

A gender perspective applied to art-historical research on the history of the Venice Biennale has so far mainly focused on Mirella Bentivoglio's 1978 *Materializzazione del linguaggio* (Materialization of language, hereafter *Materializzazione*) and on the feminist intervention of *Spazio aperto* (Open Space), as the first all-women shows in that context.¹ However, if we broaden our scope to consider the intersections between artistic and political expressions of feminism, overlapping the category of gender with other social categories which fall under the denominator of class and social position, we can reinterpret the relationship between the Venice Biennale and 1970s feminism as more complex.² Events beyond the realm of visual arts, in the popular genres of cinema and theater; unrealized exhibitions that placed the visual arts within a political history of feminism; and Marxist-feminist events marginalized by the very *Materializzazione* exhibition can be brought to the forefront in order to untangle a multilayered, complex scenario for the participation of women artists, and cultural workers in the Venice Biennale in the 1970s.³

1974 feminist events at the Venice Biennale

Already in 1974, feminist initiatives were not only present at the Venice Biennale, but were also criticized for taking center stage in newspaper reports, as the then president of the Biennale, Carlo Ripa di Meana, later recalled with a certain pride in his memoirs.⁴ The fact that these initiatives, despite receiving press coverage, did not establish themselves structurally or on a long-term basis, or attain the status of institutional highlights, can be attributed in part to the chaotic and disorganized working conditions of 1974. A year previously, the Biennale had undergone the most significant structural change in its history, transitioning from a traditional exhibition format to an interdisciplinary, permanent event institution. The years from 1974 to 1977 are remembered as both the most innovative and the most confused in the institution's history, marked by politically charged controversies. Decisions were often made at the last minute. As the institution's president Ripa di Meana recalls, in 1974 there were only «34 days to organize a 44-day program of events».⁵

In the framework of this transdisciplinary venture, which had been hastily assembled, feminists participated in the cinema and theater section. *Donna e cinema* (Woman and Cinema) proposed films exploring the relationship between women and society, exclusively featuring works made by women. It included significant screenings such as *L'aggettivo donna* (The Adjective Woman, 1971), *Siamo tante, Siamo donne, Siamo stufe* (We're Many, We're Women, We're Fed Up, 1974), and international films like Agnes Varda's *Le Bonheur* (Happiness, 1965) and Barbara Loden's

Wanda (1970).⁶ *Donna e cinema* was vital for feminist discourse at the Biennale, fostering discussions that emphasized the importance of showcasing women's narratives in cinema, as noted by writer Natalia Aspesi, who hoped that film would reveal «the truth of the face, of the woman's body».⁷

Dacia Maraini's satirical drama *La donna perfetta* (The Perfect Woman) was organized alongside this.⁸ The play, which narrates the story of Nina, who dies after a clandestine abortion, was part of a women's militant theater movement aimed at reshaping female roles, and therefore the performance was accompanied by debates and community engagement activities organized in collaboration with the cultural center La Maddalena in Rome (fig. 1).⁹ These supplementary events garnered Maraini considerable attention, leading to her being dubbed «lady of feminism».¹⁰

Despite significant media coverage, there were two reasons why these events were often overlooked in gender-focused art-historical studies of the Venice Biennale. Firstly, the academic tendency towards specialization can be criticized for neglecting these occurrences outside strict visual art boundaries.¹¹ Second, these events represented politically charged feminist expressions intertwined with popular forms like street performances and protests.¹²

While interdisciplinarity and the mingling with popular formats was symptomatic for certain strands of feminist cultural practice in 1970s Italy as elsewhere, Italian art historiography has long echoed a lack of interest in the politicization of visual artists. This disinterest might have been influenced by the withdrawal from the art scene of Carla Lonzi, a prominent Italian art critic and writer, co-founder of the feminist collective Rivolta Femminile in 1970, who explicitly refused to act as Italy's Lucy R. Lippard and preferred separatist existential feminism to a militant emancipatory engagement.¹³

