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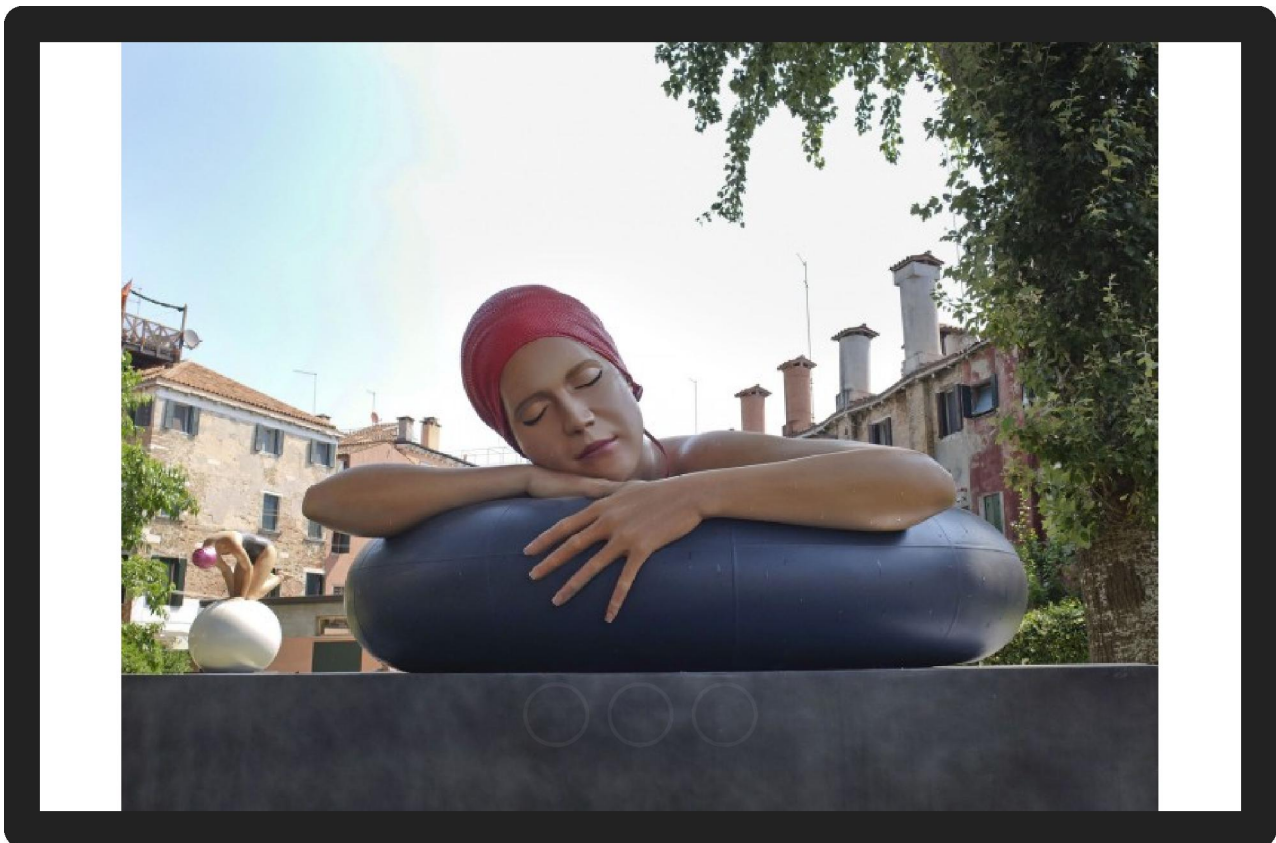
My 7 exhibitions to see in Venice during the 2017 Biennale

By [arttrav](#) on Jun 21, 2017 with [2 Comments](#)

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If you're in **Venice** for the Biennale in summer 2017, you'll also want to hit up some of the many shows taking place around town. Over a three-day weekend we dedicated 1.5 days to the giardini and arsenale and the rest of the time to other exhibits. With all that's going on in Venice art-wise, there isn't a really easy way to find a list or choose what to see. I probably missed out on a few great shows, but below are some that I saw and liked. And they're not *all* contemporary!

