

**PERSONAL
STRUCTURES**
Reflections

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Venice 2022
Art Biennial

Palazzo Mora
Palazzo Bembo
Marinaressa Gardens

Reflections
23.4 - 27.11
2022



Exhibition organised by ECC Italy in
collaboration with Open Space Venice

Foreword

The Personal Structures project was initiated in 2002 and was conceived as an itinerant open platform, where artists can present their work, thoughts, and research in exhibitions, symposia, and publications. After some years of travelling around the world, from Asia to North America and Europe, the project found its home in Venice, Italy, where the first edition of the Personal Structures exhibition took place in 2011.

Venice, as a crossroads of cultures and important exchanges in history, has always been of inspiration for people from all over the world, impressed by the uniqueness of the city: the cultural heritage, the local traditions, and the peculiar natural environment of the lagoon.

Over the years, Venice has become a reference point for the latest developments in art. Renowned art and culture institutions, museums, exhibitions, and galleries live together on this small island, a place where the past, the present, and the future coexist.

This is where the European Cultural Centre set its first satellite and developed the project into biennial contemporary art and architecture exhibitions, workshops, cultural events, educational programmes and activities.

Every two years, visual artists, photographers, academic institutions, and cultural entities are invited to present their works reflecting on the fundamental topics of Time, Space, and Existence, by revealing their viewpoint on contemporary art.

By giving space to a diverse and growing number of participants, our project aims to continuously stimulate new and in-

clusive dialogues. Art is an essential part of our culture to unlock new ideas and experiences, which should be open to all. All ECC venues will keep their doors open and free access, giving the opportunity to discover innovative projects, explore historical Venetian buildings and experience public spaces in the city.

The sixth edition of Personal Structures 2022 has been possible thanks to the collaboration and contribution of the heterogeneous group of participants who took part in this year's exhibition.

During these years we have learned to support each other, to listen, to empathise with those who were close and far from us. We helped each other, with the hope and the responsibility to change the future.

The artistic contribution of each participant, through different languages, media, and topics, is significant and inspirational to initiate those reflections.

The hard work and dedication of all the ECC team has been essential for the realisation of this event. Young international professionals, who are sharing a common passion for art and culture, each one with a diverse story and expertise, have organised a unique exhibition and programme.

We are grateful for the continuous support and enthusiasm of all the partners involved.

We thank everyone who took part in this project, for the joint efforts, persistence, hope, vision, trust, and passion that made Personal Structures 2022 possible.

European Cultural Centre Team

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Introduction

Personal Structures turns to its sixth edition, this year, taking place in the iconic venues of Palazzo Bembo, Palazzo Mora and Marinaressa Gardens, located in the heart of Venice, from the 23rd of April until the 27th of November 2022.

Throughout its seven months, the exhibition is complemented with a series of conversations, performances, and workshops.

The ECC art biennial features a wide selection of artworks from internationally-renowned to emerging artists, photographers, worldwide academic and cultural institutions, with more than 200 participants.

Art interacts with the spaces, creating interesting dialogues and unique narratives. In Palazzo Bembo, many site-specific installations are presented, offering an immersive experience. Furthermore, the architectural features and the Venetian elements of Palazzo Mora enhance the concepts that lie beneath each exhibited project. The Marinaressa Gardens welcome installations and sculptures that tune into the natural environment, turning the public space into an organic mixed-art installation and an open air sculpture park.

This year, the exhibition revolves around the concept of reflections, perceived both as the image created from a mirrored surface as well as a thought, idea, or opinion. The theme is presented with a double reading and value: physically, as a phenomenon of the visible, and mentally, as a thought resulting from a

meditative action. As envisioned by the ECC curatorial team, the act of reflecting carries the potential to foresee possibilities and the responsibility of imagining a better future.

In this historical moment more than ever, it is essential to be able to imagine a sustainable future, in a present that requests more responsible and conscious actions, both individually and collectively. We believe it is important to *reflect* by expressing one's ideas, feelings, experiences towards the outside, to a community of individuals, to reflect on what is reflected, in order to create a virtuous circle.

In an increasingly multicultural and *liquid* society, in the definition of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, where *the belief that change is the only thing permanent and that uncertainty is the only certainty*, there is a need to identify the present, by relating to the people and the surrounding environment, enhancing empathy as a tool for collective transformation.

Artists and intellectuals have always looked at society and incidents, suggesting interpretations or proposing different points of view. In *Personal Structures - Reflections*, the artists reflect through their works of art, different themes and current issues, such as climate change, environmental and social sustainability, ethnic and gender equality. Hence, the exhibition imprints and suggests realistic and utopian art-driven alternatives, where the audience has the opportunity to relate with.

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Palazzo Mora





Palazzo Bembo





Shanequa Gay

Daughters of Metropolitan. Inspired by her ancestral wisdom and the deep well of southern black traditions connected to her Atlanta home, Shanequa Gay presents the spirit of African-Asendant Womyn and girls finding God in self. Her works share personal memories, counter-narratives, mythologies, and the expansion of the Ethno-imaginary.

Gay's installation *Daughters of Metropolitan* (2022) reimagines spaces where Black girls can play. Be it playing "dress up" or "making pretend," there is a vitality and exuberance when children play. When children play, you cannot reach them; they are elsewhere—Gay places Black girls within whimsical landscapes evoked by her childhood memories. *Metropolitan Avenue*, where the artist once played with friends, provides an ideal Utopian backdrop for her feminine figures to engage within ephemeral spaces that evolve and change similar to the neighborhood's avenues and streets.

Young Black girls wear swimsuits, sometimes draped with door knocker earrings and a gold link chain often found at beauty supply stores. They place deer head masks and hybridized figures on top of their heads and shoulders. These are symbols of strength, grace, wisdom, power, and the ability to swim in the deep waters of blighted, forgotten, and disappearing communities.

Gay's selection of color, imagery, and pattern offers depth to her narrative, adding to its multiple layers. The orange homes engage viewers in this imaginary world. Orange, the color of joy in

Eastern philosophy, also signifies safety and caution in the U.S., where it serves as the primary color for road structures and signs.

Present within their make-believe world, two figures pause, gazing directly with outside observers; they appear to possess an earned knowledge beyond the experience of their years. While their striped bathing suits align the girls with 'othered' groups universally, their play provides them with power and positivity. They surpass black-and-white notions of human judgment by existing within a world of their design— dancing, roaming, and holding tight their hybrid companions who yield to the comfort of their embrace.

Gay sets the scene against a repeating pattern of rosette-style motifs, enhancing the intended reference of her hybrid figures to the magical and the divine. The Venetian premiere of this work complements her extensive study of global textiles and European imagery of the African *moro*.

Gay holds a B.A. from the Savannah College of Art and Design and an M.F.A. from Georgia State University. She lives in her native city of Atlanta, Georgia, where she actively engages within the art community.

Shanequa Gay | Artist + Shannon Morris | Curator

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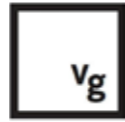
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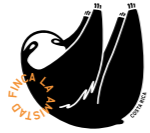


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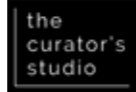
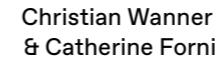
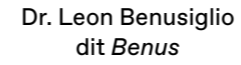
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