

**Editorial**

*OBOE Journal* aims to be an observatory, to become a platform for discussion, to research and elucidate the ostensive moment of the artistic act. Borne out of the specificity of exhibition studies and with a particular focus on periodic exhibitions, the journal continues to expand its scope towards the exhibitionary in a broader sense. This includes the moment of exposition, when the artwork, understood as an activator of multiple layers of perception – sensory, ideational, bodily, spatial, temporal, memorial, cultural, economic, political, and more – composes our experience of the infinitely complex contemporary moment.

*OBOE's* approach involves tracing trajectories and examining relationships between actors in evolving assemblages. Exploring the connections between art and the general audience, discussing the dimension of the art market, reflecting on the emergence of diverse cultures, analysing the role of the media, as well as understanding politics and governmental strategies, which converge to varying degrees when defining the ostensive manifestation of the artwork.

*OBOE Journal* also arose from the necessity of building a bridge between nodes, and of understanding the layered intersections that emerge in exhibitions. The journal addresses multiple disciplines, whilst taking into account a number of heterogeneous subjects that partake in our aesthetic and visual experience today.

*OBOE Journal* aims to become a scholarly laboratory, where topics that are urgent in this field may be further investigated and re-mediated. Writing art history, and especially exhibition history, demands new methodologies, and we envisage the malleable space of a recurrent journal germane for investigating and re-writing this evolving discipline.

For this reason, alongside an open thematic approach, we have decided to publish special issues on specific topics that will recur over time. These editions aim to become methodological tools for an in-depth study of art and the exhibitionary.

We chanced upon the title *OBOE* as an acronym for our subtitle 'On Biennials and Other Exhibitions'. Over time it sedimented and became familiar. We were intrigued by the fact that it alluded to music, and the act of playing and performing, as something entailing participation and evolution. The oboe is an instrument, and by nominating the journal as such we foresee it becoming an accompaniment to those scholars who remain devoted to studying the theory and practice of these contemporary – but never reductively contemporary – exhibitionary formats.

# Why Venice?

The inaugural issue poses a question: “Why Venice?” The answer lies somewhere between contingency and necessity. Our founding members have met at Iuav University in Venice and have been dealing with the study of the Venice Biennale in multifarious ways over the years. The concept of the journal had its origin in the conference and volume *Starting from Venice. Studies on the Venice Biennale* (2010) which evidenced the need to fill a historiographical aporia we continuously encountered. Many are the studies devoted to the Venice Biennale, but many are the gaps and fallacies that remain around the study of this exhibition. Attending to some of these oversights in “Why Venice?” remains critically important, and not just because this is our first issue, but because it intends to answer something we felt was fundamental. We wanted to collate a selection of contributions which would set the pace for future issues devoted to the Venice Biennale and its history. These touch upon very different time periods and contribute to our understanding of the complexity of studies around the Venice Biennale.

In her Preface to the issue, *OBOE*'s director, Angela Vettese, explicates the reasons for the birth of this periodical, which she considers an infinite platform for the examination of the gerundive nature of artistic and exhibitionary acts.

The issue takes off with the essay of guest contributor Caroline Jones. By looking specifically at the case of the group *Oreste* in the 1999 Venice Biennale, her analysis takes into consideration the century from 1895 to 1999, during which she argues it is possible to measure the impact of biennials on themselves and on the emergence of increasingly social forms of contemporary art.

We thought it was essential to make excellent but little-known research written in Italian accessible to the international community. Our choice was to translate a foundational text by Maria Mimita Lamberti, “International Exhibitions in Venice” (1982), which, although written several decades ago, remains a highly relevant study. We hope this effort, which we aim to replicate in future issues, will help to widen the perspective on Biennale studies and contribute to supporting excellence in non-English research by young scholars.

Camilla Salvaneschi discusses the evolution of the art periodical published by the Venice Biennale in the 1950s and 1960s: a journey from informative instrument to a container for critical thought and theory. Salvaneschi argues that the magazine was fundamental in articulating the model of the exhibition magazine, as recently exemplified by *documenta* and *Manifesta* amongst others.

In her contribution on *Ambiente come Sociale* at the 1976 Venice Biennale, Martina Tanga examines Enrico Crispolti's innovative curatorial approach for the 1976 show. Tanga considers his unique strategy as it simultaneously aligned with and critiqued the Biennale as a cultural institution.

Departing from the necessity to understand the framework within which the Biennale takes form and the question of where it positions itself in relation to the history of exhibitions, Clarissa Ricci reconsiders the curatorial contribution of the 45th Biennale (1993), *Cardinal Points of Art*, directed by Achille Bonito Oliva, and outlines the features that contributed towards reshaping the Biennale into its contemporary format.

In this first issue, we also wanted to give space to shorter texts such as Vittoria Martini's, which touches upon the branding strategies of the Biennale. Specially adapted for this issue, Martini's essay is the first of a number of conference papers we hope to present in forthcoming issues.

In conclusion, we would like “Why Venice?” to remain in the interrogative, and for us to abide with its question mark. Our hope with this issue is to stimulate questions and perspectives that might open and give space to new paths of research for other scholars.