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Beyond the Giardini and the Arsenale: five Venice Biennale shows across the city to catch now

The off-site and satellite highlights of this year's edition

'By the Means at Hand', Croatia Pavilion



'A cause for optimism in our fragmented times': Vlatka Horvat's 'By the Means At Hand' ... © Andrea Avezzi/Courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia



... for which the Croatian-born artist asked fellow artists living as foreigners around the world to send her a work in Venice – but not via courier or delivery service © Andrea Avezzi/Courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia

The final leg of this art-athon leads to the Croatia Pavilion in northern Cannaregio. Vlatka Horvat's *By the Means At Hand* deftly tackles the Biennale's "Foreigners Everywhere" theme head on. Housed in an old carpentry workshop, which doubles as exhibition space and the London-based artist's home during her residency, the exhibition comprises works by artists living as foreigners all over the world — Horvat invited them to send her a custom-made piece to Venice. But she added a caveat: it could not arrive by courier or delivery service. The works are thus in situ thanks to an extensive network of relationships and an inherent trust in the kindness of others. The result is an outstanding assemblage by a collective bound together by a brilliant idea and their willingness to participate. In return, Horvat reciprocates by sending a collage to each artist that reflects on migration and displacement, but also on the support networks we rely on when living far from home. It is a dynamic, constantly changing exhibition with a sense of connectedness that is a cause for optimism in our fragmented times. *Fàbrica 33, Calle Larga dei Botteri 5062, Cannaregio, 30121 Venice. Open Tuesday–Sun, 10am–6pm. [Website](#); [Directions](#)*

The 10 Best National Pavilions at the Venice Biennale, From a Cut-Up Giraffe to Body Horror in a Church



BY ALEX GREENBERGER April 18, 2024 3:22pm

3 Croatia



Vlatka Horvat's Croatian Pavilion.

Photo : Photo Hugo Glendinning

Vlatka Horvat's Croatian Pavilion offers little in the way of visual pleasure, which may prove frustrating for some who journey all the way to Cannaregio, a region far from the Arsenale and the Giardini, to see it. But what Horvat's project lacks in aesthetic pizzazz it makes up for in conceptual richness.

For a project called *By the Means at Hand*, Horvat has enlisted the help of artist friends abroad to each create their own art, which she has exhibited as an installation. There were stipulations: the works could not be transported the typical way, via shipping, and instead had to be personally handed off by the artist to emissaries that provided them to Horvat. In exchange, Horvat gave each participant a collage of their own, which they had to exhibit in a semi-public place and photograph for her. And, to top it all off, the grouping of artworks shifts daily, meaning that the show itself is in flux. (To facilitate all this labor, Horvat will be in residency in Venice for the pavilion's run.)

At the pavilion, one can trace the flow of artworks. You can see, for example, a drawing in which Ahmet Ögüt asks his heart to be donated to Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital upon his death and then find an image documenting the moment when the packaged work was given away by the artist. Horvat has created an installation that essentially documents a sprawling, fast-growing network of itinerant individuals—a project that is particularly meaningful to this diasporic artist, who was born in the former Yugoslavia and is now based in London. It's impossible to know how Horvat's pavilion will shift going forward, but that's what makes it so endearing.

Empowerment, Will, and Wit — Venice Biennale Pavilions (Part 2)

Katia Krupennikova

03.05.2024

recensie

From Lebanon's woven, feminist rethinkings of Greek mythology to the Ukrainian Pavilion's resilience in the face of conflict: Katia Krupennikova offers an overview of the 60th Venice Biennial's most noteworthy national pavilions.

Croatia –

The Croatian pavilion, nestled away from the usual paths of Venice, proved to be a gem worth seeking out. Conceived by artist Vlatka Horvat and curated by Antonia Majaca, both based outside Croatia, the project titled *Means at Hand*, beautifully captured the intricate networks and informal economies fostered by the global diaspora. Under Horvat's invitation, a diverse array of artists from around the world, such as Jasmina Cibic (UK/Croatia), Lia Dostlieva (Ukraine/Poland), Ahmet Öğüt (Turkey/Germany/The Netherlands), Arseny Zhilyaev (Russia/Italy), ingeniously circumvented traditional channels to present their works within the pavilion. This collaborative effort resulted in at times unimaginable constellation of artworks and names, forging unexpected connections across borders and transforming a conservative, national pavilion into an international one.

In a unique exchange, upon the arrival of each artwork, Vlatka Horvat committed to crafting a piece of her own to be sent back to the contributing artist, with the stipulation that it be exhibited in a semi-public space, such as visible through a window. This reciprocal gesture added a layer of intimacy and exchange to the project, blurring the lines between creator and curator. Every facet of the art handling process was meticulously documented and showcased within the pavilion, alongside a rotating selection of daily featured artworks. Horvat, immersing herself in the project, took up residence within the pavilion, diligently curating new compilations of works while also creating her own pieces, all the while ensuring the smooth operation of logistics. The pavilion itself resembled a hybrid of a post office, a domestic dwelling, a museum's registrar office, and an exhibition space, embodying the multifaceted nature of artistic expression and curation. As a member of the diaspora, this project stirred a plethora of emotions, touching on themes of identity, politics, borders, wars, familial ties, and the enduring bonds of friendship—evoking the poignant experience of sending something to distant family or friends via a stranger and receiving something in return.



