

Camilla Salvaneschi**The Magazine *la biennale*: Articulating a Model
for Periodicals Published by Recurring Exhibitions****Abstract**

The first biennial that published a magazine was the Venice Biennale. The magazine *la biennale di Venezia* was published from 1950 to 1971. It was conceived as an institutional instrument, to keep the audience of the show informed about the activities of the Biennial during the year. The magazine had the mission to engage in the activities organized by the institution, and discuss and examine all the disciplines at the core of the Biennials program, which meant not only art, but also cinema, fashion, music and theatre. The magazine *la biennale* pursued the same international intents as the exhibition, becoming a site of network and exchange between different nations, as well as a medium to foster local and international critical dialogue. During the almost twenty years of its existence the publication evolved from informative instrument, which included lists of artworks sold during the editions of the biennial, alongside lists of new acquisitions of the biennial's archive, into a container for critical thought and theory.

Keywords

Venice Biennale, Rivista La Biennale, Umbro Apollonio, Art Magazines, Art Periodicals

The Magazine *la biennale*: Articulating a Model for Periodicals Published by Recurring Exhibitions

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When the Biennale was in its 55th year of existence, it finally succeeded in realizing one of the projects, which had been in different periods encouraged, but which for different reasons could not be realised: that of giving life to a periodical that was the official body of the institution.¹

These were the words that in the year 1950 Giovanni Ponti, the president of the Biennale² used to announce the launch of the Biennale's new periodical publication: *la biennale di Venezia*.³ *Rivista trimestrale di arte cinema teatro musica moda dell'ente biennale*.⁴ The magazine ran from July 1950 until 1971 and during its lifetime pursued the same international intentions as the exhibition. It aimed to become a site of network and exchange between different nations, as well as a means of fostering local and international critical dialogue. The magazine *la biennale*, throughout its two distinct periods under the directorship of two different editors, Elio Zorzi and Umbro Apollonio, exemplifies the shift from the magazine of the exhibition as promotional tool into a means of research and practice actively participating in the making of the exhibition and contemporary art at large.

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In a letter from Ponti to the President of the Istituto Federale delle Casse di Risparmio delle Venezie, a Venetian banker, dated January 31, 1953. Unless explicitly cited otherwise, all references and quotes from the documents about the magazine *la biennale*, come from the Serie 4.13 Rivista "la biennale" 1950-1971 (corrispondenza), Archivio Storico Arte Contemporanea – hereinafter La Biennale di Venezia – ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza. All texts, notes, documents, articles are translated by the author, unless otherwise noted.

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Giovanni Ponti, "Inizio*", *la biennale*, no. 1 (July 1950): 4.

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For consistency throughout this article, I have chosen to keep the title of the magazine *la biennale* in lower case, as presented on the cover and first page of the magazine. The translation in English would read: *la biennale di Venezia*. *Quarterly Magazine of Art Cinema Theatre Music Fashion of the Biennial Institution*.

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On the magazine *la biennale*, see Giovanni Bianchi, "Riviste a Venezia negli anni cinquanta: 'La Biennale' ed 'Evento'", and Giuseppina Dal Canton, "Riviste d'arte a Venezia negli anni sessanta: 'la biennale di Venezia' e 'la vernice'", in *Riviste d'Arte fra Ottocento ed Età Contemporanea*, ed. Gianni Carlo Sciolla (Milano: Skira, 2003), respectively 251-270 and 271-281. See also Francesca Castellani, "Keywords on *la biennale*: The strategies of a journal in the Rodolfo Pallucchini years", in *Starting from Venice: Studies on the Biennale*, ed. Clarissa Ricci (Milano: et al., 2010), 179-184.

I will propose a reading of the magazine *la biennale* looking at its deep links to the Biennial institution, and how their histories intertwined for the entire lifespan of the magazine.⁵ By identifying the features that distinguish art magazines from recurring exhibitions and illuminating their commonality I hope to explore how they communicate, relate, and affect each other. First of all, the magazine and the biennial are key players in the art world capable of legitimizing contemporary art, and secondly they are both periodical and characterised by composite temporalities. These two major similarities make it worth comparing and relating the features that define the two, even before seeing how they combine in the publication of what I argue is the exhibition magazine.

Since *la biennale* may be seen as the first example of this specific magazine, it can provide information about the origins and characteristics of the genre, which stems from both the promotional print materials published by art institutions and the contemporary art magazine. Thus, I will engage with questions such as: Could *la biennale* be considered the ancestor of the exhibition magazine and what are its features? What is the relationship between the magazine and the exhibition, in this case the Venice Biennale? How has it evolved in time?

Finally, I will look at the context that led to the launch of *la biennale* and how it worked to legitimise its institution and respond to its own contemporaneity. It evolved from a promotional tool into a critical organism, able to renovate itself – sometimes anticipating changes that the Biennale itself needed to undergo – and eventually published and conducted thorough research on the artistic and cultural fields, just as much as the most recent periodical projects foregrounded by Documenta and other recurring exhibitions.

During the boom of biennials in the 1990s,⁶ recurring exhibitions such as Documenta and Manifesta, began publishing magazines as well as the expected exhibition catalogue.⁷ By launching their own magazines, these recurring exhibitions reinstated the important and direct link with their audience that characterised the relation between the first periodicals published by art academies in the eighteenth century Germany, soon after they originated in the form of literary pamphlets in the French Salons.⁸ In this context, magazines were initially a print platform for the discussion of art and exhibitions and primarily concerned with keeping conversations flowing across time and space between the art critics and

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The exhibition was declared *ente autonomo* (autonomous agency) by the City of Venice in 1928. See Enzo di Martino, *History of the Venice Biennale: 1895- 2005: visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, music, theatre* [1995], trans. Barbara Trotto and Susan Candy (Venezia: Papiro Arte, 2005), and di Martino, Paolo Rizzi, *Storia della Biennale 1895-1982* (Milano: Electa, 1982). See also Maria Mimita Lamberti, "International Exhibitions in Venice" [1982], *OBOE Journal* I, no. 1 (2020): 26-45.

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For an analysis of the proliferation of biennials all over the world, see Anthony Gardner and Charles Green, *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta: The Exhibitions that created Contemporary Art* (London: Wiley and Blackwell, 2016); and Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal, and Sloveig Ovstebo eds., in *The Biennial Reader* (Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz, 2010).

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There is a small number of perennial exhibitions who have published a magazine. Catherine David published three issues of the journal *documenta X documents* before and during Documenta X; for Documenta 12, in 2007 three issues of the *Documenta Magazine* were published, and for the 14th edition Adam Szymczyk appropriated the Greek magazine *South as a State of Mind* transforming it into the *documenta 14 Journal* for four issues. In 2003, the itinerant Manifesta Biennial, launched the *Manifesta Journal*. Another European example is *Stages*, published since 2012 by the Liverpool Biennial, while *Noon: An Annual Journal of Visual Culture and Contemporary Art* was published between 2009 and 2016 by the Gwangju Biennial.

