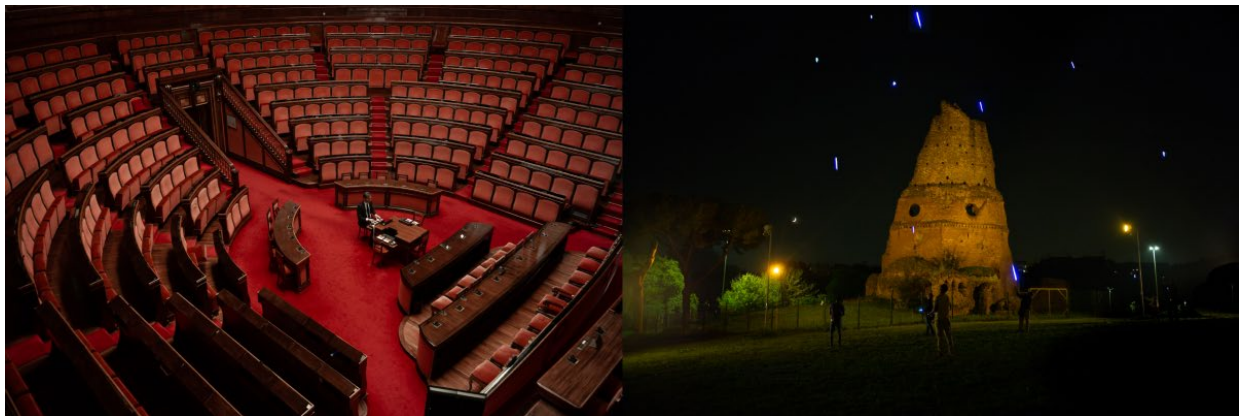


ANGELICA MESITI ASSEMBLY

MEDIA RELEASE

Angelica Mesiti's **ASSEMBLY** officially opened in the Australian Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.



Venice, Italy: Australia's 2019 representation for the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Angelica Mesiti's **ASSEMBLY**, was officially opened today in the Australian Pavilion within the historic Giardini della Biennale precinct.

Angelica Mesiti's **ASSEMBLY** is a new three-channel video installed within an architectural setting inspired by the historical shape of the community circle and amphitheatre. **ASSEMBLY** establishes as an evolving set of translations from the written word to stenographic codes then music, and performance. Filmed in the Senate chambers of Italy and Australia, the three screens of **ASSEMBLY** travel through the corridors, meeting rooms and parliaments of government while performers, representing the multitude of ancestries that constitute cosmopolitan Australia, gather, disassemble and re-unite, demonstrating the strength and creativity of a plural community.

Angelica Mesiti is the 39th artist to present work for Australia at the La Biennale di Venezia, which is widely considered one of the most important and prestigious events on the international arts calendar.

Based between Sydney and Paris, Angelica worked with more than 40 Australian arts professionals to realise the work. "Collaboration is an important part of my practice, and a central element in the work itself. **ASSEMBLY** draws on a need to come together, to exchange and to learn from each other. So I thank and acknowledge the dancers, singers, musicians, film and sound practitioners, the designers, architect, installation and project team who helped me bring this work to fruition," she said.

Commissioner for Australia, Australia Council Chair Sam Walsh AO, said, "Angelica Mesiti's **ASSEMBLY** continues Australia's important contribution to contemporary visual arts and to this very significant international exhibition.

“Angelica Mesiti has created an important new work that depicts the many faces of modern Australia, the fragility of the human condition, and our need in difficult times, to come together to share, celebrate and gain strength. We expect **ASSEMBLY** will resonate for international and Australian audiences alike.”

Artist Angelica Mesiti said, “Translation has been a particular enquiry and methodology for me for a number of years. In **ASSEMBLY**, I explore the space where communication moves from verbal and written forms to non-verbal, gestural and musical forms. The latter creates a sort of code upon which meaning, memory and imagination can be overlaid.”

Curator Juliana Engberg said, “**ASSEMBLY** uses and personifies the exilic energies of those who seek belonging in the community—the young, the female, Indigenous, the newly arrived and exiled, the refugee as well as the artist. Mesiti’s performers play along to an inherited code, but through translation, improvisation, adaptation, and re-interpretation demonstrate how a new music can emerge. The abstract relations and associations within **ASSEMBLY** open a space of imagined possibilities arising out of strange juxtapositions and unlikely re-locations.

“Cutting a rupture into the voided place of government to ignite a next succession of communication, **ASSEMBLY** seeks to create a new space for those who want to speak differently, hear attentively, and act together to form a new translation of the democratic process.”

The National Gallery of Australia will acquire **ASSEMBLY** following its premiere at the Biennale. The work will be part of the National Gallery’s 2020 program and with plans to tour nationally the following year, in partnership with the Australia Council for the Arts.

The [Australia Council for the Arts](#) is the Australian Government’s principal arts funding and advisory body. Australia’s participation at the Venice Biennale began in 1954 and has been managed by the Australia Council since 1978.

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Image Credit: Angelica Mesiti, **ASSEMBLY**, 2019 (production still) three-channel video installation in architectural amphitheater. HD video projections, color, six-channel mono sound, 25 mins, dimensions variable. © Photography: Bonnie Elliott.