Editors' picks: Venice Biennale special

Must-see shows handpicked by Art Basel's editorial team

By Art Basel Editors | Mar 20, 2024 | 7 min read



Every six weeks, members of Art Basel's Editorial team choose their favorite exhibitions of the moment.

Vlatka Horvat, 'By the Means at Hand'

Croatian Pavilion

Fàbrica 33

It's impossible to predict how London-based, Croatia-born artist Vlatka Horvat's presentation in the Croatian Pavilion might look – but that's part of the concept. 'By the Means at Hand', curated by Antonia Majaca, brings together some 200 drawings that were created by the artist's friends and family, even by strangers – all 'foreigners' scattered around the world – and then transported to Venice, not by post or a shipping service, but by hand, via informal networks. Horvat is in residence in the pavilion and will be sending artworks to her interlocutors in return. Connecting to the Biennale's theme of 'Foreigners Everywhere', the exhibition reflects the peripatetic lives many of us lead these days, as well as the improvised transport methods still so often used to move important documents, gifts, and money to and from Croatia – and places far beyond. K.B.



Vlatka Horvat, Venice (at Hand) #1, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.



Vlatka Horvat, Venice (at Hand) #3, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

Art and design

Adrian Searle

Mon 22 Apr 2024 16.23 BST

Venice Biennale 2024 review – everything everywhere all at once

Outside the Giardini in the Croatia pavilion, London-based artist Vlatka Horvat's *By the Means at Hand* invites numerous artists, none of whom are living in their native countries, to send small artworks by hand, via friends and strangers, to be shown in the pavilion. Horvat responds in an ongoing, reciprocal series of photocollages. The project is all about trust, solidarity, improvisation and generosity, and will evolve over the coming months. The show is an ongoing open conversation, a model of exchange and dialogue we could all do with more of, and one entirely without posturing or grand statements.



The Unmissable Off-Site Exhibitions in Venice

The *frieze* team selects the international shows they're most excited about during this year's Biennale

BY FRIEZE IN CRITIC'S GUIDES | 09 APR 24

Vlatka Horvat | 'By the Means at Hand' | Croatian Pavilion, Fàbrica 33 | 20 April – 24 November



Vlatka Horvat, *Venice (at Hand) #1*, 2024, Courtesy: the artist

Over the last few weeks, I have spotted Instagram posts of packages of different shapes and sizes in the hands of various people in different cities, along travel routes documented by airport codes such as LHR and JFK. Here, artist Vlatka Horvat aims to illustrate often informal methods of transporting objects from country to country by those living abroad (the photographs reminded me of the parcels my mother would receive in Ghana for her return to the UK addressed to another relative, therefore avoiding substantial shipping costs). Horvat's 'By the Means at Hand' will include drawings from over 200 artist friends, transported to Venice via these informal exchanges, and in return Horvat will produce works during her time in Venice to be sent via these same method of using suitcases belonging to friends and strangers alike.

– VANESSA PETERSON, associate editor



Venice Biennale 2024
Review

Louisa Buck, Lee Cheshire,
Alexander Morrison, Lisa
Movius and José da Silva

18 April 2024

Venice Biennale 2024: the must-see pavilions around town

Take a tour of a women's prison on Giudecca or a picturesque church in Cannaregio with our pick of pavilions beyond the Giardini and Arsenale

Croatia

By the Means at Hand, Vlatka Horvat

Fàbrica 33, Calle Larga dei Boteri, Cannaregio



Photo-documentation of works in transit for *By the Means at Hand* (2024)

There are "foreigners everywhere" says the title of this year's international Biennale exhibition and Vlatka Horvat has enlisted some of them for her Croatian pavilion. She has invited fellow artists who are living away from their homelands to create a small-scale work and send it to her in Venice. In return they will get one of Horvat's photo-montages of Venice—she is using the pavilion as a temporary studio during the Biennale.

The twist is that the works have to be delivered through informal means - passed on hand-to-hand by networks of strangers. This underlines the importance of improvised support networks both for people living in foreign lands and for artists everywhere. The exhibition includes an ever-changing display of the works that have come in, as well as records of how they got there. Horvat hopes the finished collection will be preserved as a whole by an institution.

Venice Biennale: our picks of the shows to see in Venice from John Akomfrah to Ethiopia's first ever pavillion

The 60th edition of the biggest art event of the year boasts 331 invited artists, 88 National Pavilions, 30 Collateral Events, a new president and the first ever Latin American curator

VENICE BIENNALE 2024

ELIZABETH GREGORY

20 APRIL 2024

Croatia: By the Means at Hand, Vlatka Horvat

Visual artist Vlatka Horvat's piece at the Croatian Pavilion is a dialogue between artists. She has invited some of her friends from around the world to contribute pieces that deal with experiences of living away from home. The twist here is that the works won't be sent via postal services, but will be brought by friends, colleagues and acquaintances travelling to Venice. The result, as the pieces slowly arrive, will be a continually changing exhibition, a meditation on friendship, community and trust.