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Amongst the first pamphlets that appeared during the French Salons is *La Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, a biweekly cultural newsletter distributed between 1753 and 1790. It was written and produced by Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm, and included contributions from Denis Diderot. To access the *Correspondance Littéraire* see <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/grimms-correspondance-litt%C3%A9raire>, accessed September 2018.

the audience.⁹ Since then, the serial art magazine gradually evolved into one of the key arenas for the critique of contemporary art and its legitimisation.¹⁰ However, from the twentieth century onwards, they began to provide new opportunities for artists preserving the traces of ephemeral meetings and conversations. Artists were able to correspond and collaborate over distances, to circulate their work and ideas more easily with an increasingly international art world, not strictly tied to the art museum or gallery. The magazine reached its peak as an artistic form first in the 1920s when it was adopted by a number of avantgarde movements and then again between the 1960s and 1970s. At that time the innovative curatorial practices of the dealer Seth Siegelaub recognised that the printed page was becoming an important space to showcase an artist's work. It had become the perfect alternative space for the dematerialised practices of conceptual artists, many of whom had adopted the medium to make their work accessible to a larger audience.¹¹ Furthermore, Siegelaub foresaw the magazine's capacity to become a primary site of information on and for art and a favored medium for the circulation and dissemination of artworks, for its ability to transcend space and time.¹²

By its nature, the magazine is a medium in constant flux and evolution since each issue is followed by another one. Its instrumental role as a network site remains unaltered. It is capable of creating and circulating local and international critical dialogue, mediating debates and discussions with the public, and bestowing both artistic and institutional legitimization.¹³ Recently, through the emergence of curatorial discourse and discursive exhibitions, the magazine has also become a platform for research around contemporary art, curating and the exhibition. Siegelaub's exhibition practices could be seen as anticipating this shift, which saw the magazine become a site of research and information for artists and curators alike, similar to the catalogue. However, unlike the catalogue, it has been privileged for its cheaper aesthetic and facilitated distribution which led to the birth of a new genre of art periodicals, published by recurring exhibitions, such as biennials and triennials and which I call here, the exhibition magazine. The relation between the exhibition magazine and its institution is already doubly potent, since both magazines and recurring exhibitions are periodic formats and, as will be discussed throughout this article, share a distinct relationship to contemporaneity and time. The exhibition magazine, because of the shorter interval between issues, has its origin in the idea of promoting the institution and keeping the audience engaged during the two (or more) years of pause between one edition of the exhibition and the following.

The exhibition magazine has also become an important vehicle for curators to document the process of making the exhibition. In the case of a periodic

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According to Habermas the role of the art critic as "spokesmen for the public", is to lead the viewers to think critically and engage in debates in the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1989).

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On the evolution of the art magazine see, Trevor Fawcett and Clive Phillpot, *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines*. Essays Published for the Art Libraries Society on the Occasion of the International Conference on Art Periodicals and the Exhibition 'The Art Press' at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (London: Art Book, 1976); Gwen Allen, *The Magazine* (London and Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2016); *Artists' Magazines. An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2011); "Art Periodicals and Contemporary Art Worlds (Part I): A Historical Exploration", *Art Margins* 5, no. 3 (October 2016): 35-61; "Art Periodicals and Contemporary Art Worlds, Part 2: Critical Publicity in a Global Context", *Art Margins Online* (October 22, 2016), <https://artmargins.com/art-periodicals-and-contemporary-art-worlds-part-2/>, accessed December 2018.

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Allen, *Artists' Magazines*, 15.

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Ibid., 202. On the practices of conceptual artists see, Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

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Ibid., 24. See also "Network: The Art World Described as a System", *Artforum* 11, no. 1 (September 1972), 28-32; reprinted in Lawrence Alloway, *Network: Art and Complex the Present* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), 4-5.

exhibition it takes between two to several years to see the exhibition in its final stage. In *Thinking Contemporary Curating* Terry Smith points out that the catalogue of a show is sent to a printer several months before the opening night, leaving a gap that “deprives the curator of a chance to learn from the exhibition itself and share that knowledge with the visitor [...] When writing in the catalogue the curator can state only a belief about the subject of the exhibition. No claim to be able to share its *exhibitionary content* can possibly be made”.¹⁴ There may not have been a “widely shared solution” to this inherent conundrum but the exhibition magazine, adopted by a number of curators in the last few decades and whose origin may be found in *la biennale*, might be in itself a possible answer. The magazine has been adopted by only a small number of recurring and widely known exhibitions,¹⁵ like the Venice Biennale, Documenta or Manifesta, but by tracing their most significant features it may be possible to articulate a model for this type of publication and understand its role within the wider context of exhibition practices.

On the Relation Between Magazines and Recurring Exhibitions

Before entering into the core analysis of *la biennale*, I would like to examine the periodical nature of both magazines and recurring exhibitions, which is arguably where their dialogue begins.

Allen describes the magazine as “a type of periodical: it is issued at regular intervals, and exists serially across a span of time”.¹⁶ A similar definition can be applied to the recurring exhibition since they also take place at regular intervals (every two years in the case of a biennial, every three with a triennial, or every five in the case of documenta) and exists serially across a span of time.¹⁷ Both magazines and recurring exhibitions are determined by periodical recurrence and innovation which allow them to enter into direct contact with the specific concerns of the present, but the complexity of the magazine and the biennial’s temporalities may extend from the past to the future, although they exist in the “now”, and specifically react to the present moment. They herald multiple temporalities, considering their past, foreseeing their future, and existing in the present.¹⁸

In 1976, John A. Walker stated that “because of their periodicity, [art magazines] are single issues devoted to contemporary art which provide ‘snapshots’ of art at particular moments. The back runs of such magazines themselves constitute a history of art, albeit an unrefined one,”¹⁹ meaning that when looking back at these magazines one should always consider not only the works captured in the pages of the magazines but also the excluded ones. The recurring exhibition, like the magazine, also provides a snapshot of art at a specific time.²⁰ Walker’s explanation of the magazine’s contemporaneity echoes Lawrence Alloway’s earlier definition of the Venice Biennale as an “entity in time.”²¹ The ability of recurring

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Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2013), 45.

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There have been cases of smaller biennials who have launched a magazine as part of their program. An example is the *Athens Art Review*, established in 2007 for the first Athens Biennale.

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Allen, “Introduction”, *The Magazine*, 12.

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See Terry Smith, “Biennials within the Contemporary Composition”, *Stages*, no. 6 (April 2017), www.biennial.com/journal/issue-6/biennials-within-the-contemporary-composition, accessed May 2019.

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Ibid.

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John A. Walker, “Art periodicals since 1945”, in *The Art Press*: 45.

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Terry Smith, “Biennials within the Contemporary Composition”.

