

## Wallpaper\*

# Venice Biennale 2017: the top ten pavilions, from colossal sculptures to dystopian visions

There is no escaping life's big themes – the migration crisis, identity politics, populism, an uncertain future – at this year's [Venice Biennale](#). This, the 57th edition, is curated by the Pompidou Centre's Christine Macel, under the title 'Long Live Art', and most countries have used their pavilions to remind us that the world needs our urgent attention. Antigua and Barbuda, Kiribati, and Nigeria are taking part for the first time bringing a total of 86 nations to the Giardini, the Arsenale and many of Venice's finest palazzos, churches and galleries.

In the US pavilion, American artist Mark Bradford examines 'the collapse of the centre', while Australian artist Tracey Moffatt represents her country with photographs and film referencing migration and false history. A small, Russia-funded Syrian space on the island of Guidecca pays homage to the destroyed city of Palmyra. At the French pavilion, Xavier Veilhan's [live sound experiment](#) hit all the high notes.

Other nations, though, have gone for a lighter touch. At the Finnish pavilion, two messianic figures, represented by talking animatronic puppets, visit the Finland they created millions of years earlier, and try to make sense of contemporary culture there. They, and their 'findings' are the work of artists Nathaniel Mellors and Erkkka Nissinen. On Guidecca, the Icelandic pavilion is the final destination of Ūgh and Böögår, a pair of 36m tall trolls who journeyed from the Berlin studio of artist Egill Sæbjörnsson to Venice creating music, art, perfume and fashion along the way.

Equally eccentric are the outfits of many a biennale visitor, and offbeat performances pop up all over the city just when you're least expecting them. Enter the mute and miserable man, who stood for hours near the tied-up mega yachts holding a tray of ice with a dead fish at his feet. What he symbolised was hard to fathom, but trying to decipher such seemingly random acts is part of the fun of the Venice Biennale.

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**Israel:** With its mouldy floors and walls, peeling flock wallpaper and puzzle shaped floor panels filled with coffee dregs, the Israeli pavilion has been turned from a building of beauty into one of decay

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**Israel:** Tel Aviv artist Gal Weinstein uses metallic wool, unravelled felt, pillow stuffing and mould to create sculptures and installations underpinned by historical and geographical references that lead to a post-apocalyptic scene

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**Israel:** Weinstein also sees his project as a melancholic and poetic allegory of the Israeli story - one composed of miraculous acts and moments of enlightenment as well as neglect and destruction