Finestre sull'Arte

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Venice Biennale 2024, the top 10 best national pavilions in our opinion

by **Redazione**, published on 19/04/2024

Categories: **News Focus** / **Disclaimer**

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What are the 10 best national pavilions at the Venice Biennale? After three days of discussions and comparisons, here is the verdict of Finestre Sull'Arte!

La **Biennale di Venezia** is preparing to open its doors to the public for its 60th International Art Exhibition, titled *Stranieri Ovunque - Foreigners Everywhere*, curated by Adriano Pedrosa and produced by La Biennale di Venezia. The event will take place from the Giardini to the Arsenale, open to the public from April 20 to November 24, 2024. The awards and opening ceremony will take place tomorrow, Saturday, April 20, 2024, after the traditional three-day pre-opening from April 17 to 19. Rich, as always, the offerings of the national pavilions. And after three days of visiting and comparing with each other and colleagues, which pavilions are the best? Here is the list of the ones we found most interesting: the top 10 best pavilions of Biennale 2024 according to Finestre Sull'Arte.

7. Croatia

Croatia is presented with a romantic project by Vlatka Horvat, entitled *By the means at hand*, curated by Antonia Majaca. The Croatian artist has created an exhibition of artists living “as foreigners,” thus following the main theme of the 2024 edition of the Biennale. She asked each of them, friends and colleagues, for a work, to be sent to Venice through a specially chosen messenger (thus not by courier or modern means of shipping). In fact, the works are brought by hand, and Horvat asked each artist to take a photo of the moment of delivery to the improvised shipper, capturing only their hands. In return, Horvat offers each of the participants their own work that has Venice as its theme. The project, then, insists not only on the theme of feeling “foreign everywhere,” but also on the value of encounter and exchange. The set-up is excellent, light and delicate, and the exhibition gives a way to see many declinations of the Biennale theme.



Pavilion of Croatia

60TH VENICE ART BIENNALE

SEE IN VENICE

BIENNALE ARTE 2024 | Pavilions in the city: the world will be green

Nations search for their roots and re-establish their identity in a history made of invasions, liberations, mixtures, violence. Women are at the center of an archipelago of works and ideas in which memory (often painful) mixes with a plural and sustainable future

Camilla Bertoni | May 20, 2024 | 6' min read

CONTEMPORARY ART

Eighty-seven national participations in this edition, 36 of which are spread across various venues in Venice, with some absences compared to the last edition (for example Nepal) and the four debuts of **Ethiopia**, **Tanzania**, **Timor Leste**, in addition to **Benin** at the Arsenale: an extended constellation that favors an exploration of the city and a dive into history on which almost all the Nations bring new and often painful reflections. Choosing a zigzag path, our long walk begins in the Cannaregio district (at number 5063, corner of Calle Larga dei Botteri and Calle Ruzzini) to visit the Croatian Pavilion **in** the luminous setting of Fàbrica 33, one of the most coherent and convincing: **Vlatka Horvat** in «By the Means at Hand» does not follow the theme of nationality, confirming the premises, but of diaspora. The artist offers her foreign vision of Venice with a series of photos and collages that will change throughout the duration of the exhibition according to a continuous flow, which also involves a large space dedicated to the exhibition of works by artists from around the world who live as foreigners and who will deliver their works to Venice, never by post but with "the means available", which is what the title indicates, taking advantage of relays from an informal network of friends, acquaintances or strangers already on the road. Solidarity, friendship, trust, zero emissions are some of the themes that are involved in this installation.



Vlatka Horvat (Croatia - Fàbrica 33)

HOME › VISUAL ARTS › CONTEMPORARY ART

The 10 best pavilions to see at the Venice Art Biennale 2024

More than forty countries are participating in the 60th International Art Exhibition, between the Arsenale, the Gardens and the historic centre of Venice: among these, we have selected a small group that cannot be missed

by Editorial Staff 04/18/2024

10/10

Croatia – Cannaregio



The Croatian pavilion is a relational and processual project. The artist [Vlatka Horvat](#), without rhetoric and with extreme formal cleanliness, transforms a complex plot of encounters, images, glances into an exhibition opportunity, partially disappearing in favor of an idea of progressive collectivity: the theme *Foreigners Everywhere* becomes a sincere experience of encounter and welcome. With a simple and effective aesthetic, Horvat exhibits small two-dimensional works by artists of all nationalities, united by being in diaspora, resident in a country that is not their own. She responds to them by sending them a gift of one of her collage works made on site. The great machine of exchanges, logistics, deliveries and shipments takes place solely through the hands of friends or acquaintances, being documented step by step and then presented next to the works themselves that depart or arrive. The artist will remain in Venice until the end of the Biennale, living inside the pavilion, continuing to feed this archive set up on elegant minimalist displays in light wood in a space open onto a garden thanks to large windows. A great work made of dozens of works in motion, seeking new effective strategies to build community. Documenting everything.