Feminism: The Woman as Producer of Emarginated (Isolated) Culture, 1975–1976

Despite being organized in a short time, the 1974 program of the Biennale showcased a distinctive interest in feminism which can be traced in the archival documentation of the institution also in the following years. According to the correspondence, the director of the visual art and architecture sector Vittorio Gregotti started to conceive a grand feminist exhibition as part of a broader initiative to re-evaluate the relationship between art and society. The first outreach to organize this exhibition occurred in February 1975, when Charlotte Christensen, the curator at the Museum of Modern Art in Aarhus, Denmark, was contacted by the general secretary of the institution Franco Raggi, on behalf of Gregotti. Christensen, in return, suggested Elena Borstein, an artist and member of the Women's Collective in the United States, who gradually brought together leading figures of American feminism, including Marcia Tucker, Lucy R. Lippard, Linda Nochlin, and Judy Chicago as further collaborators. The curatorial team was eager to take up the project and in September wrote to the Biennale with enthusiasm: «we have met» and «we are thrilled».¹⁴

The project, titled *Feminism*, aimed to explore women's roles and representation throughout history. It was conceived to begin with the suffragettes and end with the Women's Liberation movement, highlighting issues like the virilization of women, the portrayal of women in male-dominated culture, and the consumption of the female image in art from Goya to Cecil Beaton. The plan was to realize a comprehensive exhibition that would showcase works by notable artists like Georgia



175

175-178: iniziative di animazione popolare realizzate da Dacia Maraini e dal Gruppo «La Maddalena» di Roma in occasione dello spettacolo *La donna perfetta* nei quartieri popolari di Venezia, alla Giudecca e a Mestre (15-20 ottobre 1974).



176



177



178

369

1 Popular outreach initiatives organized by Dacia Maraini and the group La Maddalena of Rome on the occasion of the play *La donna perfetta* (The Perfect Woman), held in the working-class neighborhoods of Venice, including Giudecca and Mestre, from 15 to 20 October 1974