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Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968. From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 14. On the Venice Biennale as entity in time, see also Vittoria Martini, “The Evolution of an Exhibition Model. Venice Biennale as an Entity in Time”, in Federica Martini and Vittoria Martini, *Just Another Exhibition* (Milan: Postmediabooks, 2011), 119-138.

exhibitions to capture art in a specific here and now has contributed to their becoming one of the defining forces in the contemporary art world since the 1990s, as emphasised by Gardner and Green.²² Therefore, studying both art magazines and recurring exhibitions means studying contemporary art in the moment in which it is made, documented, defined and legitimised.

The exhibition magazine embraces both formats since it is a periodical publication born under the umbrella of a recurring exhibition. In this case, the legitimizing power is siphoned back into the parent recurring exhibition. The “snapshots” captured by the exhibition magazine are not only of art, but also of the recurring exhibition in the process of its making, so the magazine documents, defines and legitimises its publisher, the exhibition. Also the archival nature of the magazine²³ becomes crucial while building an understanding of the particular task given to the exhibition magazine, i.e. the ability to historically document contemporary art and the exhibition. As argued by Rosa Martinez, curator of the 2005 edition of the Venice Biennale: “A [biennial] looks beyond the present and into the future [...] Biennials are the most advanced arena for this expanded field precisely because they do not function like museums. Museums are temples for the preservation of memory [...] Biennials are the context for the exploration and questioning of the present.”²⁴ Indeed, recurring exhibitions are ostensibly more concerned with the present and the future rather than with the past, and so often distinguish themselves from the archival practices that are more common for museums, although the establishment of archives, and the growth of publications – magazines, guidebooks, Readers and catalogues – might suggest the opposite. This might be indicative of an anxiety about their own memory and desire to construct a history for themselves. But if the recurring exhibition is attempting to defy its own ephemerality (suggested by the launch of successive exhibitions) it seems an odd solution to adopt the magazine, which is also in itself ephemeral, despite the relative permanence of the printed medium. On this matter, Allen observes that, when subject to artists’ experimentation, “the magazine served as an archive, capturing ephemeral events and conversations in the more permanent medium of print, it was also a document that was itself highly transitory and unfixed, capturing the informal, unguarded quality of the dialogue between artists that had inspired it”.²⁵ So, if the same applies to the recurring exhibition and curatorship, can it be said that the exhibition magazine similarly helps capture the “down time” between the successive exhibitions? It certainly offers a different, more organic and polymorphous way to narrate the recurring exhibition. Indeed, by capturing the intervening time it informs the audience about the upcoming show; its development, the themes discussed, the curators’ choices, the artists, and any other component the editor-curators²⁶ wish to share.²⁷

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See Gardner and Green, *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta*, 3.

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On the relation between magazines and archives, see Camilla Salvaneschi, “Contemporary Art Magazines: The Archive in the Archive”, in *International Perspectives on Publishing Platforms: Image, Object, Text*, ed. Meghan Forbes (New York: Routledge, 2019), 151-173.

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Rosa Martinez interviewed by Carolee Thea, *FOCI: interviews with 10 international curators* (New York: Apex Art Curatorial Program, 2001), here cited from Caroline A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art: World's Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2017), 88.

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Ibid, 178.

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I use the combination of editor-curator to exemplify how the once two distinct roles have recently become intertwined. See Isabelle Graw, “In the Grip of the Market? On the Relative Heteronomy of Art, the Art World, and Art Criticism” in *Contemporary Art and its Commercial Markets. A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios*, eds. Maria Lind and Olav Velthuis (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2012), 183-208.

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With the flourishing of museum and curatorial studies, a range of journals and magazines around the same topics were launched. Periodicals, like the *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, *The Exhibitionist*, *On Curating.org*, explore the role of the curator, the discipline of curating and how it relates to exhibitions.

Finally, as entities in time, magazines and recurring exhibitions are both largely driven by two competing motivations: the first privileges constant flux and evolution in order to respond to the present whilst the second attempts to create and order a history. To epitomise our contemporaneity, magazines and recurring exhibitions must simultaneously understand the present, envisage the future and preserve their past. Although both formats already do so separately, it is interesting to look at what happens when the hybridization of the two formats occurs in the case of the exhibition magazine.

The Birth of *la biennale*: The Magazine as Official Promotional Tool of the Institution

The genesis of the exhibition magazine may be found in *la biennale*, edited between 1950 and 1971 by the Venice Biennale. *la biennale* is arguably the result of a cross-pollution between two different models of magazines. It contains traces of both the magazine published by institutions like art academies, museums, or galleries, and the contemporary art magazine, which provides critical thoughts and information around the latest trends in contemporary art.²⁸ The former model descends from the periodicals of eighteenth century Germany. *The Art Press: Two Centuries of Art Magazines*²⁹ offers an analysis of these early examples, which were for the most part sponsored by art academies and principally concerned with providing news and information. Their mission was to facilitate the reception of art and, as Allen argues, were “geared towards an upper-middle class audience interested in art as pastime or decoration”,³⁰ an audience made of politicians, diplomats, nobles, but also artists, collectors, dealers, and historians. The second model of the exhibition magazine is the contemporary art magazine. While in general, this type of magazine, for its many different formats and features escapes a single definition, the contemporary art magazine that influences the exhibition magazine participates in multiple ways in sustaining the artworld, becoming a space to display and circulate contemporary art theory and criticism, while being intertwined with the art market. Both typologies have a strong connection with their public, the institutional magazine for its need to inform the audience about the ongoing activities, and the contemporary art magazine to inform art professionals about artists, exhibitions and events happening locally and internationally.

Before *la biennale* launched in 1950, there had already been an attempt to maintain the publication of a magazine. This attempt, in the late 1920s,³¹ was coterminous with the founding of the Biennale’s archive: *Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee* (Historic Archive of Contemporary Arts).³² It was a bimonthly newsletter titled *La Biennale. Bollettino dell’Esposizione internazionale d’arte nella*

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See also Walker’s definition of the art magazine: “a magazine which is about art. These are meta-linguistic in character; they consist of writings about art and reproduction of artworks,” in “IV MAGAZINE ART: The Conflation of Art and the Magazine”, *Studio International*, special issue on “Art Magazines”, 192, no. 983 (September-October 1976): 118.

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See *The Art Press*. For further accounts on the birth of the first periodicals see also Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

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Allen, *Artists’ Magazines*, 17.

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After the declaration of the Biennale as autonomous institution in 1928, Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata, President of the Biennale’s commission, transformed the Venetian institution from solely art-oriented to multidisciplinary. He launched the annual International Festival of Contemporary Music in 1930. In 1932 the first edition of the *Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Cinematografica* (International Film festival) took place, and finally, in 1934 the International Theatre Festival was opened. The expansion in such heteronomous fields, alongside its important role in promoting Italian art, led the Biennale to become one of the major Italian tourist attractions. See Di Martino, *History of the Venice Biennale*, and Di Martino and Rizzi, *Storia della Biennale 1895-1982*.

