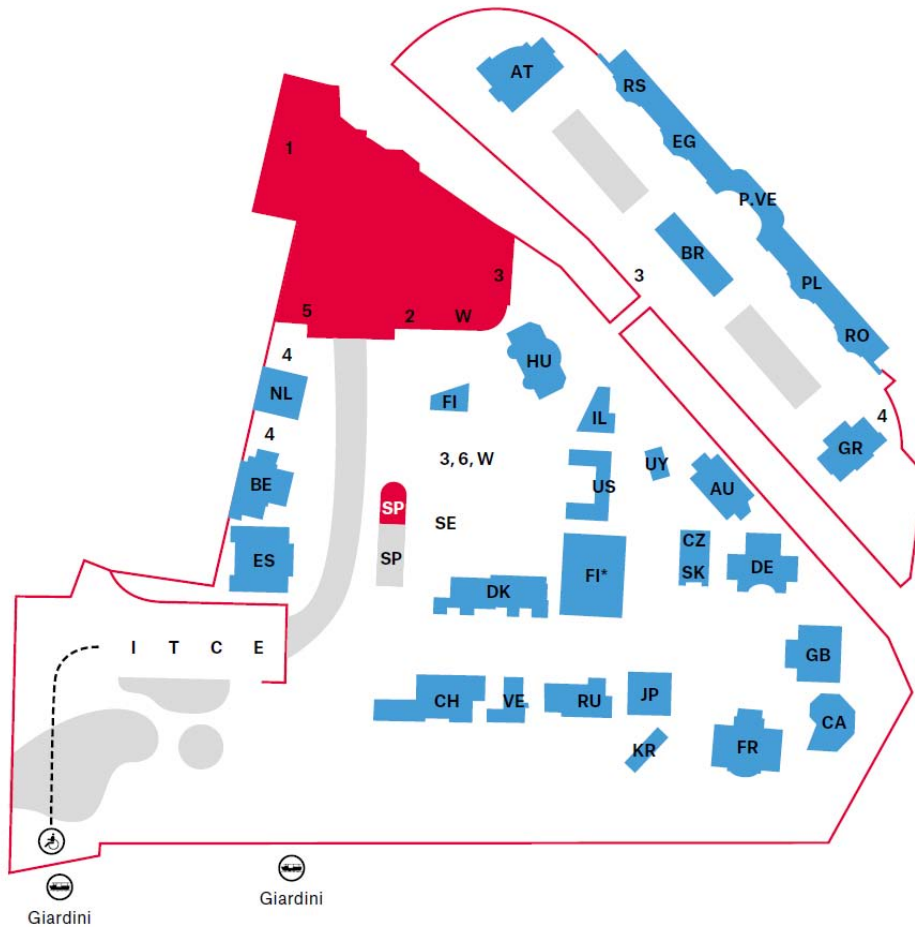
**1932** Padiglione Venezia (Brenno Del Giudice), enlarged in 1938;

- 1934** Austria (Josef Hoffmann);
- 1934** Greece (M. Papandréou - B. Del Giudice);
- 1952** Israel (Zeev Rechter);
- 1952** Switzerland (Bruno Giacometti);
- 1954** Venezuela (Carlo Scarpa);
- 1956** Japan (Takamasa Yoshizaka);
- 1956** Finland (Alvar Aalto Pavilion);
- 1958** Canada (Gruppo BBPR, Gian Luigi Banfi, Ludovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, Ernesto Nathan Rogers);
- 1960** Uruguay;
- 1962** Nordic Countries: Sweden, Norway, Finland (Sverre Fehn);
- 1964** Brazil (Amerigo Marchesin);
- 1987** Australia (Philip Cox);
- 1995** Korea (Seok Chul Kim and Franco Mancuso).

Fur further info about the Biennale and its history:  
[www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org)

# Central Pavilion and National Pavilions at the Biennale Gardens

The Arsenale area was first employed in 1980 in occasion of the 1st architecture exhibition



- **Corderie.** They were originally destined to the production of hawsers and naval ropes. The exhibition spaces cover a 6400 square metres surface.
- **Artiglierie and Isolotto.** They originally hosted the Arsenale workshops. Next to this site, there is a former warehouse (the Isolotto) that covers 900 square metres.
- **Gaggiandre, Tese, Giardino delle Vergini.** The Gaggiandre, two magnificent shipyards built between 1568 and 1573, overlook a large internal dock. Beyond the Tese, partly realised in the 16th century, is the Giardino delle Vergini, a fascinating green area.