Commissioned by the Australia Council for the Arts on the occasion of the 58th International Art Exhibition–La Biennale di Venezia. Courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Australia and Galerie Allen, Paris.

BACKGROUND NOTES

ASSEMBLY opens with the ‘Michela’ machine, a 19th century stenographic machine modeled on a piano keyboard, which is used in the Italian Senate for official parliamentary reporting to ensure transparency within the democratic process. The inventor of the ‘Michela’ was originally inspired by musical notation as a universal language. Mesiti uses this device to recode a poem by esteemed Australian writer David Malouf, which is then arranged into a musical score by Australian composer Max Lyandvert, and then performed by an ensemble of musicians, dancers, singers and performers.

A copy of David Malouf’s To Be Written in Another Tongue is available here:

<https://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/malouf-david/poem-to-be-written-in-another-tongue-0767001>

In the making of **ASSEMBLY**, Angelica has worked with more than 40 Australian artists, musicians and sound and film practitioners, including cinematographer Bonnie Elliot and producer Bridget Ikin. The dance sequence was performed by Deborah Brown, and group vocals by The House that Dan Built amongst others. A full credit list is included in the [press kit](#).

Angelica Mesiti

Angelica Mesiti (b. 1976) lives and works between Paris and Sydney. She is currently presenting a solo exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo Paris, and has previously held solo exhibitions at MAXXI Rome, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, O Space, Aarhus, Williams College Museum of Art Massachusetts, and Nikolaj Kunsthal Copenhagen. Her work is held in national and international collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, FRAC Franche-Comté France, and Kadist Art Foundation Paris/San Francisco.

Angelica Mesiti is represented in Australia by Anna Schwartz Gallery and in Paris by Galerie Allen.

Juliana Engberg

Juliana Engberg is a curator, writer and cultural producer. Her recent projects include being programme director and commissioner of the European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017; artistic director of the 19th Biennale of Sydney: *You Imagine What You Desire*; artistic director at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art; curator of the visual arts programs of the Edinburgh, Melbourne and Adelaide International Festivals; and artistic director of the Melbourne International Biennial: *Signs of Life*. Her book *En Route* is published by Melbourne University Press. She is a fellow of Goodenough College, London; adjunct professor at RMIT University, Melbourne and a professional fellow at Monash University, Melbourne in the faculties of Architecture, Art and Design.

Australia at the Venice Biennale

Australia's representation at the Venice Biennale began in 1954, and since then 39 distinguished contemporary visual artists have exhibited under the Australia banner. The Venice Biennale provides Australian artists with critical international coverage, exposing them to key new audiences, markets and contexts. This exposure helps build the profile of Australian contemporary visual arts and establishes international cultural links, networks and dialogue for individual Australian artists. The Biennale represents a significant platform for the Australia Council for the Arts and our supporters to showcase contemporary Australian visual arts across global borders. Click [here](#) to find out more about previous artists.

Australia's national participation in the Venice Biennale is managed by the Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian Government's principal arts funding and advisory body. The Australia Council also owns the Australian Pavilion. The Australia Council is the Commissioner for Australia at the Venice Biennale.

Australia's participation in each Biennale is supported by a highly successful private-public partnership. The 2019 Venice project draws invaluable support from the Venice Council, steered by Chair Kerry Gardner AO, comprising distinguished arts philanthropists and leaders from the contemporary visual arts community who spearhead advocacy and fundraising efforts.

The Australian Pavilion

The 2015 opening of the award-winning Australian Pavilion designed by Denton Corker Marshall celebrated the first 21st Century pavilion in the Giardini della Biennale. The Australian Pavilion provides an elegant home to showcase the best of Australian art and architecture. The pavilion is one of only 29 national pavilions within the Biennale Gardens, all built at different periods by various countries. The development of the Australian Pavilion was made possible through a public-private partnership led by the Australia Council with the then Commissioner Simon Mordant AM. The original pavilion designed by Philip Cox opened in 1988 hosted 22 artists during its lifetime.

Professional Development Program

The Australia Council's [Venice Biennale Professional Development Program](#) comprises an impressive cohort of emerging arts professionals, exhibition team leaders and volunteers who will support Australia's exhibition in Venice. The program's participants will gain valuable first-hand experience and networks while working behind the scenes on one of the biggest events in the international visual arts calendar.

For the first time in 2019, the program has expanded from an opportunity for curators to include those working across all areas of the arts including education, arts journalism, arts administration, exhibition design and development.

The program is a proven launch pad for arts professionals. Many past participants now hold high-level positions within the Australian and international arts sectors and credit their time in the program as a pivotal point in their career development. This really is a great example of how Australia's representation at Biennale Arte 2019 can be leveraged to create opportunities and build the capacity and profile of the Australian visual arts sector.

The Emerging Arts Professionals program is delivered in partnership with [Create NSW; Arts South Australia; Creative Victoria; Culture and the Arts \(WA\); Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries; Arts NT; Department of Tourism and Culture, Arts Tasmania](#) and [Arts Queensland](#).