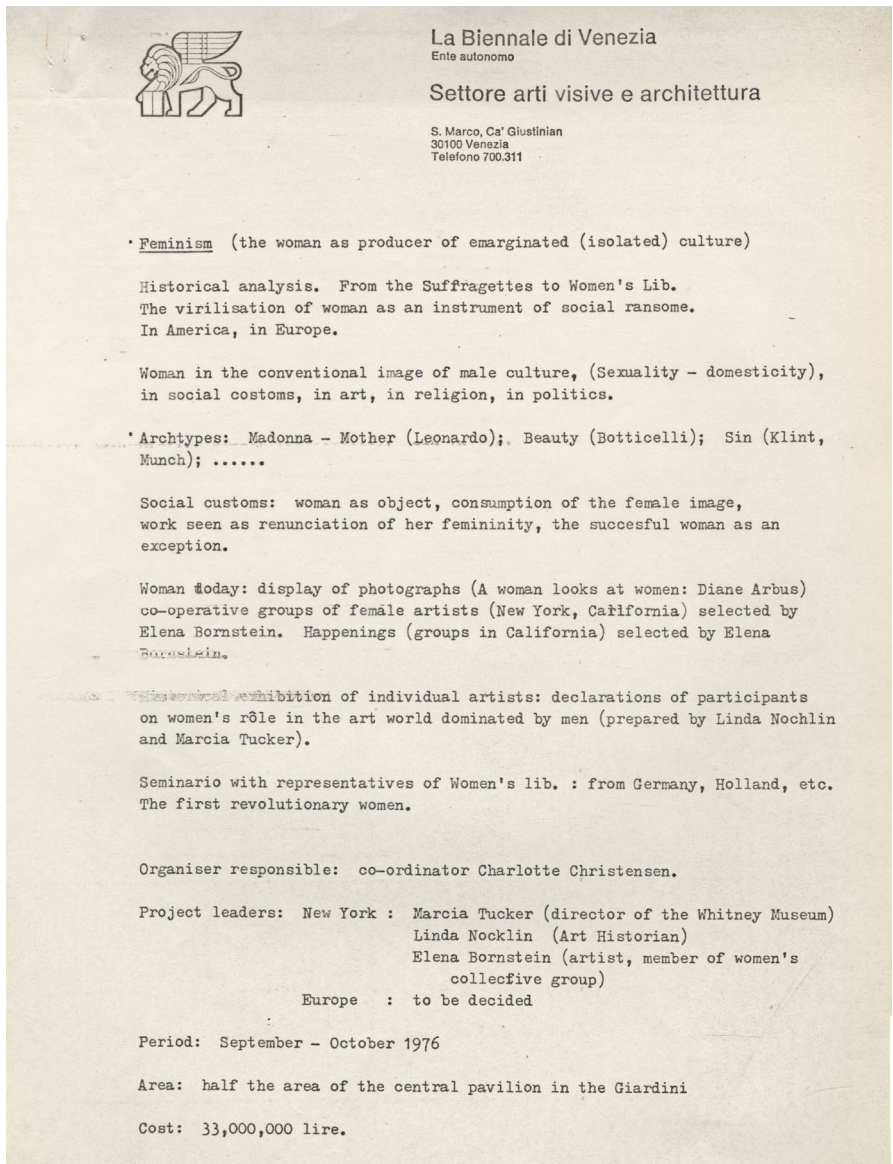
O'Keeffe and Louise Nevelson, and a reconstruction of Niki de Saint Phalle's *Hon/Elle* installation from 1966, but also photography, activities of women collectives and performances, theatrical and film segments, and a seminar featuring foundational figures of Women's Liberation (fig. 2).¹⁵ Above all, the exhibition focused on singling out feminist forms of expression and agency rather than merely women. This distinction was essential, as it positioned feminism to valorize both women artists and the feminist movement itself, in line with the many events that were increasing the recognition of women in the arts such as: the exhibition *Women Artists 1550–1950* (1976), curated by Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland; the publication of Lucy R. Lippard's compiled writings *From the Centre: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (1976); and the first UN-conference on women in Mexico (1975).

On the Biennale side, it appeared that there was a genuine intention to advance *Feminism*. The format in which the project was written specifying the dates (August 15–September 20, 1976), the location (central pavilion), and the budget (33,000 lire), aligns with what is typically used to present to the board of directors for approval of funds. Despite this effort, the show was continuously postponed. The most credible explanation for this situation relates to a shift in the 1976 Biennale's theme. The 1976 Biennale was the first official visual arts exhibition after the institution's reform, following two years of solely multidisciplinary programming, thus facing pressure to prove its relevance with a renewed approach.¹⁶ Its initial theme, focused on «the vision of marginalization», was more than apt to include the *Feminism* exhibition, subtitled «The Woman as Producer of Emarginated (Isolated) Culture».¹⁷ However, when the theme changed to focus on the «environment», the feminist exhibition project was sidelined.¹⁸ Although the environmental theme was not particularly innovative – institutionalized by exhibitions such as *Primary Structures* (1966), *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) and explored by other biennials such as the one in Graz in 1967 – it was thought to be flexible and sufficiently generic to allow all participants to align with the topic and enable social investigation at the same time.¹⁹ For Gregotti the theme «environment» could be considered «an instrument of struggle or positive affirmation for the relationship with the social environment».²⁰ So why was the *Feminism* exhibition not seen as a way to explore social struggles?