# Collateral events...where?

**Typical Venetian Palaces on the Grand Canal** or in the well known areas of the city (close to St. Mark's or Rialto, for example); these venues are of course the first to be booked, year by year, and are often sold out in advance;

**Typical Venetian Palaces** in another less important parts of Venice; these venues represent a second good choice for exhibitors;

**Remote places around the city:** not whole palaces but smaller buildings or only a few rooms in a building, sometimes a place which you should not even notice walking around the calli or campielli, really anonymous places, or even in another small islands of the lagoon or in the inland of Venice.

Generally speaking these places are owned by privates (individuals or foundations) who rent them for the Biennale time and make a fortune out of it simply because YOU ARE IN VENICE!! No matter in what conditions and circumstances but you can update your show list by saying you exhibited in Venice during the Biennale.

Another option for artists who cannot afford the rent of a whole place for themselves and their artwork is to be part of multi-artist exhibitions organized by various Italian or foreigner curators around the city. They usually rent a whole place or a building, arrange all necessary bureaucratic procedures requested by law for the access of visitors (restoration, security access, fire detectors, etc.) and they make a selection of artists out of tons and tons of participants who apply.

This solution is undoubtedly the most successful one in the last years especially because of the international financial situation which is of course a leading factor in the choices of artists and international organizers.

Another important aspect of the Biennale is that, in connection with it and because of it, also museums and galleries in the city organize exhibitions which are not official 'Collateral events' but independent events held at the same time of the Biennale. This represents an additional appeal of the city for visitors but of course it makes the situation at the opening/closing dates even more chaotic.

**A serious problem** is about express couriers (DHL, Fedex, etc.); in many countries it is easier to ship and use them but in Italy customs is a bit complicated as well as the logistics itself as you know (they don't deliver to the floor, for example; they leave packages or crates downfloor on the dock in front of the venue...). There are often delays and problems. Even if you call us to assist, once the shipment is held by the courier there is not too much to do. So, we strongly suggest to avoid such kind of last second shipments. We are sure that if you explain your client about the pros and cons they would probably understand and choose another way.

# Custom Problems

A very short notice must be done about the customs problems involved with the Biennale. Customs procedure in Italy would request for a dedicated presentation. Right here let's focus your attention to the situation strictly connected to the Biennale.

We usually strongly suggest to use the ATA carnet whenever possible. Temporary imports in Italy are more complicated, customs duties guarantee and bond are involved, an importer for customs purposes must be indicated; by consequence, costs increase and time to have everything cleared is longer.

Remember that if you are shipping by express courier (DHL, Fedex) they can only arrange for definitive import into Italy by paying customs duties.

Official Biennale guests usually have their shipments cleared and transported from terminal (airport or port) of arrival to the venue care of the Biennale Organizers.

Agreement with participants can be:

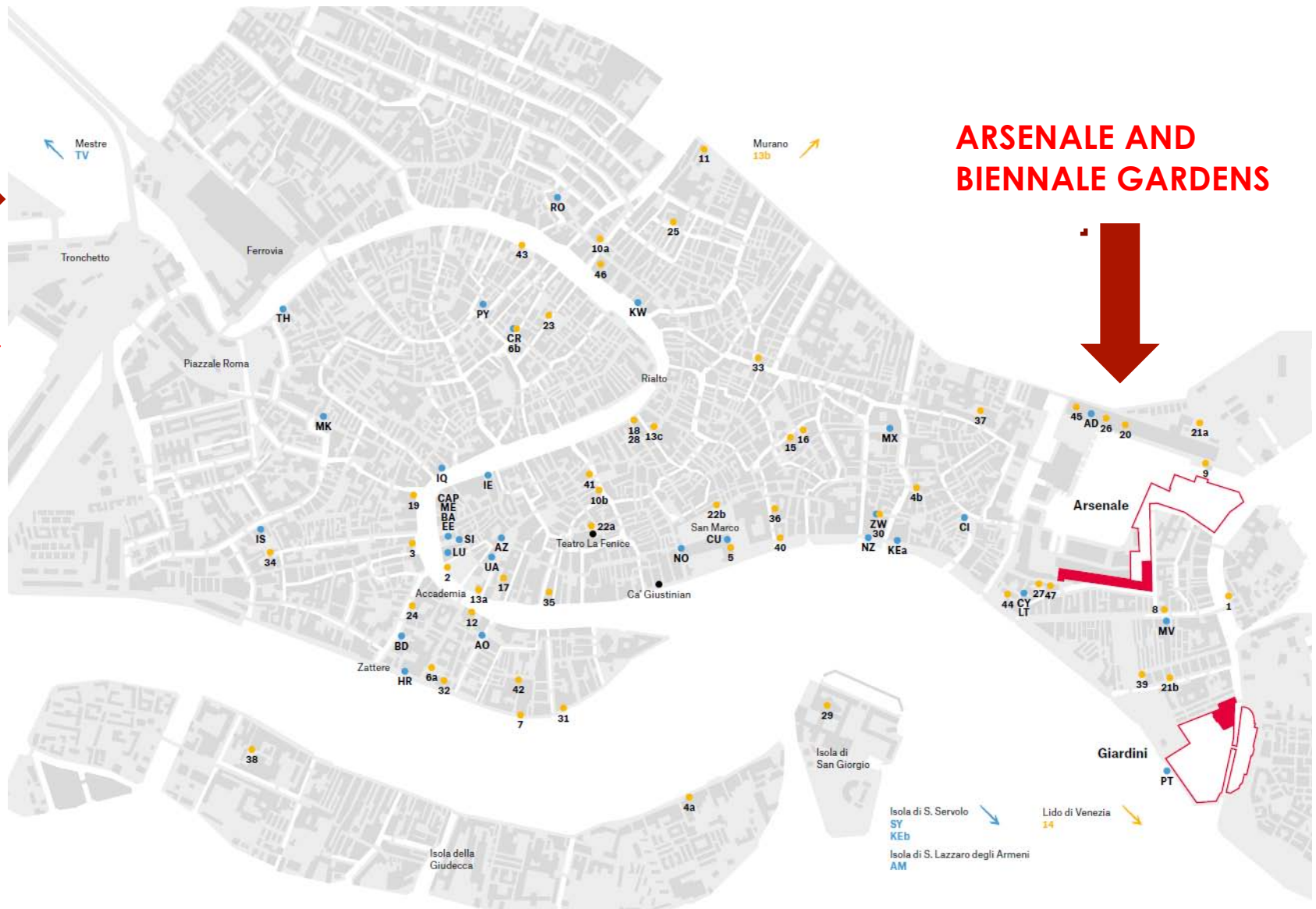
- the Biennale pays for everything in Italy;
- the Biennale pays only for customs (with the Biennale customs bond if ATA is not available) and lagoon transport; all the other costs (from releasing the shipment up to transport to the dock for the lagoon transport) must be paid and organized by the participant at its own expenses.

It often happens us that we are requested to deal with the second option because participants prefer to work with us instead of with the official Biennale agent. It is not a problem but we need to be informed in advance about the position or status of the participant and the agreement with the Biennale organizers in order to coordinate with them and their agent.



# Collateral events around Venice and main venues (Giardini & Arsenale) in 2013

TRUCK  
TERMINAL



# QUOTATIONS FOR VENICE BIENNALE?

When you ask us for a quotation and you simply say 'Venice Biennale' you now understand that for us it's like winning a lottery: it can be anywhere around Venice.

If you do not give us more details, we must of course consider:

- the venue will be at ground floor;
- easy/normal access conditions, no architectural limitations;
- available dock;
- large entrance to introduce the crates.



