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Art

Ten Reasons Non-Art People Should Care About the Venice Biennale

As a fair, it can be inaccessible and strident. But some exhibitions have a shot at changing the art world

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When the 56th [Venice Art Biennale](#) opens to the public on May 9, visitors will be able to tour submissions from 89 countries spread across the city, where some of the world's top curators have chosen ambitious, often highly political and socially oriented artworks. The big question is whether anyone outside the art world will care.

While other facets of the global art scene can attract broad curiosity—the auctions for their [insane prices](#), the art fairs for their [giant parties](#), the gallery openings, simply because anyone in the vicinity can attend—Venice's Biennale presents a much higher bar for entry. For starters, it's difficult to claim that this is for the citizens of the city, who've dwindled to around 60,000. There's also the difficult subject matter that many of these pavilions address, occasionally in a manner that, if we're being generous, is [less than crystal clear](#).

But those hurdles come with the territory and shouldn't overshadow an event that does, at the end of the day, deserve the public's attention. By grappling with concepts and issues—climate change, genocide, income inequality, religious freedom, race relations—many of the Biennale's artists offer a welcome alternative to an art world dominated by \$130 million sculptures and modernist paintings locked away in [Swiss freeports](#).

This isn't to say that the Biennale is one big Oxfam appeal. Far from it, and in fact the Biennale is prized by art world insiders for launching trends (and artists) that eventually trickle into museums, galleries, and auction houses. The following are 10 of the most promising pavilions, installations, and events—see them in Venice through Nov. 22.

Ursula von Rydingsvard in the Giardino della Marinaressa



Ursula von Rydingsvard, *Bronze Bowl 2*. Source: *The Yorkshire Sculpture Park via Bloomberg*

Not every installation is sponsored by a country. The Yorkshire Sculpture Park in Yorkshire, U.K., will install a series of six massive artworks by New York's Ursula von Rydingsvard. The abstract, bronze artworks will sit for the next six months in the lovely, open-air park that just so happens to be the main walking route between San Marco and the Giardini.