On the one hand, the answer could be related to the need to differentiate the art exhibition from the performance and discursive events that took place in 1974 and 1975. On the other, the interests of the curators, while not dismissing feminism outright, were more focused on other topics. It is important to highlight the specific position that feminism played within leftist groups. In 1970s Italy, feminism often came into conflict with leftist student and workers' movements due to its challenge to their male-dominated structures. Marxist-feminist perspectives questioned the traditional view of women's reproductive roles by rejecting domestic and care work, but this also revealed underlying patriarchal behavior and created social tension. Although women enjoyed freedoms such as smoking and wearing trousers, discussing topics like menstruation or anatomy was often seen as unsettling. As a result, both feminist initiatives and discussions about women's issues were increasingly viewed as threats to the unity and to the perceived priorities of the working class.²¹ Ultimately, it might have been the political framing of the feminist exhibition, combined with the prevailing political and social attitudes of marginalization toward feminism, that contributed to the Biennale's growing disinterest in moving forward.

Divergent perspectives. 1978 Venice all-women exhibitions

It was not until 1978, following the protests from feminist groups in Venice – Federica Di Castro, Lia Secci, Anna Maria Sortani, and Riccarda Pagnozzo – that the visual art and architecture section started to acknowledge feminism and the representation of women artists again.²² To demonstrate commitment to progress, Ripa di Meana expressed his openness to new proposals during the *Verifiche di un quadriennio* (Four-Year Review) conference, which evaluated the organization's activities from its initial term (1974–1977). He also announced plans for an exhibition organized by artist and curator Mirella Bentivoglio for the upcoming Biennale in 1978.²³



In response to Ripa di Meana's call, the feminist Gruppo Immagine (Image Group) from Varese sent *Vogliamo Vo(g)liamo* (We want, we want (to fly)), a document which emerged from the first Woman-Art-Society conference, in collaboration with the Visual Arts Union of Milan.²⁴ In it, artists Silvia Cibaldi, Milli Gandini, Clemen Parrocchetti, Mariuccia Secol, and Mariagrazia Sironi traced a new course for feminisms, stating that after years of activism, marked by a rejection of traditional roles and mainstream art markets, they sought institutional recognition, asserting that «without emancipation, it is not possible to be truly free».²⁵ The Image group proposed a collective work in two parts titled *From female creativity as motherhood-nature to the control-research of nature*. The first section featured photographs of the moon, representing nature as an image, while the second centered on a pool of water with tapestries hanging above.²⁶ The work *Dalla donna alla donna passando per il cielo* (From woman to woman passing through the sky) by Gruppo Donne/Immagine/Creatività (Women/Image/Creativity Group) from Naples – Rosa Panaro, Mathelda Balatresi, Antonietta Casiello, and Mimma Sardella – was also presented alongside.²⁷ Grouped under the univocal title of *Spazio aperto* (Open Space), the two exhibitions opened in June 1978, marking the first episode of a feminist exhibition at the Art Biennale as well as a concrete attempt by the institution to respond to the demand for equity.²⁸ *Spazio aperto*, in fact, stemmed from the Italian Visual Arts Commission's goal to create a space that was both open to experimental and non-mainstream art and a regulated environment. Due to the Italian Government's restrictions on large gatherings following the rising political violence in the country, *Spazio aperto* was held outside of the main venue of the Giardini. This separate location allowed for a focus on political themes, particularly women's issues, for which feminist groups were advocating.²⁹ The original plan for *Spazio aperto* also included *Materializzazione*, a film and performance review curated by Vittorio Fagone, and an exhibition of feminist artists from Rome, proposed by Wanda Raheli and titled *La follia del quotidiano* (The Madness of the Everyday).³⁰

The project of *Spazio aperto*, however, met with firm opposition from Mirella Bentivoglio. She wrote to Gregotti that holding too many women artist exhibitions in the same venue «would end up connoting that space in the context of Biennale 78 as a ghetto».³¹ Bentivoglio's complaints were taken into account and Wanda Raheli's exhibition was cancelled.³² Meanwhile, *Materializzazione* was moved under the category «special exhibitions», erasing the words «Spazio aperto» from the catalogue's reprints. Bentivoglio's objection shows that her approach was distinct from the activism of Marxist-feminist positions and that her exhibition in Venice was the culmination of a seven-year commitment to her curatorial work (fig. 3).³³ Her journey into curation began in 1972 with the *Esposizione Internazionale di Operatrici Visuali* (International Exhibition of Visual Workers) at the Centro Tool in Milan, where Bentivoglio first gathered a group of women artists in the realm of visual and concrete poetry.³⁴ The relevance of Bentivoglio's work lies not only in the drive she gave to the recognition of the work of women artists but also in the critical and curatorial commitment along this and many other exhibitions.³⁵ So why refuse the association with other women's exhibitions? And why did Ripa di Meana acquiesce to Mirella Bentivoglio's request?