Various  
venues...  
and access  
conditions





Various venues...  
and access conditions





Various  
venues...  
and access  
conditions



ENTRANCE TO THE VENUE







**THE VENUE**

**STAIRS...TO  
EXHIBITION FLOOR**



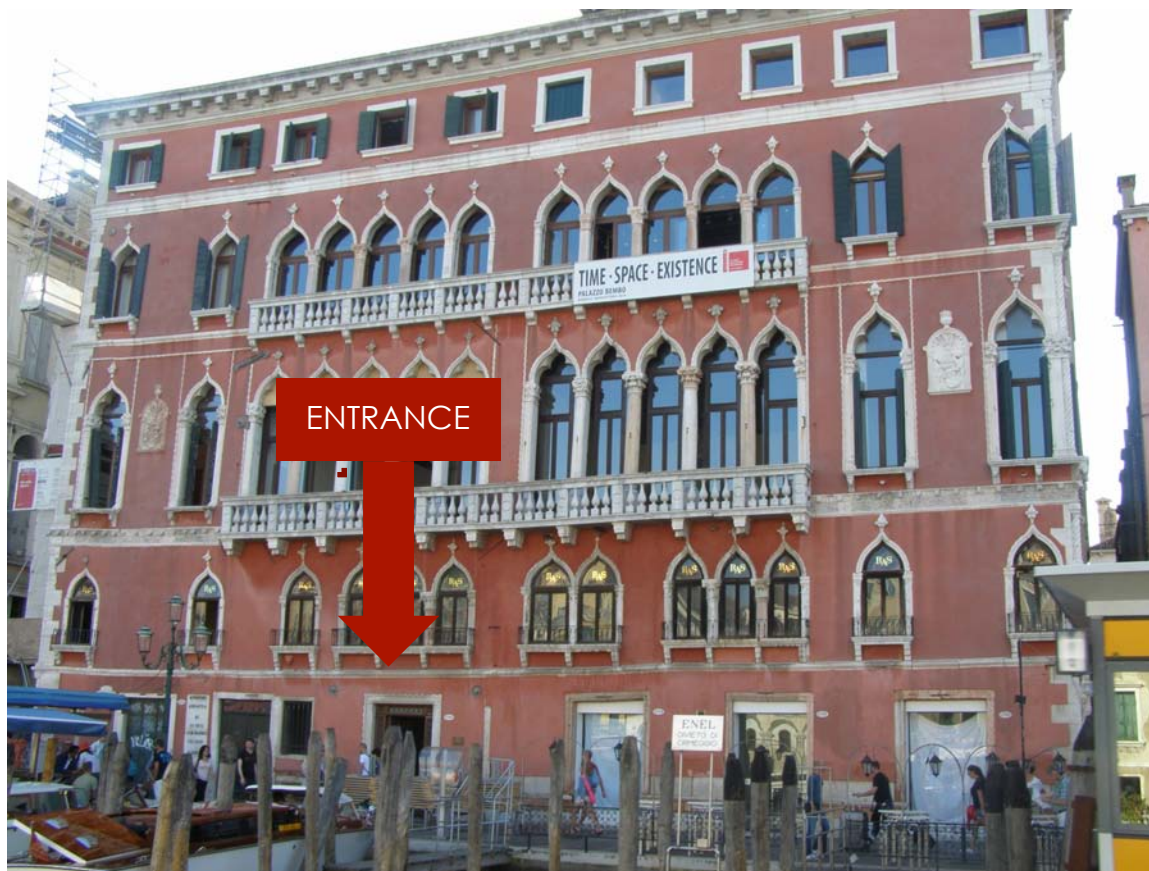
**MAIN ENTRANCE**

Opening of the crates outside the venues or even on the boat to deliver loose pieces to the exhibition place is something we are unfortunately used to in our city exactly because of the many access problems of the buildings. So, this is one of the reason why we need to know WHERE your shipments must go especially when dealing with large dimensions – very common with contemporary artworks.

Sharing the necessary information in advance is meant to find suitable solutions for the packing of items inside the crates to fit through the access or entrances of the venue and reduce – by consequence – extra costs for services which can be avoided.