Croatian Pavilion, Vlatka Horvat, By the Means at Hand. Photo Hugo Glendinning

Eight must-see exhibits at the 2024 Venice Biennale

KATE TAYLOR >

VENICE, ITALY

PUBLISHED MAY 9, 2024

UPDATED MAY 15, 2024

Croatia: Hidden away in Cannaregio, far removed from the glamour of the Giardini or the tourist sites of San Marco, Croatian artist Vlatka Horvat takes a different approach to this year's theme of *Foreigners Everywhere* in a group show entitled *By the Means at Hand: Rethinking 1970s mail art projects*, she has invited migrant and diaspora artists from multiple countries to deliver to her – by safe hand, not digitally – small works of art. Thanks to friends, travellers and other impromptu couriers, a vast collection of works on paper, witty and poignant, is accumulating in the Croatian pavilion



vltkhrvt
Venice, Italy

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review

Guide To The Most Interesting Events In Biennale Arte 2024.

Collateral Events from Central and
Eastern Europe and selected
National Pavilions.

Selection by Antoni Konieczny

A selection of the most interesting National Pavilions in Venice 2024.

Croatian Pavilion

'Vlatka Horvat: By the Means at Hand'

Artist: Vlatka Horvat

Curator: Antonia Majača

Commissioner: Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of
Croatia

Location: Croatian Pavilion, Fàbrica 33

This multidisciplinary exhibition by the Croatian-born, London-based artist (recognised for investigating the relationship between the body and the physical environment) alludes to improvised transport of informal networks—of family members, friends, and strangers—activated to deliver objects to people living far abroad. The pavilion features works by artists living “as foreigners” across the world, whose contributions arrive in Venice via such informal channels. At large, the exhibition examines notions of migration and displacement.



Vlatka Horvat, Venice (at Hand) #9, 2024. Collage on inkjet photo.



Vlatka Horvat, Venice (at Hand) #1, 2024. Collage on inkjet photo.



Portrait of Vlatka Horvat, 2024. Photo Hugo Glendinning.

60th Venice Biennale Twelve Essential Highlights – Nico Kos Earle



Croatia: Vlatka Horvat 'by the means at hand' @croatianpavilion2024 @labiennale

Devising a structure of exchange between her extended group of artist friends, Horvat invited each to contribute a small-scale work that reflects the idea of "foreigners everywhere" and relies on their network of friends to deliver it. Look closely, and you'll find the catalogue to our times—show in compliment to Horvat's own poetic collages, made from observations during her time in Venice.

So often, we ignore the horrendous collateral shipping and waste costs of international shows (especially short-term octopus art fairs). However, this simple concept, replete with an elegant, modular archival system, creates the opportunity for a hand-held network of trust and engagement—like our journey there on arrival with @kristinhjellegjerde to deliver a new work by @sintatantra for the show.

Vlatka Horvat on Representing Croatia at the 60th Venice Biennale

ArtReview Venice Biennale 2024 15 April 2024 artreview.com

ArtReview sent a questionnaire to artists and curators exhibiting in and curating the various national pavilions of the 2024 Venice Biennale, the responses to which will be published daily in the leadup to and during the Venice Biennale, which runs from 20 April – 24 November.

Vlatka Horvat is representing Croatia; the pavilion is in Cannaregio, Fabrica 33 (Calle Larga dei Boteri, Cannaregio 5063).



Photo: Hugo Glendinning

ArtReview *What do you think of when you think of Venice?*

Vlatka Horvat I think of the instability of the built environment, of precarious structures and precarious conditions of living. I think of human ingenuity – people throughout history finding seemingly implausible solutions to survive and thrive, against the odds. The city as a site of fiction, where spaces might be opening and closing, where streets might rearrange themselves at night, where you walk on water, where your understanding of ‘how things work’ is upended... I think of meandering and lostness, of mindboggling beauty, and of a different experience of one’s body in space and time. I also think of the vulnerable ecosystems, the fraught relation between humans and the natural environment, of unsustainable tourism, rising sea levels.

AR *What can you tell us about your exhibition plans for Venice?*

VH

My project for Venice, titled *By the Means at Hand*, is structured as a framework into which I’m inviting other people. Specifically, I have invited a large group of artist friends – from different countries around the world, based in different countries – who are all “foreigners” in places where they live (as am I), to contribute an artwork which reflects in some way on their diaspora experience. In exchange, I will send them a new work of mine produced in the pavilion, which doubles as my studio for the duration of the biennale. A key aspect of this artist

exchange is that we don't use the postal service or shipping companies, but instead, we try to piggyback on existing journeys by asking friends and acquaintances – curators, other artists, writers, technicians, etc. – who are already going to Venice for their own purposes to become informal couriers, delivering the artworks to the pavilion in their hand luggage.

Activating networks of artist friends, the Croatian Pavilion is envisioned as a site of convergence and a gathering of artists. The exhibition will take the form of a dynamic install that changes shape over time as new works by different artists arrive and my own works are sent back to them. The artworks will be shown alongside different traces of performative processes of encounter and exchange, including fragments of the journeys different works travelled, and the records of handovers between the artists and couriers who were entrusted with their delivery.