The entire situation highlights the authority that Bentivoglio exerted among the organizers of the Biennale. Her connection with the institution, facilitated by the prominent figure of the art historian Umbro Apollonio, started in 1969 when she



238



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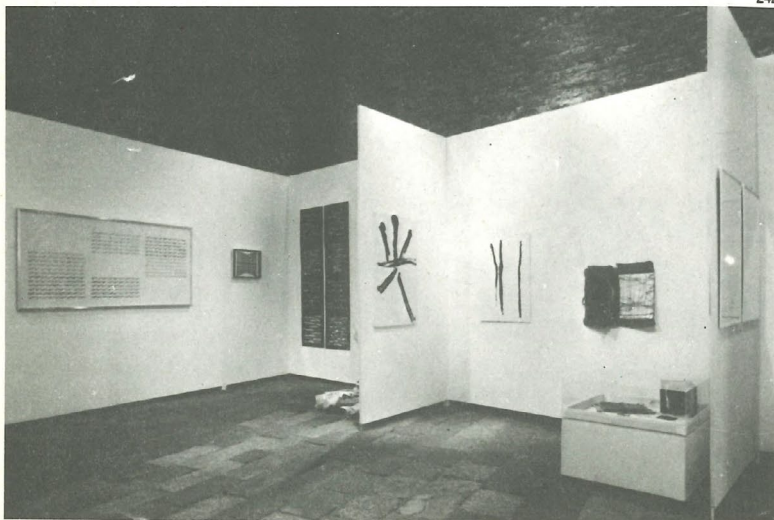
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240



241

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«Materializzazione del linguaggio»
Alcuni momenti delle Performances: Betty Dannon, (238, 240); Gisela Maria von Frankenberg, (239); Paula Claire, (241); 242: un insieme della mostra.



242

3 Display and performances of *Materializzazione del linguaggio* held at the Venice Biennale, from 20 September to 15 October 1978

participated as an artist in the *Poesia concreta* (Concrete Poetry) exhibition, and was fueled by the recognition she gained among scholars, as evidenced by the commission from the art historian Giulio Carlo Argan to compile the entry on «visual poetry» for the Treccani encyclopedia.³⁶ Her prominent social position, recognition, and appreciation by leftist scholars leading Italy's cultural discourse, paved the way to Ripa di Meana's condescension.³⁷ While Bentivoglio's relevance is undisputed, however, social factors must also be considered in her exercise of power – in her refusal to be associated with feminist exhibitions. Reviews of her show highlight her perceived «calmness»; her work, it was noted, lacked the aggressive and intimidating tones ascribed to the feminist struggle.³⁸ This comment, intended as a compliment tied to her social position, reveals instead the unease felt towards feminism by the left and resembles a tendency towards strategies of tone policing. Although Bentivoglio's views were rarely explicitly documented, comments about her attitudes suggest that she exhibited ladylike manners, marking a class distinction from feminists aligned with workers.³⁹ The concerns of the Marxist-feminist-informed collectives from Varese and Naples did not match with Bentivoglio's desire for integration into the established canon. As feminist artist and art historian Simona Weller recalls, Bentivoglio consistently supported the women artists she worked with, often at her own expense, by enhancing their visibility in public displays, entering through the «front door» and aligning their work with that of male artists and practitioners, as she explicitly declared in *Materializzazione's* catalogue.⁴⁰ These qualities made her a suitable choice for the Biennale, and the most respected figure in this context.