Another specific problem which may happen around Venice is when we are in the middle of a public place so we cannot unload crates to stay on site or store empty crates. Crates or items must immediately be introduced and taken away, only transit is allowed not staying there. The risk is especially for tourist (they could stumble and fall!).

It's easy to understand that, another point to consider in quotations, is the picking up of empty crates: if it cannot be done later on, it must immediately be organized after delivery and unpacking.







**STAIRS FROM MAIN ENTRANCE**

**NARROW CALLE TO THE SECONDARY ACCESS**







**CORNER TO THE COURTYARD**

**COURTYARD**



## ***BRIDGES AROUND VENICE***

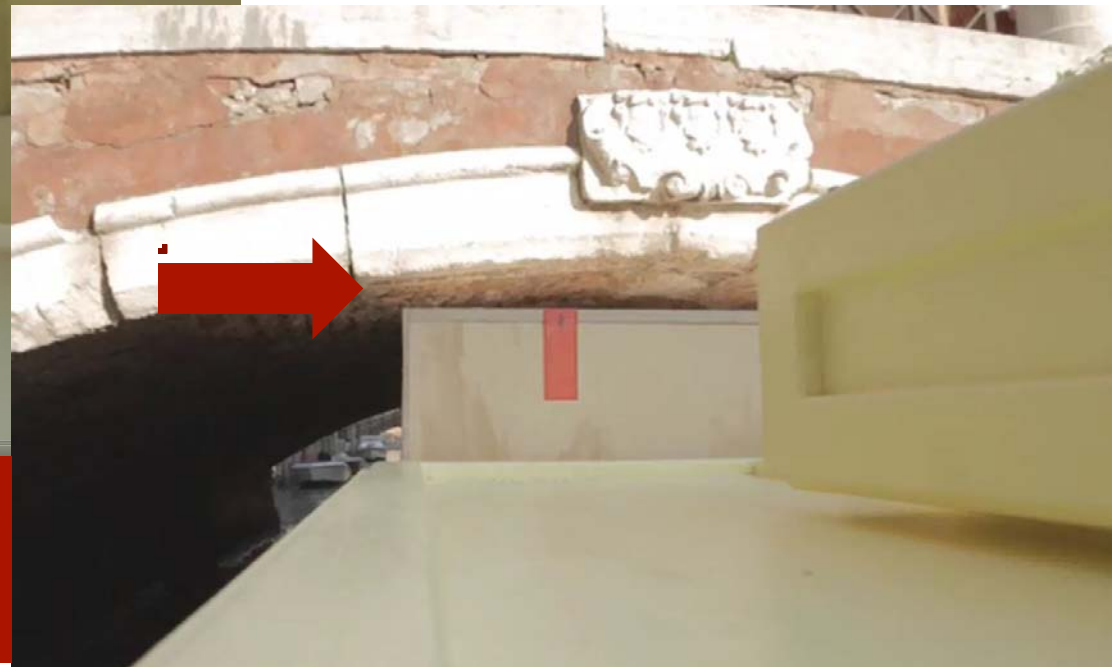
This is very typical in Venice and you cannot see something similar anywhere else.