At its heart, *By the Means at Hand* is a project about friendship and trust, about solidarity and mutual support, and about community. It's also about making do and finding ways to make things happen, by circumventing the official structures and systems in favour of the makeshift ones that are powered by people, and that rely on the goodwill and generosity of others.

AR *Why is the Venice Biennale still important, if at all? And what is the importance of showing there? Is it about visibility, inclusion, acknowledgement?*

VH The structure of the Venice Biennale is problematic in many ways, starting with the idea of an artist could ever represent a nation. The framework of the national pavilions reinforces a view of the world defined by borders and nation states, implying that conditions of belonging and association work along the lines of national identity and citizenship. There's also the biennale's impact on the city of Venice, the incredible carbon footprint it produces via the travel and the shipping of artworks and materials, the astounding amount of resources it uses and waste it produces...

In its manifestation, my project for the Croatian Pavilion tries to foreground some of these problematics associated with the frame in which it sits. Our exhibition quietly pushes against the organizing principle of national pavilion representation – it's a deeply collaborative project that includes a large number of artists from different countries, living in different countries. There is, as you suggest, a heightened visibility of one's work in a context such as this one, and *By the Means at Hand* makes use of that visibility to flag certain things. Concretely, the project activates collective energy to make something happen, rather than serving a single-author position. It gives centre stage to solidarity, friendship, and mutual support as principles that bring and keep people together. By employing alternative means to get a large number of artworks to and from Venice, it encourages us to think of different ways of approaching logistics and the use of resources. The work celebrates the possibility of using materials that are 'at hand' and readily available, of piggybacking on travel and on other processes that are already happening. It also stages a series of collaborations across geographical distance, testing ways of working (and being) together, having a conversation, without necessarily being physically present in the same place.

A certain contradiction at play here is not lost on me though: we are making use of the travel which is already happening and in doing so we are of course entangled in the situation we are trying to address. It is precisely because of the large scope of the Venice Biennale, and the large number of people traveling to Venice over the course of its eight months that a project of this nature can be pulled off.

AR *When you make artworks do you have a specific audience in mind?*

VH I work with an awareness of context so the decisions I make in the work take on board different particularities of the place where the work will be encountered: the site's architecture, its spatial properties, its historical and social context, its previous uses, as well as the socio-political and material conditions operating in and around it. An essential part of working for me is thinking about the ways in which the work might raise questions into a particular set of contexts and dynamics, about the propositions the work makes and *how* it makes them in regard to the viewer. When I'm making work, I'm often actively imagining the encounter between the work and the viewer, so part of my process involves me testing different possibilities, playing through different scenarios linked to how a viewer might encounter a work in space, through a particular frame of reading and understanding. That said, I don't make work for specific groups of people, if that's what you mean. In every context one hopes for a diversity of audience approaches, and a range of responses and ways of engaging with the work. No audience is a homogeneous mass; as every social grouping, it is a diverse mix of individuals who bring to the encounter with the work their very different – sometimes conflicting or contradictory – experiences, wants, assumptions, knowledges, sensibilities, and so on. So when I make work I try to be mindful of those complexities. Often what I want to put into a room are sets of questions, or open-ended propositions, tensions, and contradictions that audiences have to contend with in some way.



Vlatka Horvat, *Venice (at Hand) #3*, 2024, collage on inkjet photo

AR *Do you think there is such a thing as national art? Or is all art universal? Is there something that defines your nation's artistic traditions? And what is misunderstood or forgotten about your nation's art history?*

VH I don't think of art in national terms. And at the same time I don't think of art – or anything else – as being universal.

Art of course is not made in a vacuum; it's produced in specific contexts and under specific conditions. The processes of making, exhibiting, and encountering it are all entangled in the complex sets of dynamics operating in the culture. So art reflects its context, but it can also do more than that; it can effect and shape the social imaginary and the sense of what is possible in the setting within which it is situated.

What I am aware of is that my work is informed by, and grows out of or in a dialogue with, certain traditions, certain conversations, certain histories. I wouldn't be the artist I am without the legacy of Yugoslavia and the conceptual and performance practices that came from there in the mid-twentieth century. And at the same time, I've been lucky to work and study in other places, to broaden the sets of references and approaches I might draw on – I lived in the US for twenty years, and in the UK for the last thirteen... so through that and through travel and other encounters, I feel like I'm drawing on a wide range of practices and understandings. And I think many artists work in this way. What constitutes the work comes from a very personal and diverse set of references and knowledges; it's not that you're an articulation or product of a nation.

Universality has a trickier, complex history. I'm on board with the idea that we have things in common, that there are shared truths and experiences, but at the same time I'm also attuned to difference, to the ways in which our particular experiences can make us see, understand, and act in the world in different ways. For me the tensions that come from difference, the nuance, and conversation around different understandings and possibilities is as important as any notion of a shared experience.