Carole Feuerman / Giardino Marinessa



Good art changes the way you feel. If I feel something, then I try to place it or explain it, emotionally, rationally or historically. To me, the most beautiful, charming and calming images I saw at the whole Biennale are these over-life-sized hyper-realist figures of swimmers by British artist Carole Feuerman. The artist says: "While their outward appearance is often one of beauty and tranquility, their faces mask a deeper meaning of heroism, endurance, balance and triumph." Displayed in a public garden, they are everything that is good about

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art. These works are separate yet integral part of the exhibit *Personal Structures: Open Borders* mentioned below.

Damien Hirst / Palazzo Grassi



Damien Hirst and collector François Pinault will be laughing all the way to the bank with this (mostly) critically-acclaimed masterpiece that is also pretty appealing to the general public. *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* displays the purported underwater find of a shipwreck full of artworks within a museological framework. An Egyptian pharaoh jostles with a narwhal horn, genitalia-shaped shells, gold (fake?) coins, a silver transformer doll, a lapis lazuli Neptune bust and room after room of relics from various periods of art history. The display cases and wall texts are as much part of the artworks as the pieces themselves (which of course Hirst doesn't make himself, anyway). It's the kind of gigantic hoax Banksy would pull if he had as much money as Hirst. This show makes fun of everything about the art world, from curatorial practices to the viewer who paid 18 euros to see it.

Serenissime Trame / Galleria Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro

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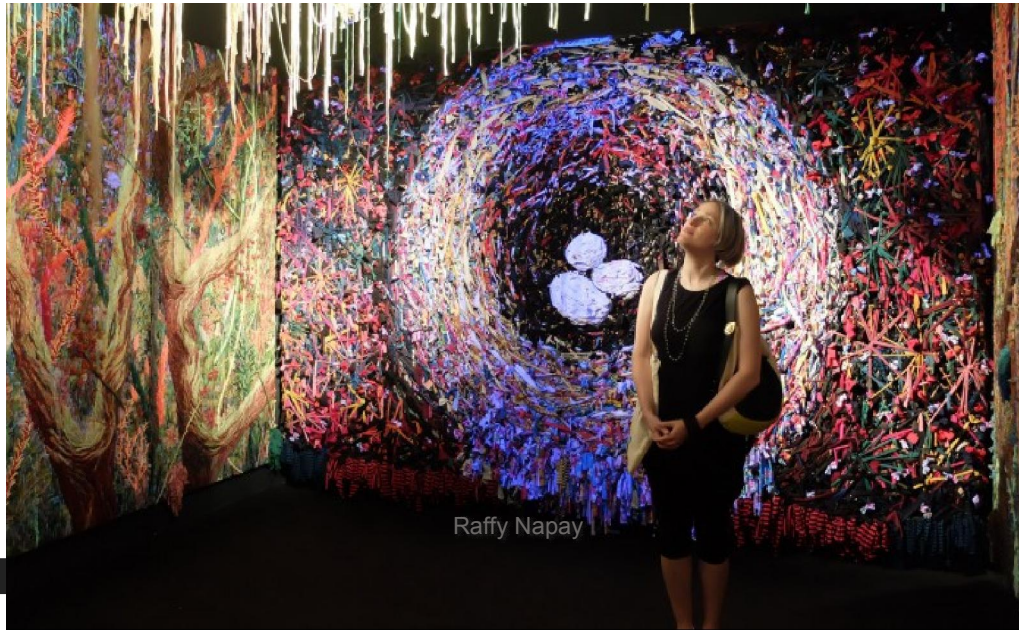


Carpets in paintings

You didn't think I would skip out on the Renaissance, did you? Just because Venice is the home of the Biennale doesn't mean you have to dedicate yourself solely to contemporary art during your visit. The Ca' d'Oro is one of the most spectacularly ornate exemplars of 15th-century architecture, and you can visit the palazzo's impressive entrance with the most amazing inlaid marble floor you'll ever see. Then, head upstairs to the temporary exhibition dedicated to the representation of Persian carpets in Venetian Renaissance art. You won't be disappointed. You may have never noticed this detail in paintings, but they were a way of demonstrating the wealth of a portrait sitter or of a home setting. Painters like Lorenzo Lotto and Vittorio Carpaccio usually owned or had access to one or two carpets that would show up repeatedly in their paintings, in great detail. The carpet patterns became so famous from the paintings that they took the name of the artists. I was thrilled to see the two media together for the first time.