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The archive was established by Domenico Varagnolo in 1928.

città di Venezia (La Biennale. Bulletin of the International Art Exhibition in the city of Venice) that focused on contemporary art. The *Bollettino*'s major promoters were Domenico Varagnolo, founder of the archive, Antonio Maraini, who took the position as Secretary General in 1927 and strongly sustained the editorial ventures of the Biennale, and Elio Zorzi,³³ head of the Biennale's Press Office. In a letter to Varagnolo, Maraini expressed his absolute confidence in the bulletin project: "success will assist us, because a contemporary art magazine in Italy does not exist and is strongly desired".³⁴ This confidence was partly inspired by the fact that it would have risen "under the auspices of an institution that would posit it immediately on the market with an infinite cultural value".³⁵ Since it was intended as an instrument to document, collect, and record the activities of the Biennale its primary goal was to bring the Institution worldwide recognition.³⁶ Internationality was key, so the contents were published "in each one of the languages of the different countries represented in the pavilions, for the part that concerned it".³⁷ This multilingualism was adopted later on by *la biennale*, which included summaries of each article in English, French, and German at the beginning of each issue. While the *Bollettino*'s project counts less than a year of publication, its idea was adopted and published in a similar form in 1934 by the Biennale's Archive as the *Bollettino dell'Archivio Storico dell'Arte Contemporanea. L'Arte nelle Mostre Italiane. (Bulletin of the Historical Archives of Contemporary Art. Art in Italian Exhibitions)*. Similarly, it documented the solo shows held by Italian artists and the prizes won in Italy and abroad. It was sent to museums, galleries, and art academies all over the world, and created an international network of institutions for the Biennale and its artists, the development of which was certainly a great advantage for *la biennale*. The bulletin was suspended between 1941 and 1950, but it was fundamental in opening the roadway for the magazine, which would continue to host the *Bollettino* in a dedicated section.³⁸

In 1950, two decades after the launch of the *Bollettino*, *la biennale* was born. It was a quarterly magazine which had to serve as a tool of information and propaganda, focused on the Biennale and its manifestations. It was edited by the Biennale's Press Office and initially directed by Zorzi. It is no coincidence that the magazine came into being in the 1950s. The decade represents a moment of great cultural and artistic ferment in Venice, partly thanks to the manifestations promoted by the Biennale. As Venice became a vibrant cultural centre, able to participate in the national and international cultural scene, so did the Biennale and its magazine.

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Elio Zorzi, was a journalist and writer, expert in Venetian history and periodicals. He held the position of Head of the Press Office from the end of the First World War to 1955, the year of his death.

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Letter from Maraini to Varagnolo, December 1, 1928. *la Biennale di Venezia – ASAC*, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Carte Capo Ufficio Stampa Elio Zorzi, b. 01, Venezia Opuscoli (1928-1946).

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Ibid.

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Letter from Maraini to Zorzi, Florence, November 15, 1928. *la Biennale di Venezia – ASAC*, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Carte Capo Ufficio Stampa Elio Zorzi, b. 01, Venezia Opuscoli (1928-1946).

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Ibid.

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On the *Bollettino* published in *la biennale* in the 1950s see Bianchi, "Riviste a Venezia negli anni cinquanta", 260-261. The contents consisted of reports on the number of visitors, press releases, alphabetical lists of exhibition reviews, list of the exhibitions held in Italy, list of exhibitions abroad where Italian art was being shown, lists of prizes, the acquisitions of the archive, and reports on the sales of artworks. The latter was also a list in alphabetical order, disclosing the buyer, the name of the artist, their nationality, the artwork's title, and technique. In the 2nd issue of *la biennale*, the *Bollettino* published a chronicle of the Biennale's Institution and the list of the National Participations.

Inextricably Linked: The Magazine, the Institution and the Audience

Since its launch *la biennale* was a luxury magazine with a large format, glossy paper, a bulletin curated by the Biennale's archive and printed on removable inserts, and a steadily increasing and impressive number of colour reproductions. Moreover, the magazine presented a modern and elegant design, advertisements of luxury products and other Venetian tourist attractions. The opening editorial of the magazine, interestingly signed not by the editor but by Ponti, the President of the Biennale, read:

I always thought that the Biennale ought to be in contact with the public, not only through the news released by the Press Office, but directly, through its own publication. The audience needs to be informed, to be continuously updated on the multiple activities of the Biennale, and of its various manifestations, not only when they take place, but also when they are in project phase; [...] hence it ought to be, called to participate directly in the life and activities organised by the institution [...] This direct contact between the public and the scholars/intellectuals, and in particular, with the Biennale itself, is now entrusted to this magazine, which will boast the well-known and ancient title of the exhibition, and which will be published every three months. We hope that the magazine will have a long and lasting life, and that ultimately, it will support the efforts of the organisers of the many events of the Biennale.³⁹

In this letter “*Inizio*” (beginning), Ponti summarises the Biennale's intents, aims and hopes for the magazine. It is clear that *la biennale*'s purpose was to keep the audience engaged in a conversation around the many activities of the Biennale's calendar. It foregrounded the conversational and boundless nature of the magazine, and its ability to maintain a conversation with a larger and widespread public.

This letter of intent shows that the audience was the main element taken into account for every decision concerning the magazine. It had to be updated on the activities of the Biennale directly, engaged in a conversation in and around its manifestations, even when they were still in progress. This anticipated a practice which became more common with curatorial discourse.⁴⁰ The magazine became a tool to keep the audiences' interest alive during the intervals between one exhibition and the next, as well as a means to anticipate the upcoming exhibition. This audience, elite and cultured in character, was made up of artists, intellectuals, diplomats, politicians, and aristocrats, and was described in the first issue in an article by Irene Brin “*Le Biennali nel bel mondo*” (The Biennials in the High Society). It gives an account of the various exhibitions of the Biennale. Right at the top of the article is a photo of the first exhibition of 1895, capturing King Umberto I and Queen Margherita in attendance.⁴¹ Other images in the article portray noble and political Italian figures, with the quite evident intent of highlighting and showing the institution's prestige.

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Ponti, “*Inizio*”, 4.

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Terry Smith, “Discourse,” in *Talking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2015), 13-36.

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The Biennale was founded in 1895, but the first idea for “a national biennial exhibition of art” dates back to 1893, when the City of Venice set funds for the exhibition in order to contribute on a cultural level to the celebrations, taking place all over Italy, of the silver anniversary of King Umberto I and Queen Margherita di Savoia. Cfr. Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, and Mimita Lamberti, “International Exhibitions in Venice”, and Jones, *The Global Work of Art*.