In terms of my 'nation's artistic traditions', the ones that are most relevant to my practice and ways of working are the legacies of conceptual art, feminist art and performance, and various collaborative efforts of artists and artist collectives from the 1960s and the 70s, often working in self-organized structures with limited resources and limited infrastructural support. These efforts and legacies we cannot talk about without talking about the history of the larger region, as these historical practices operated in a different national frame, of what used to be Yugoslavia.

AR *If someone were to visit your nation, what three things would you recommend they see or read in order to understand it better?*

VH I'm not sure that such a limited number of things would necessarily help someone understand a nation better. As with every nation, Croatia is full of contradictions and inconsistencies. It abounds with different historical interpretations and different takes on its own position and identity, and there are stark regional differences within the country itself. An additional complexity is of course that people of my generation and older were born and formed in another country and another system (in Yugoslavia, in socialism). For me, an understanding of the current situation would need to account in some way for the history and the legacies of that other entity.

Things I would recommend reading or looking at are some the things that have formed my own relation to the place I come from. They might not help one understand it, but they may help 'complexify' it. In any case, the texts I'm thinking of don't so much refer to a "nation" as an entity; rather, they speak of the lived experience of particular people or groups of people in these parts. It's all difference, all nuance for me. No generalities.

I would say, read the poetry of Josip Pupačić, Antun Branko Šimić, Danijel Dragojević, Olja Savičević Ivančević, Grigor Vitez, Gustav Krklec, and the books of Dubravka Ugrešić, Janko Polić Kamov, and Kristian Novak. Listen to Međimurska popevka, the atonal folksong from the Međimurje region, where I come from, for a sense of the endless sorrow and endless sadness.

AR Which other artists have influenced or inspired you?

VH If I were to single out something that was extremely influential for my developing a certain sensibility as an artist, it would be animation: cartoons like Osvaldo Cavandoli's *La Linea*, the Czechoslovak stop-motion series *...a je to!, Simon in the Land of Chalk Drawings*, *Professor Balthasar*... I grew up watching amazing animation, especially animation coming out of the Czech studios – artists like Jan Švankmajer and Jiří Trnka – with its matter-of-fact mixing of the humorous and the horrific, and its frequent treatment of the absurd as the ordinary and the ordinary as remarkable.

Thinking of influences, I don't tend to think of artists separate from writers, filmmakers, performance makers... So in no particular order: Mladen Stilinović, Vlado Martek, Francesca Woodman, Ana Mendieta, Clarice Lispector, Samuel Beckett, Georges Perec, Jorge Luis Borges, Italo Calvino, Chantal Akerman, Kathy Acker, Donald Barthelme, Gertrude Stein, Tomislav Gotovac, Goran Trbuljak, Hanna Hoch, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, Jiří Kovanda, Bas Jan Ader, Želimir Žilnik, John Smith, Hannah Wilke, and the performance collectives Forced Entertainment, Goat Island, Lucky Pierre, and The Wooster Group. And, of course, many more contemporary artist colleagues and friends, and my partner Tim Etchells, with whom I've been having an over-twenty-year-long conversation about art (and other things) on a daily basis.

AR What, other than your own work, are you looking forward to seeing while you are in Venice?

VH I'm excited to see the works of close to 200 artists who have accepted my invitation to contribute to our project for the Croatian Pavilion, which will be arriving in Venice over the course of the biennale.

Elsewhere, I'm very much looking forward to seeing Adriano Pedrosa's main exhibition, as well as the Czech and Slovak, Kosovar, Austrian, and British pavilions. Some projects curated by dear friends are high on my list – a retrospective of Robert Indiana, *The Sweet Mystery*, curated by Matthew Lyons; a five-day programme titled *When Solidarity is Not a Metaphor*, curated by Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez; and the Catalan collateral project curated by Filipa Ramos. *South West Bank – Landworks, Collective Action and Sound*, a project featuring work of Palestinian artists from the West Bank, is an absolutely essential one to support, as the voices of Palestinian artists and organizations need to be amplified in these kinds of visible contexts. I'm also keen to visit The Artists at Risk Pavilion, focusing on the work of artists whose activities are situated at the cross-section of art and human rights, and to attend ecology-related program of talks, *The Gathering into the Maelstrom*, curated by Sale Docks and Institute of Radical Imagination, which is running over the opening weekend at Sale Docks.



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Why all the art for the Croatia Pavilion is being hand-delivered

STIRring 'Everywhere' in Venice: Artist Vlatka Horvat mobilises an informal delivery network of friends and strangers in her show at the Venice Biennale.

by Eleonora Ghedini | Published on : Apr 18, 2024

Working across an eclectic range of media – such as sculpture, installation, drawing, performance, photography, video and writing – the London-based artist Vlatka Horvat previously represented Croatia at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2018 with her work *To Still the Eye*, as part of the collective art exhibition *Cloud Pergola: The Architecture of Hospitality*. On the occasion of this year's Croatian Pavilion at the Venice Art Biennale, curated by the art historian Antonia Majača, Horvat presents her new project *By The Means at Hand*, which is characterised by a distinctly participatory dimension. After having an experience of migration when she moved to the United States as a teenager, Horvat decided to involve a wide group of international artists in her presentation, all of whom are united by the diasporic condition.