These are examples of passages under the bridges...unusual to many of you but common in our working days.

It is clear that our arthandlers first carefully check the possibility to pass, sometimes the crates must change position on board to fit the passage but they are NEVER in danger. If there are risks and no other way is possible, the motorboat and staff stop the job and wait for the low tide. Delays are very common but the safety of artworks comes first.



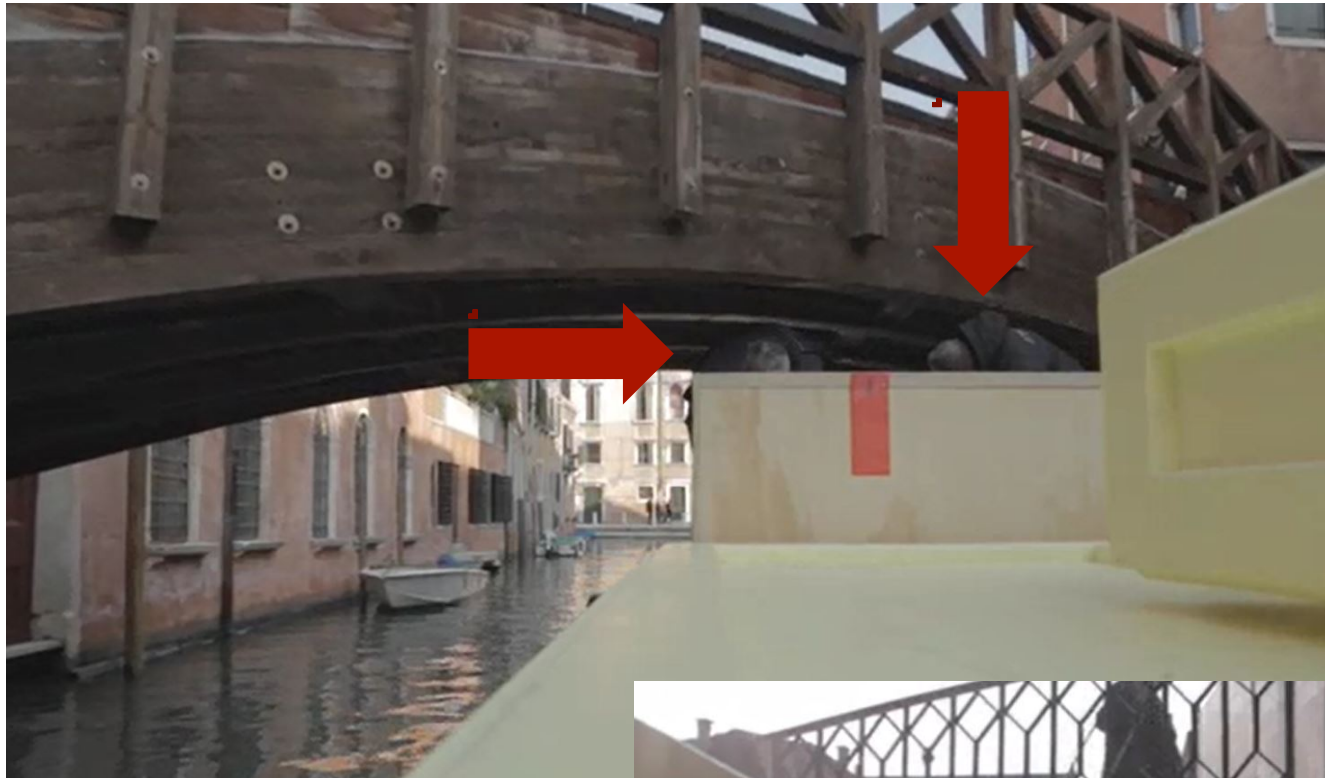
Extreme attention must be paid to bridges...