The collectors also played a crucial role for the magazine's initial intent of legitimizing the Biennale. Until its renovation in 1973, the Biennale could be seen as an hybrid between an art fair (there was a sales office in charge of the sales at each exhibition) and the recurring exhibition itself.⁴² Some of the Biennale's collectors were invited by the head of the sales department Ettore Gian Ferrari,⁴³ under Zorzi's request, to write about their acquisitions and collections. Contributions include Domenica Jean Walter's "*I quadri che vorrei portare con me*" (*The paintings I would like to have with me*), published in the second issue (October 1951); Peggy Guggenheim's "*Come è nata la mia collezione*" (*How my collection was born*), in the fourth issue (April 1951), and "*La Raccolta di Cavellini*" (*Cavellini's collection*) by Achille Cavellini, published in 1954. The idea of inserting contributions by collectors into the pages of the magazine, shows not only an in-depth understanding of the potentialities of the magazine within the art market, but also the comprehension of the collector's role in sustaining the artist's profession.⁴⁴

The magazine was not, however, solely intended for an audience concerned with the figurative arts. It was to cover all the various fields of the Biennale, such as cinema, dance, theatre and, initially, also fashion.⁴⁵ The interdisciplinary character of the recurring exhibition had to be reflected by its magazine and appeal to multiple audiences, whose interests would always span across the various fields. In order to show the multidisciplinary approach, the editorial board was composed of members from each of the Biennale's disciplines,⁴⁶ to one or more of which each issue was dedicated. The cover changed with each issue, depending on the manifestations ongoing, or on the assigned prizes. For instance, the cover of the first issue [fig. 1] presented the work *Il Barcaiolo* (*The Boatman*) (1930) by Carlo Carrà. His work put a visual emphasis on the figurative arts, due to the fact that the first issue was published in conjunction with the 25th Art Exhibition.

The choice of Carrà for the first cover was also because he was part of the editorial board of the magazine and he won the Great prize in 1950.⁴⁷ The disciplines were also listed in the full title of the magazine which read *la biennale di venezia. Rivista trimestrale di arte cinema teatro musica moda dell'ente biennale* (*la biennale. Quarterly Magazine of Art Cinema Theatre Music Fashion of the Biennial Institution*). The subtitle of the magazine changed several times during the lifespan of the magazine, and while it initially comprised all the disciplines at the core of the Biennale's institution, it would later become *Rivista trimestrale dell'ente autonomo "la biennale di Venezia"* (*Quarterly magazine of the autonomous institution "la biennale di Venezia"*).⁴⁸ The interdisciplinary approach was supposed to ferment interest for the largest audience possible, but a letter from the publisher of the mag-

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On the origin and context of birth of the Venice Biennale's exhibition model see Caroline A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art*, and "Biennial Culture: A Longer History" in Ricci, *Starting from Venice*, 28-49.

43

On Ettore Gian Ferrari and the history of the sales office see Clarissa Ricci "Breve Storia dell'Ufficio Vendite della Biennale di Venezia 1895-1972. Origini, Funzionamento e declino", *Ricerche di S/Confine* 8, no. 1 (2017): 1-20, <http://www.ricerchedisconfine.info/VIII-1/RICCI.htm>, accessed January 2019.

44

See letter to Comm. Carlo Frua De Angelis from Elio Zorzi, November 3, 1950. La Biennale di Venezia - ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Carte Capo Ufficio Stampa Elio Zorzi, b. 01, Venezia Opuscoli (1928-1946).

45

Fashion, initially included with a column edited by Misia Armani, was abandoned with the 5th issue published in August 1951.

46

The first editorial board of the magazine was active until 1953. Every member would consult around their specific field and the board would change when new directors or secretaries were appointed. See Bianchi, "Riviste a Venezia negli anni cinquanta", 255-256.

47

Ibid., 255.

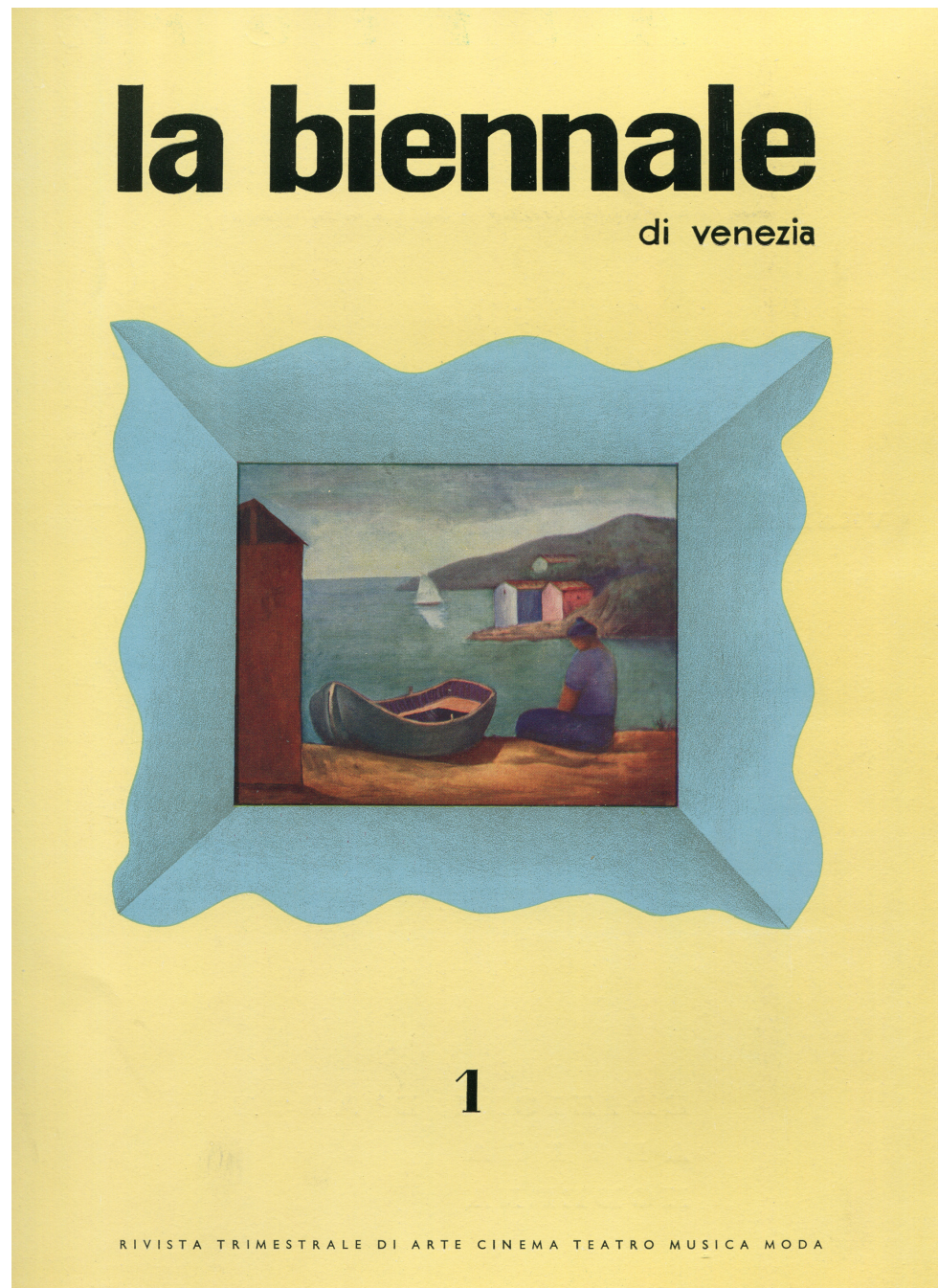
48

From the first to the 5th issue the magazine was subtitled *Rivista trimestrale. Arte cinema teatro musica moda*; with issue 5 (October 1951) *Rivista bimestrale. Arte cinema teatro musica*; issue 22 (September-October 1952) *Rivista trimestrale. Arte cinema musica teatro*; issue 30 (January-March 1958) *Rivista dell'Ente Autonomo "la biennale di Venezia"*. *Arte cinema musica teatro*; issue 40 (July-September 1960) *Rivista dell'ente autonomo "la biennale di Venezia"*; issue 55 (December 1964) *Rivista trimestrale dell'ente autonomo "la biennale di Venezia"*.