Photo-documentation, works in transit for *By the Means at Hand*, 2024, Vlatka Horvat
Image: Jelena Juresa; Courtesy of *By the Means at Hand*

The title of the project comes from Horvat's improvised approach of transporting the works to Venice, activated through informal networks of friends, acquaintances and strangers. In the role of unofficial couriers, individuals have been collecting, carrying across borders and delivering by hand – in the form of parcels, envelopes and tubes – the simple drawings made by the artists who have been invited to participate. This method reflects the ways in which people living outside their countries of origin often transport treasured items back home. Due to the performative nature of the project, the Croatian Pavilion – which is currently welcomed by the spaces of Fàbrica 33, in the vibrant neighbourhood of Cannaregio – will grow over time as more works are delivered by hand. The space becomes the focus of a mutual exchange of artworks and other materials between Horvat and the collaborating artists, enhancing the values of solidarity and trust. This exhibition – which relates to the Venice Art Biennale director Adriano Pedrosa's theme *Foreigners Everywhere* – is an opportunity to reflect not only on the effects of displacement but also on the environmental impact of the most institutionalised modes of



Portrait of Vlatka Horvat, 2024

Image: Hugo Glendinning

Horvat is in residence onsite at the Croatia Pavilion during the Venice Art Biennale, creating collages in response to the drawings she receives over time which she will then send back through the same hand-delivery networks. The landscape of Venice is the starting point for Horvat's collages. The city-as-subject (particularly Venice) has continued to have uninterrupted popularity in international imagery from at least the 18th century, when the pictorial genre known as *Vedutismo* (Vedutism) flourished. Nevertheless, Horvat reinterprets the theme with sensitivity, drawing on details that might otherwise seem trite. A significant example is the *sotopòrtego* (under pòrtego), one of the most characteristic architectural elements of the Venetian tradition: a passageway that runs under a building, connecting *calli* (streets), *campi* (squares) and canals to each other. By its nature, the *sotopòrtego* can perform different functions, from shortening walking times when one is in a hurry, to refreshing people with its shade during the notoriously humid summers of the Venetian lagoon. When one looks at it through the lens of Horvat's collages, the *sotopòrtego* soon reveals metaphorical values: indicating the passage from light to darkness and back, as well as the movement from one place to another, perhaps symbolising the experience of foreigners, especially that of refugees and exiles.



This exhibition...is an opportunity to reflect not only on the effects of displacement but also on the environmental impact of the most institutionalised modes of production, transportation and presentation in the contemporary art world.



Venice (at Hand) #1, collage on inkjet photo, 2024, *By The Means at Hand*, Croatian Pavilion, Venice Art Biennale 2024, Vlatka Horvat

Image: Courtesy of By the Means at Hand

The artist's choice of collage is also particularly pertinent to the concept of displacement. Juxtaposing different iconographic materials means reinventing what is already known to create a new dimension, perhaps fairer than the actual reality. In fact, collage can lead to imaginative geographies that converge the boundaries between the individual and collective, as well as between the local and universal. The style of Horvat's collages is reminiscent of the illustrations by the Italian painter and graphic designer Leo Lionni (1910–1999), who was forced to leave his country for the United States in 1939 because of the racial laws against the Italian Jews. Author of some of the most innovative children's books of the 20th century, such as *Little Blue and Little Yellow* (1959), Lionni used a similar approach to geometry and texture, bringing to life existential topics through a graphic identity that is still highly evocative in its simplicity.



Venice (at Hand) #3, collage on inkjet photo, 2024, *By The Means at Hand*, Croatian Pavilion, Venice Art Biennale 2024, Vlatka Horvat

Image: Courtesy of By the Means at Hand

The affinity between paper collage and **fabric** patchwork in Horvat's work also relates to the American tradition of patchworks and quilts from the late 19th century. Examples include the *crazy patchworks* or, even more significantly, the *silk cigar ribbon quilts*, mentioned by the British **curator** Patrick Elliott in the exhibition catalogue of *Cut and Paste: 400 Years of Collage* (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 2019), which all tend towards the construction of imaginative geographies; an escape from daily life in form of cutouts stitched together.



Venice (at Hand) #24, collage on inkjet photo, 2024, *By The Means at Hand*, Croatian Pavilion, Venice Art Biennale 2024, Vlatka Horvat

Image: Courtesy of *By the Means at Hand*.

In his famous essay *Watermark* (1992), the Russian poet Iosif Alexandrovich Brodskij wrote that during the Venetian winter, he noticed the same smell of seaweed that he had inhaled as a child on the Baltic Sea. The words of the exiled poet remind us, once again, how Venice, despite its uniqueness, is a place where everyone can recognise themselves: a place to reach and from which to depart, as *By The Means at Hand* promises to do.



 20 December 24

2024 – How was it for you?: Vlatka Horvat

Artist Vlatka Horvat reflects on a year immersed in *By the Means at Hand*, her project for the Croatian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, and shares her hopes and plans for 2025.

What kind of a year has 2024 been for you?

