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10 Shows to See in Venice During the Biennale, From a Pierre Huyghe Blockbuster to Art About Palestine

By Alex Greenberger - April 11, 2024 5:00am

Italy's Venice Biennale, the world's biggest art festival, would be big enough if it were limited to merely its main venues, the Arsenale and the Giardini. But the sprawling show has gradually expanded beyond these sites as other seek to get in on the action, piggybacking on the central show and accompanying national pavilions by staging their own exhibitions alongside it.

Enter the phenomenon known as the "collateral event," or a show that is technically mounted outside the confines of the Biennale but has been given the official stamp of approval by the Biennale's foundation. Most collateral events are, to be sure, pay-to-play affairs. They are underwritten by major galleries or foundations, typically, and are lent authority by branding themselves with the Biennale's logo.

For that reason, most collateral events are no more notable than the average gallery show. Yet every so often, one comes along that is worth seeing. And that's not to mention the institutional shows that are being staged by museums and foundations across the city.

"All African People's Consulate" at Castello Gallery



CRISTIN TIERNEY

When the art world converges in Venice this week, it will represent a multinational coalition of people who've had the privilege to transgress borders. But the unfortunate fact is that not everyone can pass through their countries' bounds, and an aspiration toward a different state of living guides this project by Dread Scott, who here envisions a consulate for "an imaginary Pan-African, Afrofuturist union of countries, promoting cultural and diplomatic relations," according to a description of the show. Brought to Italy by the Africa Center and the Open Society Foundations, the presentation will allow people of African descent to apply for a passport to this fictional union and all others to obtain a visa to it.

Castello, 1636; Closest vaporetto stop: Giardini "A"