

**Holy See Pavillion at the  
19th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia 2025  
will be *Opera Aperta* in the Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex**

**10 May - 23 November 2025**

The **Dicastery for Culture and Education** takes part in the 19th. International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale Di Venezia by presenting for the first time the **Holy See Pavilion** in the **Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex** in Castello, which the City of Venice has granted a concession until 2028 for the Holy See's cultural activities. The project, entitled “*Opera Aperta*”, is curated by **Marina Otero Verzier**, architect, former curator and researcher, and **Giovanna Zabotti**, artistic director of Fondaco Italia and former curator of the Venice Pavilion, in collaboration with two of the most important international architecture studios specialised in **responsible construction and collective care**: **Tatiana Bilbao ESTUDIO** (Tatiana Bilbao, Alba Cortés, Isaac Solis Rosas, Helene Schauer) based in Mexico City, and **MAIO Architects** (Anna Puigjaner, Guillermo Lopez, Maria Charneco, Alfredo Lérida) in Barcelona.

*“The Holy See Pavillion will be a pavilion-parable – explains **His Eminence Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça** – The title “Opera Aperta” presents it as a construction site, as an ongoing process in which everyone is invited to collaborate. At the same time that the walls and architectural details of the building are being repaired, neighbourhood relations and intergenerational hospitality will also be repaired, simultaneously reconstructing physical space and social space. Our wish is that this pavilion-parable may give concrete expression, in the field of architecture, to the prophetic intuitions contained in the encyclical *Laudato si'* and become an active workshop of human and community intelligence, bringing together reason and affection, professionalism and conviviality, research and ordinary life”.*

During the seven months of its opening, the Pavilion of the Holy See will be a space in **continuous evolution** and will host, alongside that of architecture studios, the collective work associations and living realities of Venice, which are invited to share their skills and competences to create a **project open to the entire community**, which enhances the existing world and those who inhabit it.

*“Opera Aperta is a collaborative process involving an international team and local collectives” - says curator **Marina Otero Verzier** - “Together, we claim repair as a creative and radical practice that transcends architectural form to nurture communities, ecosystems and the fragile bonds between them. By revitalising an existing structure, we value its cracks and losses not as flaws to be hidden, but as openings to new possibilities. These thresholds invite us to reimagine the relationship between past and future, growth and decay, rupture and*

*regeneration. Opera Aperta honours the stratified histories embedded in place, while creating space for those who will come after us."*

*"We envision this opportunity as a way to place architecture as an act of care" - explains **Tatiana Bilbao Estudio** - "to recognise the urgency of caring for the environment and communities in these uncertain times, and to instill in our profession a renewed sense of purpose." On the same track **MAIO Architects** continues, "Our work explores spatial systems designed to evolve over time, promoting care, collaboration and interdependence between diverse individuals and communities. Opera Aperta takes this vision to its fullest expression, acting as an experimental workshop where new ways of living and relating to architecture take shape."*

*"Opera Aperta" therefore suggests a living practice of **repair** and **collective care**, at a time of ecological precariousness and accelerated consumption. Over the months, this project will give new life to the Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex in the Castello district, focusing on what can be preserved, reused and reactivated, promoting a sustainable and ethical architecture. This repair process is developed on several levels, by engaging different groups and heterogeneous forms of work to create a **dynamic** and **collectively managed space**, through the work of **local artisans** joined by people eager to learn and preserve ancient knowledge, ensuring their knowledge to remains active.*

*According to curator **Giovanna Zabotti**, "In a world where fractures and divisions seem to be amplifying, "Opera Aperta" is proposed as an act of "restoration" and community intelligence. For Venice and its inhabitants, residents and citizens from all over the world who visit and experience it, it represents an important occasion. This Pavilion will not only be a physical space, but a meeting place where music becomes a universal language capable of uniting people across cultural barriers. Every "restoration" is an act of social justice, because it restores value to what has been neglected, offering a second chance not only to buildings, but also to the people living in them.*