azine, Vittorio Alfieri⁴⁹ says otherwise. He laments the low sales of the magazine after the first year and blames “the very structure of the magazine, not specialised to arouse the interest of artists and critics, and too expensive and luxurious for the general public”.⁵⁰

fig. 1

Cover of the first issue of the quarterly magazine of the Venice Biennale, *la biennale di Venezia* (July 1950). Courtesy: Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia - ASAC.



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Vittorio Alfieri was the owner and director of the Venetian publishing house Alfieri Edizioni d'Arte, which was the first publisher of the magazine *la biennale* (1950-1955). It was also the publisher of the Biennale's catalogues of 1948, 1950 and 1952. Alfieri and the Biennale, stipulated a five year contract that ended in 1955: "the convention May 1, 1950 the publisher Alfieri (Venice) takes on the role to publish, print and distribute, at its own expenses, the magazine *La Biennale di Venezia* which has the aim of publishing all the events of the institution, and simultaneously carrying out tourist propaganda. The direction and editing of the magazine are held by the Biennale". Document dated 1955, edited by the Biennale, and summarizing the five years with Alfieri as publisher. *la Biennale di Venezia* – ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 (1950-1956).

In *la biennale*'s editorial letter Ponti also refers to the frequency of the magazine "which will be published every three months."⁵¹ The periodicity of *la biennale* changed several times, shifting from quarterly to bimonthly, occasionally forced to condense two issues into one. However, the temporal gap was always shorter than that of the Biennale's exhibitions and *la biennale* encouraged the reader to engage all year long with the institution. Nonetheless, in the first years, *la biennale* was quite criticised by both readers and its publisher, who complained for the delays and the irregular publication schedule, unable to provide precise updates on the events promoted and thus at times incapable of showing a lively institution even when its doors were closed.⁵²

New Editorial Policies: *la biennale* as a vehicle for international network and critical dialogue

During the first years of its existence, the magazine *la biennale* fulfilled its role as the institution's official organ of promotion. As early as 1952, Rodolfo Pallucchini began pushing for the transformation of the magazine, strongly convinced that *la biennale* had already sufficiently established itself in the public realm to become a critical authority in the artistic and cultural fields. This is one of the first occasions in which the editors viewed the magazine as a space for critical debate, not simply concerned with the promotion of the institution. This realization led to the publication of special issues focusing on the work of a single artist or movement, often analysed from the multiple perspectives at the core of the Biennale's institution. In 1953, a double issue (n. 13-14, April-June 1953) dedicated to Picasso appears. The issue was published simultaneously with an exhibition of the artist's work in Rome, at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna.⁵³ It was a completely Italian issue with contributions by Apollonio, Argan, Branzi, but also Pallucchini, and Malipiero who wrote about the relation between Picasso and music, and artists such as Carlo Carrà, Enrico Prampolini, Gino Severini, and Renato Guttuso. Although this was a step towards the magazine becoming a space capable of hosting a broader analysis of contemporary culture, it should not be forgotten that its first aim was to serve the Biennale's needs. The Picasso issue was published in conjunction with an exhibition in Rome, but in 1948 and 1950 respectively, twenty-five and thirteen of Picasso's works were shown at the Biennale. The issue was strategic since it attempted to create a network with another Italian institution, whilst legitimising the critical-artistic authority of the Biennale in identifying trends in the artistic field and exhibiting them.

In the 19-20th issue (April-June 1954), dedicated to the 27th Biennale a change has not been registered yet. Pallucchini confirms that the magazine remained consistent with its initial mission: "[...] *la biennale*, which is now four years old, bringing both an informative and critical contribution on what the 27th Biennale is presenting, keeps faith to its mission, as it was defined since the beginning by Giovanni Ponti: a continuous update on the facts of art, a turn of the horizon from this Venice, that periodically is at the centre of the world's attention with its figurative arts exhibition".⁵⁴ During his editorial tenure, it was largely

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Letter from publisher Vittorio Alfieri to Zorzi, May 21, 1951. *la Biennale di Venezia* – ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 06 (1950-1956).

51

See footnote 42.

52

See exchange of letters between Pallucchini and Zorzi, letter from Pallucchini to Zorzi, Venice January 28, 1952; letter from Zorzi to Pallucchini, Venice February 2, 1952, in *la Biennale di Venezia* – ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Professor Pallucchini, b. 08 (1952). See also letter from Pallucchini to Ponti, October 10, 1953, in *la Biennale di Venezia* – ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., Rapporti con le tipografie.

53

The exhibition was titled *Picasso*. It collected 200 works produced between 1920 and 1953, and was held at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (May-June 1953).

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Pallucchini at the time was the Vice President of the magazine. He wrote the editorial letter, dated June 8, 1954, published in *la biennale*, no. 19-20 (April-June 1954).

Zorzi's strong ties to the press office and subsequent focus on the magazine as a producer of propaganda which prevented it from transforming into a critical organism.

la biennale's shift would gradually begin in 1957, with the 28-29th double issue, a few years into Umbro Apollonio's editorship,⁵⁵ and after a year-long interruption of the publication during which its structure was reviewed and renovated.⁵⁶ Apollonio had been part of the editorial team since the magazine's first issue, and was a regular contributor. Apollonio was also director of the Biennale's Archive, position that he held from 1949 to 1972.⁵⁷ In the 28-29th double issue Apollonio wrote "*La Biennale e la critica*" (The Biennale and criticism) in which he illuminates the Biennale's need for change (and perhaps strategically also uses the Biennale as a stratagem to explain the changes he would make in the magazine):

The Biennale like any other public institute that wants to resist the wear of time, has to modify, from time to time, its structure, in order to meet the exigencies, imposed by experience and the passing of age. It has to keep faith to its delicate function of serving the artistic chronicle.⁵⁸

Most of his words might be used to discuss the magazine. As above mentioned, both the magazine and the biennial can be seen as "entities in time", and both need to understand and adapt to their period. It is probably from this very moment that the editor becomes aware of the magazine's possibilities as a space for criticism and reflection, both on the Biennale and on the magazine itself. It is not just a mirror of the institution, but a tool for self-understanding capable of analysing the Biennale's own potentialities and criticalities. This excerpt was published right before 1958 and remarks that the discussion around the institution's need to change had begun. The debate about how it could update itself in order to be able to respond to contemporary demands of art and culture continued, with interruptions, until 1968, when the conference "*La Nuova Biennale. Contestazioni e Proposte*" (The New Biennale. Critiques and Proposals) was held.⁵⁹ This was the time of the culmination of the student protests, and, departing from the academy, it had included some of the most prominent artistic and cultural events in Italy and abroad, including the Venice Biennale.⁶⁰ The Venetian institution in 1968 was still regulated by the fascist

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In 1955, after Elio Zorzi's death, the role of editor was assigned to Umbro Apollonio who held the position until the end of the publication in 1971.

