

**Holy See Pavilion Dossier**  
**Biennale Arte 2024 - Pavilion of the Holy See**  
**Venice-Giudecca Women's Prison**

**Title:** With My Eyes

**Commissioner:** His Eminence Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See

**Curators:** Chiara Parisi and Bruno Racine

**Artists:** Maurizio Cattelan, Bintou Dembélé, Simone Fattal, Claire Fontaine, Sonia Gomes, Corita Kent, Marco Perego & Zoe Saldana, Claire Tabouret

**The Holy See Pavilion** stands as an unprecedented and groundbreaking reality for the **Venice Biennale**, thanks to the physical and conceptual opening of the **Venice-Giudecca Women's Prison**, where art, humanity poetry and the act of caring will be in conversation.

The title of **the Holy See Pavilion** curated by Chiara Parisi and Bruno Racine, "**With My Eyes**", is borrowed from a fragment of poetry that references an ancient sacred text and an Elizabethan poem: "*I love thee not with mine eyes*" (Shakespeare, Sonnet 141) echoing the verses 42.5 of the Book of Job, "*Mine eyes have seen thee.*" A cross-fading that blurs into an action where seeing becomes synonymous of touching with the gaze, of embracing with the eye, of allowing a dialogue between sight and perception.

**The Pavilion** content spans across workshops, installations, dance, cinema, performance and painting. Inside it, everything is the result of an energy that challenges artistic and prison conventions, where pragmatic projects intertwine with the creativity of worlds usually lying parallel, strangers to each other. This concept align perfectly with the urge for the multifaceted dialogue proposed by **Pope Francis**.

Words and images come together through the women inmates, artists and poets contributing to the artistic and historical narrative of the place. The visit to the **Pavilion**, available upon reservation only, is a guided tour led by the women inmates. This project opens unprecedented perspectives on social and artistic dynamics, challenging prejudices and conventions, reflecting on power structures within art and institutions.

**The Holy See Pavilion** establishes itself as a place of life and encounter, a cosmos where artistic and social norms are reinterpreted, representing a heterotopia that reflects and subverts traditional spaces.

The meeting with artists and curators, moderated by **Hans Ulrich Obrist** enriches the project, interlacing voices and stories.

### **Maurizio Cattelan's Project for the Pavilion:**

**Maurizio Cattelan's** work involves the presence of a large outdoor artwork on the facade of the Chapel that is striking in both its size and emotional impact.

The artist will contribute to the special issue dedicated to the **Venice Biennale** of "L'Osservatore di Strada ", an editorial proposal that will feature a direct collaboration with women prisoners, transforming them into the actors of the editorial process.

### **Simone Fattal's Project for the Pavilion:**

The project by **Simone Fattal** is a journey of storytelling and rediscovery of the self through the creation of enameled lava plaques turned into the canvas in to which poems, narrations, verses by the inmates of the House are woven. This will create a visual dialogue that welcomes visitors from the moment they enter the Women's Prison.

### **Claire Tabouret' s Pavilion Project**

**Claire Tabouret** crafts **portraits of inmates as children** and of their younger loved ones. Each portrait is a reminder of dignity, identity, and beauty: art becomes a vehicle for personal rediscovery, a way to see themselves through a different lens, celebrating their uniqueness. The portraits, inspired by real photographs provided by the female inmates, arise as symbols of rediscovery and reappropriation of the self, and will be installed in a large picture gallery, hosted in the room adjacent to the Chapel.

### **Claire Fontaine's Pavilion Project**

In the central courtyard of Giudecca Prison, **Claire Fontaine** features "We are with you in the night ", an invitation to break free from symbolic boundaries and live free, even from prejudice. The artwork dialogues with a second light installation, "White Sight", located at the end of the entrance corridor. The artist duo proposes the experience of the "**Feldenkrais method**" to female inmates as a way to practice mindfulness through movement.

### **Bintou Dembélé's Project for the Pavilion**

Choreographer and dancer Bintou Dembélé brings an energetic and vibrant choreography, especially created for the **women prisoners and for their participation**. The choreography gives life to a performance that celebrates resistance and independence, featuring stories of liberation to support female strength, and stories of prohibition, in which women cannot express themselves.

### **Sonia Gomes' Project for the Pavilion**

**Sonia Gomes** presents an installation consisting of suspended sculptures, entitled "Sinfonia". The artwork is a balancing act between the theatrical balconies and confessionals of the Chapel inside the Prison and sets up a symbolic bridge that connects the original function of the place, the Baroque convent for "reconverted" women, with the current life of the Prison House and the stories of women from all over the world. The addition of a sound installation further enriches the experience and helps to create an even more immersive environment.

### **Corita Kent's Pavilion Project**

The cafeteria area will see on display the artworks of pop art icon Corita Kent, also known as Sister Mary Corita, artist, activist, and pacifist. Known as a "joyful revolutionary," her works serve as vehicles to spread an artistic message that combines aesthetics and social mission.

### **Marco Perego & Zoe Saldana's Pavilion Project**

Artist and director **Marco Perego** and American film star **Zoe Saldana** present a short film shot in the heart of the Venice-Giudecca Women's Prison, plunging the viewer into an introspective journey in pursuit of the deepest meaning of freedom. The extraordinary and intense participation of **the inmates as actresses** make the production a very special event, a unique and transcendent human experience. The film will be presented in the inmates' meeting room.

### **Pavilion catalogue: designed by Irma Boom**

The catalogue of the Holy See Pavilion, commissioned to the outstanding creativity of **Irma Boom**, is shaped as a further work of art within the curatorial project, through the description of the "before" and the "after," up to the presentation of the memorable visit that Pope Francis will pay to the Pavilion. His Holiness will be the first Pope in history to visit the Venice Biennale.