Intense. Inspiring. Hardworking. Filled with dismay and desperation over the state of the world. But also filled with hope and optimism, having witnessed an incredible amount of solidarity at work through my project for the [Croatian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale](#), which activated collective energy to make something happen.

By the Means at Hand manifested as a durational, performative structure into which I invited a large number of artist friends, all living ‘as foreigners’ in countries they were not born in, who all made works that in some way reflected on their experience of migration or life in diaspora.

The project staged exchanges between me and the invited artists, through the sending of artworks to one another through a network of friends, acquaintances, and sometimes strangers enlisted as couriers. All the works travelled to and from Venice in someone's hand luggage, traversing distances and borders via these alternative logistics. In the process, we built a loose community of people working together to achieve a shared goal.



Vlatka Horvat, *By the Means at Hand* – Pavilion of Croatia at the 60th Venice Biennale, 2024. Photo: Hugo Glendinning

What would you say has been your major achievement this year and why?

I spent the whole year immersed in this one project; it was a huge undertaking. I lived in Venice – in the exhibition itself – for eight months of its unfolding, responding to the ebbs and flows produced by the project and its processes of exchange.

Realising a year-long, continually changing exhibition with several hundred participants based all over the world is in itself something I'm incredibly proud of, but an additional sense of achievement comes from the knowledge that we have pulled it off in a way that goes against the grain. By piggybacking on existing travel, we were able to circumvent the machinery of the biennale and its extractive, resource-and-waste-heavy model of producing art exhibitions, in favour of an alternative proposition. Thanks to the cooperation and goodwill of many people, we were able to realise this work without generating the need for additional travel, keeping our carbon footprint very low.

The fact that it all worked – over 200 artworks from artists living across the world were delivered to me in Venice and the same number of my works were delivered back to them using the same alternative transport system – demonstrated that working together can achieve a lot with limited means.

Looking back at it now, I'm thinking of the project as a celebration of friendship and solidarity. It showed that you can rely on people, and that on the intimate scale of human encounter, people are willing – keen even – to connect, to get involved, to help one another.



Vlatka Horvat, *By the Means at Hand* – Pavilion of Croatia at the 60th Venice Biennale, 2024. Photo: Hugo Glendinning

What has changed for the better?

That's a hard one. Looking at the world, I can't really say that much has changed for the better. Tories are out, that's something.

One thing I'm thinking of – and I'm not sure this is something that has changed but has maybe been made more visible because of the dire context in which many are trying to survive – is that people are very resilient and inventive. When institutions of all kinds are failing around us, people come up with ever new ways to get by, to support each other and to thrive.

What do you wish had happened this year, but didn't?

Ceasefire. Arms embargo. Freedom for Palestine. Peace in Ukraine. A different outcome to elections in many places around the world.



Vlatka Horvat, *By the Means at Hand* – Pavilion of Croatia at the 60th Venice Biennale, 2024. Photo: Hugo Glendinning

Is there anything you'd like to have done this year but haven't?

There's a longform piece of writing I was hoping to complete alongside my project in Venice. But once my project started, it became apparent very quickly that this was not going to happen! *By the Means at Hand* took over my life – *was* my life – this year. I had the ambition to become fluent in Italian while living and working in Venice for most of the year... but somehow that didn't happen either.

What are your plans and hopes for 2025?

I'm collaborating with my partner [Tim Etchells](#) on a new dance piece for Basel Ballet, titled [Go With Your Heart](#), that's opening in March. So I'm getting ready to spend three months at the start of the year in Switzerland, where we'll be working with an ensemble of 17 dancers. We are starting with ideas to do with traces that linger in the body after violent and/or transformative events, looking at both the aftermaths of things that have happened and 'rehearsals' for things that are yet to come.

I'm also working on plans to present the archive of *By the Means at Hand* in different contexts. The extensive catalogue of the project, documenting both the exhibition in Venice across its eight-month-long timeline as well as various traces of the exchanges at the heart of the work, is coming out at the start of January, and we will be launching it in London, Zagreb, Berlin and Milan.



Vlatka Horvat, *By the Means at Hand* – Pavilion of Croatia at the 60th Venice Biennale, 2024. Photo: Hugo Glendinning

The final part of my project – something we are finalising as I write this – is the donation of the entire archive, including the collection of over 200 works by international artists whom I invited to take part, to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. The documentary materials and the collection generated through the artist exchange will have its permanent home there. For a project based on gift economy and realised thanks to the generosity of a lot of people, it seemed fitting to end it with a gesture in the form of a gift.

Also, I'd like to finish that writing project! And maybe learn Italian properly...

In terms of broader hopes, I'm hoping that we can all find the strength, the wherewithal, and the collective energy to stay resilient and to keep going, in spite of Trump and others, in spite of rising nationalisms, and cruel anti-immigrant policies. I'm hoping that as artists we can keep on working, asking questions, and making ambitious propositions, in spite of the shrinking budgets, populist cultural policies, and dwindling state support.

And very concretely: I would like to see an end to all these wars.

Top image: Portrait of Vlatka Horvat. Photo: Hugo Glendinning



Ellen Wilkinson