56

For information concerning the agreements between *la biennale* and its publishers see Bianchi, in particular 251-254.

57

Apollonio was an art critic, who besides directing the magazine of the biennale and its archive, was also curator of several exhibitions of the Biennale and director of the 35th Venice Biennale in 1970.

58

Umbro Apollonio, "La Biennale e la critica", *la biennale*, no. 28-29 (June-September 1957): 6-7.

59

See *la biennale*, no. 64-65 (January-June 1969). The conference was held between November 15-17, 1968 at Ca' Giustinian in Venice. It was organised by the City of Venice. Another conference was organised earlier, in September 1968 by the magazine *Metro*, edited by art critic and publisher Bruno Alfieri. The conference, with speakers such as Giulio C. Argan, Gillo Dorfles, Ettore Colla and Germano Celant, was titled "*Proposte per la Biennale. Una tavola rotonda, un progetto*" (Propositions for the Biennale. A round table, a project) and by its very title was meant, according to Alfieri, to "stimulate reactions and ideas". See Bruno Alfieri, "*Proposte per la Biennale. Progetto*," in *Metro*, no. 15 (1968): 55. See also Vittoria Martini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1968-1978. La Rivoluzione Incompiuta* (PhD diss., Luav University and Ca' Foscari University, Venice, 2010-2011).

60

On the "*Biennale della contestazione*" (Biennial of Protest) and on the history of the Venice Biennale see Di Martino, *La Biennale di Venezia 1895-1995*. See also Stefania Portinari, *Anni Settanta. La Biennale di Venezia* (Milan: Marsilio, 2018), 17-117 and Vittoria Martini, *La Biennale di Venezia 1968-1978*.

statute issued by a Royal Decree-Law of 21 July 1938,⁶¹ and it was only in 1973, that the institution was actually reformed.⁶²

The 30th issue (January-March 1958) of *la biennale* registers another change. For the first time the magazine was officially published by the institution. Until that moment the Biennale's editorial office was only in charge of content, while production, publishing, distribution and sales were outsourced to the publisher.⁶³

With Apollonio's reform of the magazine and the decreased emphasis on the informative character of the publication, the "*Bollettino*" ceased but would be revived a few years later in the 36-37th issue (1959) in a column titled "*Osservatorio*" (Observatory), on the national and international contemporary art scene. The magazine's new role was outlined in a draft invitation letter for potential contributors, in which Apollonio explains how the new *la biennale* would distance itself from what the magazine used to be:

The magazine is not meant to be a means of propaganda of the various events of the Biennale, but a publication which makes known and discusses the problems of contemporary art history in all its aspects: figurative, drama, music, film and architecture. It is our constant care to avoid giving the magazine a purely informational character, but to place it on a level of deeper critical values, contemporary artistic phenomena, or those immediately precedent, are not dealt only with information or exalted celebration, but with the severe methods of historical investigation, from the point of view of cultural influences and linguistic structures, and also with relation to the poetics of the work of art.⁶⁴

Apollonio's editorial approach completely distanced itself from the informative and propagandistic approach of his predecessor, Zorzi. As an "historian of contemporaneity"⁶⁵ who was able to understand present trends and often anticipate them, Apollonio, was able to open *la biennale* up to a range of renowned national and international contributors, such as critics, art historians, and scholars with different backgrounds and enquiry methods, who gave life to debates around art criticism and its methods, contemporary art, aesthetics and judgement.⁶⁶ Since the 30th issue, on the cover were published the names of the contributors to the issue, emphasizing their role and making them more visible to the audience. The number

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On the history of the Venice Biennale's statute see Giorgio Di Genova, *Periplo delle peripezie del cosiddetto ente autonomo La Biennale di Venezia*, (Rome: Officina edizioni, 1972); Marilena Vecco, *La Biennale di Venezia, Documenta di Kassel - esposizione, vendita, pubblicizzazione dell'arte contemporanea* (Venice: Franco Angeli, 2002).

62

On July 8, 1971 the reform law was approved by the parliamentary committee of Palazzo Madama. This law was definitively approved by the Parliament on July 26, 1973. The law is reported in *La Biennale di Venezia: Annuario 1975, Eventi 1974* (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1975), 15-22.

63

Letter from Apollonio to Massimo Alesi, dated June 13, 1957: "given the unhappy initiatives with two publishers and the continuous discussions that this system causes, for which many times the institution itself is questioned [...] I would propose to study the possibility that it was the same biennial the publisher of the magazine, limiting itself as entrusting its distribution and sale to some publisher: a similar system was used for the 28th biennial catalog", in *la Biennale di Venezia - ASAC*, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 07 (1956-1966).

64

Draft letter for International contributors, signed by Apollonio, in *la Biennale di Venezia - ASAC*, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 07 (1956-1966).

65

Dal Canton, *Riviste d'arte a Venezia*, 273.

66

See Sergio Bettini, "Arte e Critica", *la biennale*, no. 30 (January-March 1958): 3-12; and "Possibilità di un giudizio di valore sulle opere dell'arte contemporanea", *la biennale*, no. 56 (March 1965): 3-17.

of contributions per issue was reduced to give its authors greater space for analysis and discussion.

Sustaining its new role, *la biennale* published surveys with in-depth readings of international and national artists, and began dedicating covers to international artists.⁶⁷ Historical surveys brought new light to great artistic movements such as futurism (no. 36-37, July-December 1959) which would be featured in the 30th Biennale in 1960. One of the most successful issues was on realism. The cover of the issue, published in 1962, reproduced a detail of Renato Guttuso's *Vecchio che legge il giornale nella strada* (*Old man reading the newspaper in the street*) (1960).⁶⁸

During the second half of the 1960s, articles and essays on the relationship between the arts and communication theories, and the methods of art criticism were published. Worthy of mention is Umberto Eco's "*Teoria della comunicazione e arti visuali*" (Theory and communication of the visual arts) published in 1966.⁶⁹ In this issue, the subtitle of the magazine changes into "*Rassegna delle Arti Contemporanee*" (Contemporary Arts Review), emphasizing the focus on the contemporary arts.

