



PRESS RELEASE

March 31, 2015

PAVILION OF MAURITIUS AT THE 56th VENICE BIENNALE

at the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia
(first official participation)

Title of the Exhibition:

From One Citizen You Gather an Idea

Participants:

Sultana Haukim, Nirmal Hurry, Alix Le Juge, Olga Jürgenson, Helge Leiberg, Krishna Luchoomun, Neermala Luckeenarain, Bik Van Der Pol, Laure Prouvost, Vitaly Pushnitsky, Römer + Römer, Kavinash Thomoo, Tania Antoshina, Djuneid Dulloo

Commissioner:

pARTage

Curators:

Alfredo Cramerotti and Olga Jürgenson (Office for Roles & Responsibilities)

The **first national Pavilion of the Republic of Mauritius** at the Venice Art Biennial, 9th May - 22nd November 2015, is based on a dialogue between Mauritian and European artists. Mauritius is a fusion of cultures, languages and ethnicities, with its population made of Indian, African, Chinese and European descendants; the co-presence of temples, churches and mosques in every town of this island nation reveals this diversity.

Virtually uninhabited until the end of the 16th century, the island was then ruled by the Dutch, French and British, before gaining independence in 1968. The newly born state has managed to maintain close ties with their former rulers, and also to establish an economic relationship with the USSR. Since 2000 the Ibrahim Index of African Governance has consistently rated Mauritius as the **best-governed African nation** in terms of safety, economic development and human rights.

However in art and culture, different sets of assessments apply; there is a short distance to questioning the value and relevance of the contemporary cultural output of a region in relation to the global artworld. The Pavilion is not only a slice of the Mauritian artistic and cultural scene, but also a **take on Western conventions** when it comes to assessing the 'art now' and the canons and critical approaches to the issues of the day.

The Pavilion's curators believe that art has meaning when challenging its own structure and relationships. Consequently the seven participating artists from Europe, based in established art centres such as the **UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Russia**, are each invited to present a work in response to the work by seven artists based in Mauritius, a remote island in the Indian Ocean. The artists are invited to challenge each other's aesthetic and ideological canons, initiating discussions about art theory and practice, colonial heritage and postcolonial relations, education and politicisation of culture.

With this indirect approach to the idea of inclusiveness and difference, carried out by the work of fourteen prominent artists in their respective countries, the Pavilion of Mauritius aims to **'take the temperature'** of

the global art world, and possibly provide – besides a lot of questions – some answers.

When asked about their interest in curating the national Pavilion of Mauritius, Cramerotti and Jürgenson said that: *“The project was born out of our dialogue, the 'urge' to talk about difference in cultural and even aesthetic canons, why these differences are there and how we approach them. It's quite easy to 'dismiss' a certain approach as naive, immature or wanting to play hardball with geopolitical issues, without really understanding what's going on in that region and why certain tendencies have developed and are there. Being that manifestation either a political and activist approach or a more transcendental and spiritual one - incidentally, both very present in the Mauritian artistic scene.”*

The commissioning body and responsible for the Pavilion of Mauritius is pARTage Association of Contemporary Artists on behalf of the Mauritius National Gallery and the Ministry of Culture.

Project advisers: Alessio Antonioli, Maria Arusoo, Pamela Auchincloss for Arts Management and Cultural Agency ELEVEN +, Giorgia Mis for ArtICE / Arts production, Dimitri Ozerkov, Georg Schöllhammer, Joanna Sokołowska, Olesya Turkina, Gabriella Uhl

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Curators' biographies:

Alfredo Cramerotti is a curator and writer working across TV, radio, publishing, arts festivals and exhibition making in museums, galleries and off-site venues. He directs MOSTYN, Wales' contemporary art institute, co-directs the curatorial agencies AGM Culture and CPS Chamber of Public Secrets, and is Head Curator of APT Artist Pension Trust. He has curated exhibitions worldwide, amongst others those in biennials such as Sequences VII in Reykjavik (Iceland) in 2015, the Maldives Pavilion and the Wales Pavilion at the 55th Venice Art Biennial (Italy) in 2013, and Manifesta 8, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, Region of Murcia (Spain) in 2010. He is author of over 100 texts on art theory and curatorial practice published by museums, institutions and art publications. He is Editor of the Critical Photography series by Intellect Books, and his own publications include the book *Aesthetic Journalism: How to inform without informing* (2009). Cramerotti is Research Scholar at the eCFPR European Centre for Film and Photography Research, University of South Wales, and is Visiting Lecturer in several European universities i.e. Goldsmiths (University of London), Oslo National Academy of the Arts, HEAD University of Art & Design Geneva, Università Cattolica Milano and DAI Dutch Arts Institute.

Olga Jürgenson has enjoyed an interesting journey from a Fine Art education focused on Socialist Realism at The Academy of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Russia, to currently working as a contemporary multi-disciplinary artist and curator living in the UK. Throughout her artistic career she participated in numerous significant group exhibitions globally, including MANIFESTA 10, Liverpool, Moscow and Ural biennials. Jürgenson undertook several international residencies and fellowships including: Artists House Lucas (Ahrenshoop, Germany), IDAT (University of Plymouth, UK), Peterborough Digital Arts (UK), pARTage (Mauritius) and others. Two of her most recent solo exhibitions, of more than twenty, were at The State Hermitage Museum (2013, St Petersburg, Russia) and New Hall Art Collection, the University of Cambridge (2014, UK). Jürgenson was awarded numerous grants, scholarships and awards from European foundations, including from KulturKontakt (Austria), European Cultural Foundation (Netherlands), Kultuurkapital (Estonia), Arts Council England (UK), and was selected for Escalator Visual Arts in 2010. In 2011 she was nominated for Kandinsky Prize in Moscow, Russia. Her works are in state and private collections across the world, including The State Russian Museum (St Petersburg, Russia), National Centre for Contemporary Art (Moscow, Russia), Oulu Art Museum (Finland), The University of Cambridge and many others. While as a curator, Jürgenson has organised exhibitions and screenings of videoworks by British artists in several countries and was invited to judge various art competitions.

For further information:

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