Personal Structures: Open Borders / Palazzo Bembo and Palazzo Moro

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If you don't have time to do the official Biennale but want something very similar, for free, go see this vast exhibition on the theme "Open Borders" curated by the European Cultural Center / GAA Foundation through two of their palazzi, with over 200 artists displayed – many of whom are young and still unknown. The works are loosely grouped around reflections about time, space and existence, rather than being forced to fit into a singular narrative. The exhibition reflects the organizing entity's founding goal of creating a platform for dialogue amongst artists, cultural exchange and international mobility in the arts. The stand-out work IMO? Raffy Napay's *Will it play its wrath on earth, or nurture our survival* is a hand-embroidered, immersive paradisiacal garden that is a joy to experience. Also worthy of note is Simhyang's discreet multi-layered embroidery on paper that, in a weird Korean way, this has a je-ne-sais-quoi of Giorgione to it, and I'm seeing a thread theme that sews its way over to the main Biennale exhibit.

Loris Cecchini / Fondaco dei Tedeschi

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Loris Cecchini

The installation *Waterbones* by Loris Cecchini, represented by Galleria Continua, consists of thousands of organically shaped metal modules that seem to grow on the wall and ceiling of the 4th-floor space at the top of the Fondaco. It looks like the set of one of the planets that Star Trek adventurers might land on. I like it.