In place of a conclusion

Rereading the relationship between the Venice Biennale and feminisms in the 1970s through gender and social position has allowed us to explore much more than the exhibitions alone. Instead of analyzing the arrangements of exhibits within a specific time and space, the paper delved into theater and film programs, behind-the-scenes meetings, unrealized projects, correspondence, and the dynamics among various actors and groups, as well as the positionality of these. Instead of offering a conclusion, I would thus like to open the floor for discussion as to whether adopting an intersectional approach to exhibition history could expand Tony Bennett's notion of the Exhibitionary Complex.⁴¹ This concept examines how museums, exhibitions, and public displays serve as instruments of power and governance – not through surveillance, but by making knowledge visible and accessible. Within this complex, exhibitions create a «dynamic order of things», strategically mobilizing this order in response to immediate ideological and political needs.⁴² Biennials in particular play a crucial role in the Exhibitionary Complex as they integrate countercultures and marginalized discourses, making ideological configurations more flexible. The capacity of biennials, both in the seventies and in the present day, to perpetually refresh dialogue and redefine representation underscores the necessity of employing methodologies that tackle interconnected inequalities, which might not be immediately apparent in archival studies. As this contribution has suggested, an intersectional lens may allow us to consider how power and governance not only operate within the exhibition space itself, but also in the socially intertwined negotiations that shape the entire process of exhibition production – calling for an extension of such intersectional investigations into the evolving field of exhibition historiography.

1 See Stefania Portinari: Materializzazioni del linguaggio alla Biennale di Venezia, in: Riccardo Caldura (ed.): *Verbovisioni*, Milan/Udine 2017, pp. 38–69; Marco Scotini/Raffaella Perra (eds.): *Il Soggetto imprevisto. 1978: Arte e Femminismo in Italia*, exhib. cat., Milan, FM Centro per l'arte contemporanea, Milan 2019; Andrea Viliani/Cristiana Perrella (eds.): *Ri-Materializzazione del Linguaggio 1978–2022*, exhib. cat., Bolzano, Fondazione Antonio Dalle Nogare, Rome 2022; Maria Teresa Ferrara: *Abbiamo avuto voglia di volare. Il Gruppo Femminista Immagine e il Gruppo Donne/Immagine/Creatività alla Biennale di Venezia del 1978*, Dissertation, University of Padua 2019–2020.

2 See Maria Bremer: *De-linking Women and Nature: Care Work as a Subject of Art at the 1978 Venice Biennale*, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 87, 2024, no. 4, pp. 473–488.

3 The foundation of this paper lies in archival research and in my essay: *Politiche dello Spazio aperto*, in: Paola Stelliferi/Stefania Voli (eds.): *Anni di rivolta. Nuovi sguardi sui femminismi degli anni Settanta e Ottanta*, Rome 2023, pp. 241–272.

4 See Carlo Ripa di Meana: *Le mie Biennali, 1974–1978*, Milan 2018.

5 *Annuario 1975, Eventi 1974*, Venice 1975, p. 10.

6 For the full program, see *La Biennale di Venezia* (ed.): *Donna e cinema*, Venice 1974, pp. 2–3.

7 Natalia Aspesi: *Sullo schermo finalmente compare una donna vera*, in: *Annuario 1975* (as note 5), p. 496.

8 *La donna perfetta*, directed by Dacia Maraini and Annabella Cerliani together with Associazione culturale La Maddalena, Rome, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice 1974; for agitation theater in Maraini, see Maria Grazia Sumeli Weinberg: *Dacia Maraini and Feminist Theatre as a Model of Transgression*, in: *Italian Studies in Southern Africa*, 1990, no. 3, pp. 20–31; Dacia Maraini: *Fare Teatro. 1966–2000*, Milan 2000; Claudia Messina: *Scrittrici del Rinascimento: il teatro di Dacia Maraini*, in: Baldassarri/Di Iasio/P. Pecci/Pietrobon/Tomasi (eds.): *La letteratura degli italiani 4. I letterati e la scena*, Rome 2014, pp. 1–15.