The **UIA - International University of Art** will conduct a series of restoration and redevelopment workshops **two afternoons a week**, ensuring that traditional building techniques are transferred to new generations. Participants will receive a UIA diploma, reinforcing a long-term commitment to the preservation of these skills. All this in collaboration with Lares, which will carry out the restoration of the monumental part, which will be visible to the public Monday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

In addition to restoration, "Opera Aperta" promotes **cultural exchange** through shared meals and music. A community kitchen, managed by the cooperative **NONSOLOVERDE**, will welcome Biennale visitors and local residents twice a week, creating a space for dialogue, discussion and involvement around shared meals. The **Conservatorio di Musica "Benedetto Marcello"** of Venice, on the other hand, will support local musicians by offering **rehearsal rooms**, storage space and availability of instruments (including harp, piano and upright piano)

inside the Pavilion. These facilities will be accessible during weekends, with the possibility for musicians to book the room online to play, following time slots of one hour each.

From this perspective, buildings are not meant to be fixed entities, but as evolving ecosystems, shaped by social and material heritage. *Opera Aperta*, therefore, will not be a finished work, but a place of continuous exchange, involvement and participation, deeply rooted in the community.

The presence of the Holy See for this edition of the Biennale Architettura and for the next edition of the Biennale Arte will once again see the support, as main partner, of **Intesa Sanpaolo**, which has chosen to support the Dicastery for Culture and Education in this artistic and human journey.

For **Michele Coppola, Executive Art, Culture and Historical Heritage Director - Intesa Sanpaolo, General Manager Gallerie d'Italia**, *"the collaboration between Intesa Sanpaolo and the Dicastery for Culture and Education develops from a solid common vision, which recognises in art an extraordinary tool for tackling contemporary social challenges. In this logic, we are pleased to renew our support to the Holy See Pavilion at the Biennale 2025, which will propose a project for the regeneration of the spaces of Santa Maria Ausiliatrice to give life to an open place for sharing and creativity, also described in a catalogue published by Allemandi"*.

The project will also count on the support of the **dst group**, a Portuguese group operating in the engineering and construction sectors.

### Useful information:

Holy See Pavilion at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia

**Venue:** Santa Maria Ausiliatrice Complex, Fondamenta S. Gioacchin, 450

**Dates:** 10 May - 23 November 2025

**Press Preview:** 7-8-9 May 2025

**Opening:** 9 May 2025, 6.30 pm, by invitation only

**Hours:** 11am-7pm (from 10 May to 28 September) and 10am-6pm (from 30 September to 23 November), closed on Mondays

**Catalogue:** Allemandi Editore

### Colophon

Padiglione della Santa Sede alla 19. Mostra Internazionale di Architettura - La

Biennale di Venezia 2025

Santa Maria Ausiliatrice, Fondamenta S. Gioacchin, 450

**Title:** *Opera Aperta*

**Commissioner:** Sua Eminenza Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, Prefetto del Dicastero per la Cultura e l'Educazione della Santa Sede

**Curators:** Marina Otero Verzier and Giovanna Zabotti

**Art Direction and Architectural Design:** Tatiana Bilbao ESTUDIO (Tatiana Bilbao, Alba Cortés, Isaac Solis Rosas, Helene Schauer) e MAIO Architects (Anna Puigjaner, Guillermo Lopez, Maria Charneco, Alfredo Lérica)

**Graphic design:** Estudio Herrera (Maricris Herrera)

**Organisation:** Dicastery for Culture and Education of The Holy See, His Eminence Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, His Excellency Monsignor Paul Tigh and Cristiano Grisogoni

**Executive Production:** COR arquitectos (Roberto Cremascoli, Edison Okumura, Marta Rodrigues)

**Production coordination:** Erika Pisciotta and Camilla Donantoni

**Local coordination:** Raul Betti

**Local architectural design studio:** Valentina Vettori

**Construction management:** Mattia Marzaro e Nicola Picco (restoration)

**Security planning:** Davide Cassandro

**Electric system:** Fabio Cappellato

#### **Institutional partner**

Patriarcato di Venezia



#### **Main Partner**

Intesa Sanpaolo



#### **Partner**

Dstgroup





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