Don't worry...we can do it!!







**MIND YOUR HEAD!!**



# DOCKS

You have probably already noticed the difficult access to the docks. Gondolas, vaporetti stops, taxi areas, garbage boats...transporters in Venice don't have an easy life. The common way people working on the boats have to reach the dock may look unusual to many of you but that's it.

In the following example our boat is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> line our staff – to reach the dock – must jump from one boat to the other. Just imagine what happens when we have crates to unload:

- as docks cannot be booked, the right to use them is given on first come best served basis;
- when we have crates to unload, we only have to wait for the other boats to leave and then once at the dock we can complete our delivery (unlike any other city in the world where museums usually have their own private unloading area).

You can easily understand that this is a real waste of time and can delay a whole delivery programme if – for every delivery which is scheduled – we find such situations. Now, this is why a delivery timeframe is usually given to clients; a fix time is very hard to respect. And it is also clear that this 'waste of time' is considered in our quotations.

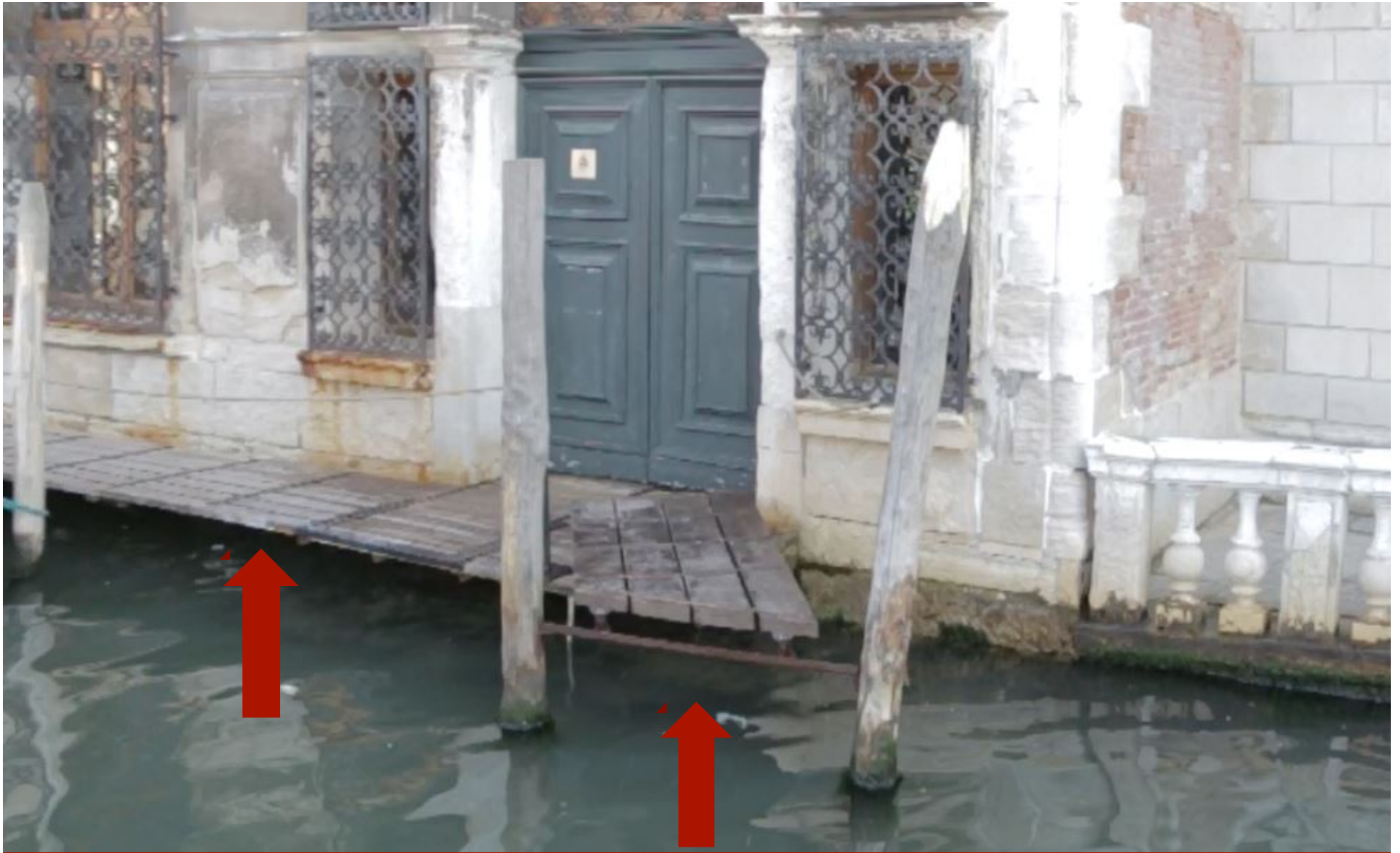






**SLIPPERY ACCESS**





NO SUPPORTS TO SUSTAIN THE WEIGHT DURING THE TRANSIT  
WITH ARTHANDLERS AND ARTWORKS!!

# CRANES

Cranes can be used in Venice for various reasons:

- even if the crate is not too large or heavy, we may find limitations at the dock (like a fence) and the crane is necessary:
- cranes are often used for the Biennale events (delivery to pavilions or collateral events) due to the dimensions of installations and artworks which are exhibited



**LIMITATIONS AT THE DOCK: FENCE PROTECTION  
(AND BARRIER...)**





**THE USE OF CRANE  
IS NECESSARY TO  
LOAD INTO  
MOTORBOAT**



**CRANE USE FOR INSTALLATIONS OF HUGE WEIGHT AND DIMENSIONS**









This 'train' represents a collateral event at a private area at the Arsenale.

It consisted in 2 parts of a train, the weight of each piece was 5 tons one and 7 tons the other and the organization of this transport has been particularly difficult because the client could hardly understand the logistics problems here in Venice.

The 2 parts of the installation travelled to Venice port by Flat Rack equipment. Due to the size of the pieces it was not possible to reach – as usual – the truck terminal with the FRs because they could not fit through a bridge reaching the dock.

So, we had to ask to port authorities the special permit to access the port directly with the floating platform to load right there the pieces still on the FR 'boxes' and then we sailed to the Arsenale area where they had to be exhibited.

Once at the Arsenale, we used a crane to unload them and a special mechanical tool to introduce them into the exhibition place; we also had to install – together with the artist's staff – the special rails where the train had to be placed; these rails were loaded into one of the two pieces, the heaviest one.

On return it was the same, with the only additional problem is was the end of November, it was rainy and foggy and we had to wait – and delay the service 3 times – for a sunny day to be able to arrange the pick up and delivery the pieces to the port. It was not our choice but it all depended from the port authorities because, due to the fog, they could not give us the authorization to enter the port with the floating platform.

The most hard aspect was to explain the client about this delay: not due to us or to our will (we had the whole team ready in 3 different days) but to *force majeure*.