9 Paola Stelliferi: *Il femminismo a Roma negli anni Settanta. Percorsi, esperienze e memorie dei collettivi di quartiere*, Bologna, 2015, pp. 49–52; Francesca Fava: *Donne di teatro a Roma ai tempi della mobilitazione femminista (1965–1985)*, in: Donatella Orecchia/Livia Cavaglieri (eds.): *Fonti orali e teatro. Memoria, storia, performance*, Bologna, 2018, pp. 146–152.

10 Mariella Gramaglia: *Le signore cadono*, in: *Il Manifesto*, 27 October 1974, reprinted in: *Annuario 1975* (as note 5), p. 497.

11 With the exception of Stefania Portinari: *Anni settanta. La Biennale di Venezia*, Venice 2018, p. 239 and p. 242.

12 See Alfredo Ronchetta/Ferdinanda Vigliani/Alberto Salz: *Giubilare il teatro di strada: manuale*

per fare e disfare un teatro politico d'occasione, Turin 1976; in addition to Orecchia/Cavaglieri 2018 (as note 9) see also Mirka Pulga: *Donne in scena. Il teatro femminista della Maddalena negli anni settanta*, Rome 2020.

13 On Lonzi, see Laura Iamurri: *Un margine che sfugge. Carla Lonzi e l'arte in Italia 1955–1970*, Macerata 2016; Francesco Ventrella/Giovanna Zapperi (eds.): *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy. The Legacy of Carla Lonzi*, London 2020; on Lonzi's refusal to act like Lippard see Giovanna Zapperi, Carla Lonzi: *Un'arte della vita*, Rome 2017, p. 23; see also Marta Seravalli: *Separare l'arte. La militanza come strumento di lettura dei rapporti tra le artiste e il femminismo degli anni Settanta*, in: Cristina Casero/Elena Di Raddo/Francesca Gallo (eds.): *Arte fuori dall'arte. Incontri e scambi fra arti visive e società negli anni Settanta*, Milan 2017, pp. 59–65.

14 Letter from Elena Bornstein to Franco Raggi, 20 October 1975, Asac, Visual Arts, Historical Fund, (hereafter Asac, VA, HF), box 282.

15 For a reconstruction of the exhibition see Ricci 2023 (as note 3).

16 Vittoria Martini: *Una rivoluzione incompiuta*, Doctoral dissertation, Università Cà Foscari, Venice 2012, pp. 177–195.

17 *Project Feminism*, in: Asac, VA, HF, b. 282.

18 Vittorio Gregotti: *Introduzione*, in: B76 La Biennale di Venezia Settore arti visive e architettura. Ambiente, Partecipazione, Strutture culturali, exhib. cat., Venice, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice 1976, p. 10.

19 *Convegno internazionale sulla nuova Biennale, 30–31 maggio 1975*, in: Asac, VA, HF, b. 296, p. 19.

20 Vittorio Gregotti: *Lettera n. 2, Quei rompiballe dei giornalisti*, in: *L'Espresso*, 18 July 1976.

21 Rita De Petra: *L'allergia del Pci alla libertà delle donne*, in: *Left*, 8 March 2021, <https://left.it/2021/03/08/allergia-del-pci-alla-liberta-delle-donne/#>, last accessed on 10 April 2025; Eleonora Forenza: *Iscritte a parlare. Storie di donne e pratiche femministe nel Partito comunista italiano (1970–1991)*, Rome 2025.

22 *Proposals for Women's Participation in the Biennale, 1977*, to the President and Board of the Biennale signed by the constituting Venice Operations Group, Asac, VA, HF, b. 298; see also Federica Di Castro: *L'idea espansa. Un percorso critico nell'arte del Novecento*, Macerata 2013.

