



THE HOLY SEE AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

In the Beginning

CREATION, UNCREATION, RE-CREATION

The Pontifical Council for Culture holds contemporary art at the heart of its interests for it is one of the most important cultural expressions of recent decades. The Council is promoting the Holy See's very first participation in the *Biennale Arte*, a project that is not only extraordinarily innovative, but also responds to its own objectives, that is instituting and promoting occasions of dialogue within an ever broader and diversified context.

For this first occasion, we have chosen a theme that is fundamental for culture and for Church tradition. It is also a source of inspiration for many whose works that have left a mark on the history of art: the story told in the Book of Genesis.

Specifically, the first eleven chapters have been chosen, as they are dedicated to the mystery of man's origins, the introduction of evil into history, and our hope and future projects after the devastation symbolically represented by the Flood. Wide-ranging discussions on the multiplicity of the themes offered by this inexhaustible source led to three thematic areas being chosen with which the artists have engaged: *Creazione* (Creation), *De-Creazione* (Uncreation), and the New Man or *Ri-Creazione* (Recreation).

The theme of Creation concentrates on the first part of the biblical narrative, when the creative act is introduced through the Word and the breath of the Holy Spirit, generating a temporal and spatial dimension, and all forms of life including human beings.

Uncreation, on the other hand, invites us to focus on the choice of going against God's original plan through forms of ethical and material destruction, such as original sin and the first murder (Cain and Abel), inviting us to reflect on the "inhumanity of man." The ensuing violence and disharmony trigger a new start for humanity, which begins with the punitive/purifying event of the Flood.

In this biblical story, the concept of the voyage, and the themes of seeking and hope, represented by the figure of Noah and his family and then by Abraham and his progeny, eventually lead to the designation of a New Man and a renewed creation, where a profound internal change gives new meaning and vitality to existence.

Clearly, each of these aspects was only a starting point for the selected artists. A vital, rich, and elaborate dialogue has been established with them and is a sign of a renewed, modern patronage. To them, my most heartfelt thanks.

Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi

President

(Presentation of the Holy See's Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, 2015, more info)