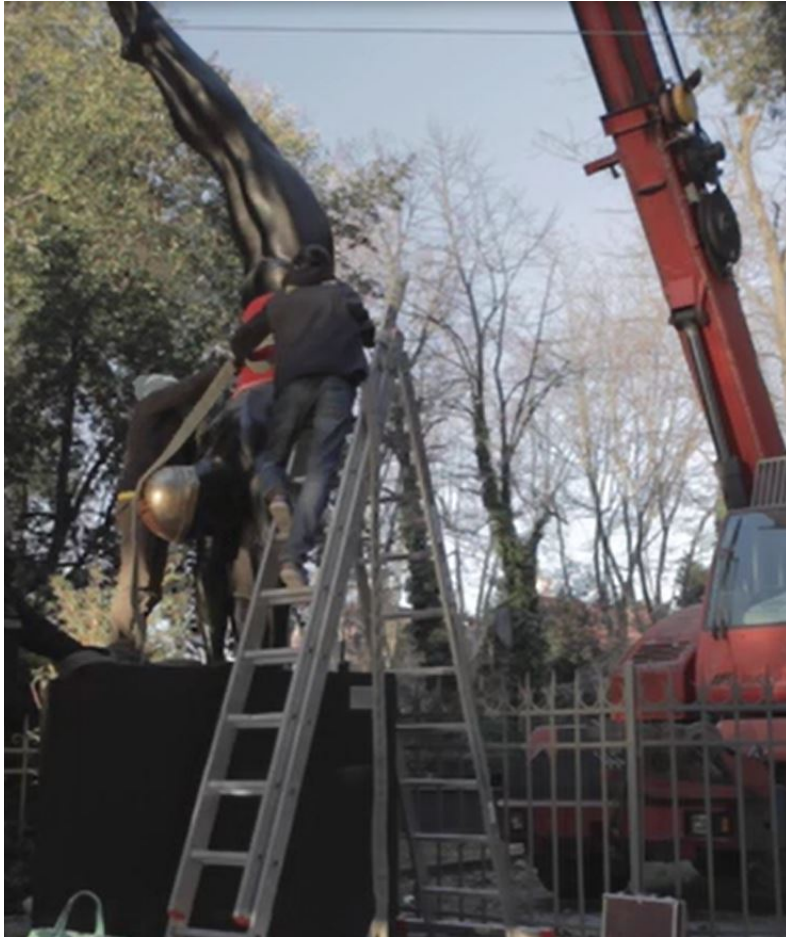












**BELTS WERE SAFELY FIXED  
AROUND THE WAIST OF THE  
SCULPTURE**





The installation had to be placed in the basement from above; the basement of the sculpture was inside a small fence and to introduce the sculpture we had to pay attention to the context of the venue and various limitations of handling.

The use of the crane was necessary but keep in mind that, if for exclusive use, it can be quite expensive to get a crane available at the Biennale Gardens not for the crane itself but because an exclusive transport by floating platform would be necessary. Keep in mind that in most parts of Venice it is not possible to use such kind of cranes.





**ARTWORK FINALLY PACKED  
INTO ORIGINAL CRATE**



It often happens that our clients or foreign partners give us very rough info about the artworks which are arriving. Even if we ask them, there is no way to have the correct details.

Last year we dealt with a collateral event at a new area of the Arsenale which consisted in 15 between 40' and 40'HQ containers for a total amount of 270 crates for approx. 600 artworks. It was a real titanic job.

We received a first lot of 13 containers and then 2 final containers. To deliver all these containers we had to use floating platforms fully loaded with crates.



**CRATES TO  
BE  
LOADED  
ONTO  
FLOATING  
PLATFORM**



The opening of the last container was a real surprise. According to packing list the content should have been '5 items' but two of which were the the following ones...!!



THIS IS WHAT THE CLIENT  
CALLED:  
2 ITEMS / EXHIBITION GOODS  
IN ATA CARNET AND PACKING  
LIST!!



# LOADING OF THE «ITEMS» ONTO FLOATING PLATFORM



Now, the client had not informed us about the weight nor the real consistency of the 'items'; in all other containers we dealt with normal crates which were to be handled by forklift and our staff without any problem. But what about such 'items'? Extraction could not happen only by forklift use...

We urgently needed to look for the rental of a crane – and during the Biennale days it was a real miracle to find an available one. So, we immediately organized the service and could extract the truck from the container to load it onto our platform. We arrived late at the venue and our staff had to work in extra time **with connected extra costs for the client**. At the venue we had the same handling problem including the passage through an access door made of glass: we had only a few centimeters of space available on each side for the passage and with extreme care we fitted through the door.

**All these extra costs could have been avoided by a simple correct communication!!**





GLASS DOORS AT THE ENTRANCE  
OF THE VENUE

GLASS DOORS



# BIENNALE GARDENS

The Biennale Gardens area is usually clear for us when dealing with quotations because we know where pavilions are and, if we have correct info from the client, we can immediately and correctly quote.

Anyway, it must be important for you to know that:

- the most used dock at the Biennale Gardens is the following one and it is not easy to work – during the opening and closing time – because everybody needs to use it; so there are many motorboats of many transports companies (max 2 motorboats at the same time), the motorboats of the garbage pick up, etc. If you add that we can work with rain, fog and after 4 p.m. in November it's dark. So, this is how we are meant to handle services there.
- the transit at the Biennale gardens is mostly on grass and pebbles and the journey is not easy as the pavement is uneven due to pebbles, grass, imagine it when it's raining: the earth becomes a big puddle. And we must travel with forklift or chariots and artworks loaded on them. There are many steps, roots of trees on the way to/from the pavilions and this must be considered as well according to the pieces we have 'on board': the assistance of our staff is always necessary!



**MOSTLY USED BIENNALE  
DOCK FOR  
LOADING/UNLOADING –  
WHEN IT IS FREE...**



**AND THE AT  
OPENING/CLOSI  
NG OF THE  
BIENNALE...**

**TRANSIT AT THE  
BIENNALE  
GARDENS**







**IMAGINE THIS DOCK WITH RAIN AND PUDDLES  
EVERYWHERE...**



**STEPS**

**ROOTS OF TREES**







**EVEN A SMALL BUMP CAN BE RISKY FOR THE ARTWORKS ON BOARD OF THE FORKLIFT DUE TO THE UNEVEN PAVEMENT: THE ASSISTANCE OF OUR STAFF IS ALWAYS NECESSARY!!**

## For estimates and info:

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