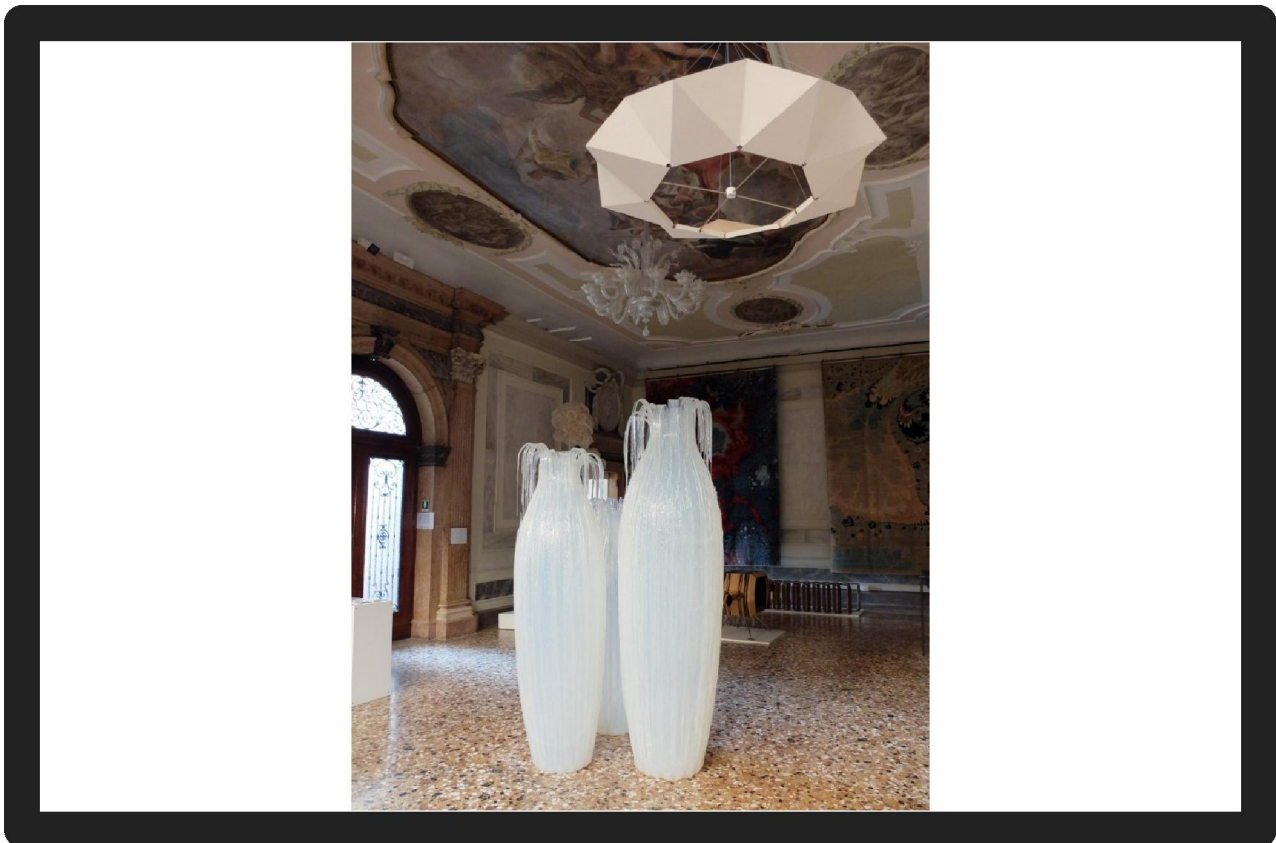


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But to be truthful, the real reason to not miss this free show (conveniently also open later than most) is to go into T at Fondaco dei Tedeschi, the new department store opened in late 2016 by DFS (an Asia-based luxury group). The beautiful restoration and attention to detail in every aspect, as well as the rather nice mostly made-in-Italy merchandise, are worth checking out. While I love the red escalators, it's worth taking the elevator too, because rather than standard floor buttons they are gigantic red buttons like the emergency stop you want to push on every train. Just beyond the show, go out on the panoramic terrace for one of the highest, freest, views of the city.

Venice Design / Palazzo Michiel (Brusa)



Art and design go hand in hand (as do art and architecture). In the context of each of these Biennali, the European Cultural Centre dedicates one of its exhibition spaces, the first floor of Palazzo Michiel, to emerging designers. Rooms are curated according to loose themes and the objects displayed are for the most part prototypes that are both for sale and intended for eventual production. There are a few items I would want in my house, which is one of the ways I judge both art and design (with apologies to the artists who never want to hear "it'd look good over my couch"). In a room facing the Grand Canal, curators have placed various items made of wood, with the nice connection to the fact that all of Venice is built on wooden stilts. Steen Higham has made a most gorgeous bookcase out of wood from a super-inaccessible part of the highlands of Honduras that I would have bought had it not cost €20k (I'd take it in more normal wood, too). Next to my bookcase I'd want a breathing lamp by Kinetura.

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Shirin Neshat / Museo Correr



Photo <http://correr.visitmuve.it/>

The Persian artist, who now lives in the USA, presents two works in photo and video in The Home of My Eyes, an official Biennale collateral event. 55 photographs of diverse people from Azerbaijan, unified visually by frontal photography and dark clothing. She has them use hand gestures reminiscent of Christian art. The artist asked the subjects about their cultural identity and concept of home, and then composed texts, which she inscribed calligraphically on the works along with some poems by a 12th-century Iranian poet. Of course, you wouldn't go into the Correr without visiting at least some of this collection's highlights, in particular the Pinacoteca with Venetian paintings from the 14th century onwards including a whole lot of Bellini and Carpaccio. Book lovers should also visit the connected monumental rooms of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.

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Gisella Pisano • 5 months ago

Got a slight shock on that first gallery. I thought it was a real girl. Haha! I love that Damien Hirst gallery. It has that post-modern Pirates of the Caribbean feel to it. So cool! And you certainly look lovely in that black dress. ^_^

But wow, so many art exhibits in Venice. I'm so jealous! I barely even have time to visit local art galleries here in my city because I've been so busy. Thanks for making me even more envious that you're living in Italy. Hehe. :P

Seriously though, thanks for sharing this! May you visit even more galleries so I can pretend in my head that I'm there, enjoying the Biennale 2017 myself. :D

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arttrav Mod → Gisella Pisano • 5 months ago

Thank you so much, Giselle, for your comment.

Let me tell you, the concentration of things to see in Venice right now is mind-boggling. I do love that first installation, they don't call the movement hyper-realist for nothing!!

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It's a privilege to be able to dedicate a few days to seeing art - if it's any comfort, in my

thanks

Who is ArtTrav?



Hi, I'm Alexandra Korey and my goal is to make art accessible. I'm from Toronto, Canada, but live in Florence, and I put my PhD in art history to use in arts marketing, blogging and social media.

ArtTrav, a blog about expat life, art and travel in Italy and Europe, has been online since 2004. [Want to know more?](#)

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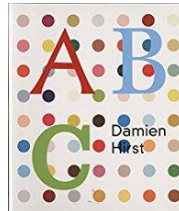
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Shirin Neshat: Facing History

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Damien Hirst: ABC Book

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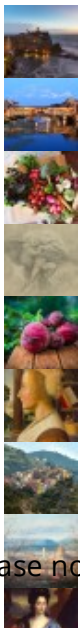
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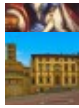
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