From the end of the 1950s to the mid-1960s, the magazine reached its apex as a vehicle for international network and critical dialogue, now on a par with other prestigious contemporary international art magazines. It is interesting to note that *la biennale* reduced those 'high class advertisements' mentioned in the press release of the magazine's launch, such as commercial products and tourist attractions,⁷⁰ and used advertising as a strategic connector. With Zorzi, advertising was meant to show the cultural elite that Venice was a tourist and cultural attraction, while Apollonio was interested in an audience of intellectuals and cultural affiliates who could discuss the latest artistic and critical developments. For this reason, *la biennale* started exchanging advertising space with other European magazines, which fostered the creation of an international network. Some of the magazines included *Kunstwerk*, *Art International*, *Magnum*, *Zodiac*, *Werk*, *Aujurd'hui*, *Journal de L'amateur d'Art*.⁷¹ A similar strategy had already been adopted during the avant-garde, when artists' magazines would exchange advertisements in order to promote each other and create a network of connections.⁷²

The end of *la biennale* and posthumous development of the exhibition magazine

By the mid-1960s, after these exciting and fruitful years, the magazine was already reaching the end of its life. The folding of *la biennale* was linked to the crisis that hit the Biennale and led to a complete restructuring and renovation of the institu-

67

See Hans Richter's cover on issue no. 54 (September 1964).

68

See *la biennale*, no. 46-47 (December 1962).

69

See Umberto Eco, "Teoria della comunicazione e arti visuali", *la biennale*, no. 60 (December 1966): 5-6.

70

The Biennale was initially established, not only for the celebration of the silver anniversary, but also with the hope of boosting the economy of the city in a time of terrible decline so it is somewhat expected that its official promotional organ, i.e. the magazine, would also advertise the city's grandeur and its touristic attractions. See Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, and Mimita Lamberti, "International Exhibitions in Venice".

71

See document "Rivista la biennale di Venezia. Scambio di pubblicità con altre riviste", in *la Biennale di Venezia* – ASAC, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 11 (1958-1970).

72

On the strategy of exchanging advertisements in avant-garde magazines, see Meghan Forbes, "Advertisement As Collaboration In the Central European Avant-Garde Magazines," *Post. Notes on Modern and Contemporary Art Around the Globe* (MoMA), published on March 22, 2016. https://post.moma.org/content_items/769-advertisement-as-collaboration-in-the-central-european-avant-garde-magazines, accessed June 2019.

tion at the beginning of the 1970s. Alloway reports a conversation with Apollonio, who pointed out that:

In 1968 it was becoming necessary for the Biennale to do more than be informative. The massive presentation of great numbers of works from different countries is the foundation of the show. This function of data-assembling had been the proper course after the Second World War, but he regarded it as basically fulfilled.⁷³

An attempt to confront the problems surrounding the Biennale motivated the conference *La Nuova Biennale*, held in November 1968. Artists, thinkers and critics, including Sergio Bettini, Wladimiro Dorigo,⁷⁴ and Apollonio, were called to debate the Biennale's need to abandon its old structures and methods. The acts were published in the issue 64-65 (January-June 1969), which in many ways marked another shift in the magazine. The frequency had already slowed down since the 63rd issue (January-March 1968) and the magazine was becoming an annual publication. Issue 66 (September 1970) was, according to the magazine's administrator Douglesse Grassi, the very last edited issue of the magazine: "because of technical difficulties, and the pending reorganization of the Biennale, it is not possible to guarantee the regular periodicity of the magazine. Thus, it will be published once a year, in the form of a "book" and will be normally dedicated to a single theme in order to constitute a monographic volume".⁷⁵ The last issue (no. 67-68, December 1971) followed the model of issue 64-65 and published the acts of the conference "*Arte e Didattica*" (Art and Didactics), held in May 1970, as part of the research activities organised for the 35th Art Exhibition. In 1971 the Biennale still had constitutive problems to solve; the new statute would be approved only in 1973 by the Italian Parliament. In 1972 the archive's directorship passed into the hands of Wladimiro Dorigo who focused almost entirely on the archive's organization and documentation of the Biennale's activities. In 1975, after four years of silence, the magazine was resurrected, with a new title, subtitle and format, for another four years as the *Annuario dell'ASAC* (ASAC's Almanac) before ending in 1979. It was a "Yearbook" linked to the archive, publishing the events of the previous year and once again privileging the informative and documentary character of the publication rather than the critical one.

In only two decades *la biennale* proved itself able to adapt to the changes of its time, sometimes even anticipating the changes that needed to occur within the Biennale itself, evolving from a mere instrument of promotion into a platform for the contemporary debate of art and culture. With its shift, *la biennale* succeeded in furthering an ancestral model that would define the features of the exhibition magazine and those magazines born out of other institutions of the art system. It shows the magazine's ability, during a twenty year lifespan, to understand the changes dictated by contemporaneity and those in public taste.

Both editorial periods of the magazine, under Zorzi and Apollonio, launched editorial initiatives still practiced by current exhibition magazines such as the promotion of an institution, contribution of curators, and creation of a space for the display and discussion of contemporary art and culture. These three commonalities are part of the attempt to transform the magazine of a biennial exhibition into a critical authority, and by doing so, contribute to turning the biennial itself into a platform able to simultaneously generate culture and legitimise it.

The history of *la biennale* shows the need of institutions to investigate and control the contents around the exhibition, to create their own means

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Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895-1968*, 22.

⁷⁴

Editor of *la biennale* with Apollonio from 1958.

⁷⁵

Letter by Douglesse Grassi to the subscribers of the magazine, dated 1972, in *la Biennale di Venezia – ASAC*, s. 4.13, R.L.B., corrispondenza, b. 16 (1969-1972).

of methodologically understanding and documenting the present and, finally, to produce new knowledge, fulfilling the magazine's and the exhibition's educational role.

Finally, the exhibition magazine evinces the exhibition's need to become an incubator of culture, knowledge and discourse, and to keep the audience interested all year long. Exhibition magazines crucially document and historicise the recurring exhibition and contemporary art at a specific moment in time and space. The analysis of the history of the exhibition magazine necessitates an understanding and study of the institution itself, the tension between the ephemerality of both the biennial and the magazine versus the institution and the archive, and their strategies of legitimisation. Also, the relationship between art and its audience, which has guided some of the changes of *la biennale* (and, as we have seen, the Biennale itself), cannot be underestimated and encourages a discussion of the media's function and influence.

There are multiple perspectives from which to study magazines, since they have the potential to document the trajectories and shifts, radical or incremental, that occur in art history, curating, criticism and artistic practices, as well as the art market. This study requires all of these multiple perspectives, since the link between exhibition and magazine is inextricable, and the exhibition magazine remains first and foremost a vehicle to legitimise its institution, while responding to contemporaneity and the changes in the audience's taste.

Abbreviations

ASAC Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee

s. Serie

b. busta

R.L.B. Rivista La Biennale

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