

# 'Armenity': the Armenian diaspora at the Venice Biennale 2015

On the occasion of the 100th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia has dedicated its pavilion to the artists of the Armenian diaspora.

Curated by Adelina Cüberyan von Fürstenberg, the concept of Armenty implies the notion of displacement and territory, justice and reconciliation, ethos and resilience. Regardless of their place of birth, the selected artists carry within their identity the memory of their origins. Through their talent and willpower, these grandchildren of survivors of the Armenian Genocide - the first genocide of the 20th Century - rebuilt a "transnational assembly" from the remnants of a shattered identify. Their ingrained concern for memory, justice and reconciliation skillfully transcends notions of territory, borders and geography. Whether they were born in Beirut, Lyon, Los Angeles, or Cairo and wherever they may reside, these global citizens constantly question and reinvent their 'armenty'.

Swiss citizen of Armenian origin, Adelina Cüberyan von Fürstenberg is a renowned international curator. A pioneer in the field, she is known for broadening contemporary art to include a multicultural approach. She is the founder and first Director of the Centre d'Art Contemporain de Genève and the former Director of MAGASIN - Centre National d'Art Contemporain in Grenoble. In 1996 she founded ART for The World, an NGO working with contemporary art, independent cinema and human rights.

'Armenty' is being held in a setting of special significance for the Armenian diaspora. It was on the Island of San Lazzaro, located between San Marco and the Lido and facing the Giardini of the Biennale, that in 1717 the Armenian monk Mekhitar established the Mekhitarist Order. It was here that

in the early 19th century Lord Byron studied the Armenian language. Many important works of European literature and religious texts were first translated into Armenian on this scenic island. Over its three-hundred years history the Monastery of San Lazzaro with its gardens, former print shop, cloisters, museum and library, has helped to preserve Armenia's unique cultural heritage, much of which might otherwise have been lost.

### **Participating contemporary artists from the Armenian Diaspora**

Haig Aivazian, Lebanon/France; Nigol Bezjian, Syria/USA; Anna Boghiguan Egypt/Canada; Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, Turkey; Silvina Der-Meguerditchian, Argentina/Germany; Rene Gabri & Ayreen Anastas, Iran/Palestine/USA; Mekhitar Garabedian, Belgium; Aikaterini Gegisian, Greece; Yervant Gianikian & Angela Ricci Lucchi, Italy; Aram Jibilian, USA; Nina Katchadourian, USA/Finland; Melik Ohanian, France; Mikayel Ohanjanyan, Armenia/Italy; Rosana Palazyan, Brasil; Sarkis, Turkey/France; Hrair Sarkissian, Syria/UK.

Opening: May 6, 2015 from 7 to 9 pm

Mekhitarist Monastery on the island of San Lazzaro degli Armeni

*[Photo: Courtesy of the Mekhitarist Monastery of the Island of San Lazzaro, Venice]*