23 *Verifiche di un quadriennio – Riflessioni per il futuro*, in: *Archivio storico delle arti contemporanee* (ed.): *Biennale di Venezia. Annuario 1978*, Venice 1979, p. 638; Daniela Ferrari (ed.): *Mirella Bentivoglio. I segni del femminile*, in: idem (ed.): *Poesia visiva. La donazione di Mirella Bentivoglio al Mart*, exhib. cat., Rovereto, Mart, Cinisello Balsamo 2011, p. 16.

24 The project, 6 April 1978, in: Asac, VA, HF, b. 298; see also Milli Gandini/Mariuccia Secol: *La*

mamma è uscita. Una storia di arte e femminismo, Rome 2021, pp. 49–53.

25 Gandini/Secol 2021 (as note 24), p. 51.

26 Dalla creatività femminile come maternità-natura al controllo ricerca della natura and Dalla donna alla donna passando per il cielo, in: La Biennale di Venezia 1978: From Nature to Art, from Art to Nature. General Catalogue, exhib. cat. Venice, Giardini et al., Venice 1978, pp. 246–247; La mamma è uscita, in: Le operaie della casa, November 1975–February 1976, p. 21, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Operaie_della_casa.pdf?uselang=it, last accessed on 6 March, 2025; see also Jacopo Galimberti: Images of Class: Operaismo, Autonomia and the Visual Arts (1962–1988), London/New York 2022, pp. 274–276.

27 Stefano Taccone: La cooperazione dell'arte, Naples 2020; idem: La donna ha la testa troppo piccola per l'intelletto ma sufficiente per l'amore. Gruppi femministi a Napoli, in: hotpotatoes, 19 December 2021, <http://www.hotpotatoes.it/2021/12/19/gruppi-femministi-a-napoli/>, last accessed on 6 March 2025.

28 The catalogue also mentions the seminar *La professionalità della donna nell'arte*, and the screening of *Le vestivi violente dalla veste bianca alla veste nera: condizionamenti sacri e profani nella vita delle donne dal matrimonio alla morte* (1978), see Spazio aperto, exhib. cat., Venice, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice 1978.

29 The Second Appeal signed by the constituting Venice Operations Group, Asac, VA, HF, b. 298; see also Federica Di Castro: Le arti visive, in: Effe 3, 1975, no. 3, pp. 33–34.

30 Fagone's program was later entitled *Art and Cinema, Historical Works, Documents and Current Material (1916–1978)* and held at Ca' Corner della Regina (2–13 July 1978); *Follia del Quotidiano*, planned between 20 August and 15 September 1978, included works by Raheli herself but also by Lilly Romanelli, Marisa Busanel, Silvia Maglione, Maria Grazia Bertacci, Verita Monselles and Dacia Maraini, see: Asac, VA, HF, b. 292.

31 Letter from Mirella Bentivoglio to Vittorio Gregotti, 9 July 1978, in: Asac, VA, HF, b. 292.

32 Letter from Ripa di Meana to Wanda Raheli and Franco Rocella, 28 July 1978, in: Asac, VA, HF, b. 292.

33 For a list of Bentivoglio's exhibitions, see Simona Isacchini: L'attività curatoriale di Mirella Bentivoglio, Dissertation, La Sapienza University of Rome, Rome 2019–2020; Anna Maria Fioravanti Baraldi (ed.): Post Scriptum. Artiste in Italia tra linguaggio e immagine negli anni '60 e '70, exhib. cat., Ferrara, Civiche Gallerie d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Ferrara 1998, p. 158.

34 On the activities of the Centro Tool, see Jacopo Galimberti: Individuals Against Individualism. Art Collectives in Western Europe (1956–1969), Liverpool 2017; Dario Dogheria: Ricerche sulla parola, al di là della parola: il Centro Tool di Milano (1971–1973), in: Ricerche di S/Confine 4, 2018, pp. 127–138; Gabriele Detterer/Maurizio Nannucci (eds.): Artist-Run Spaces. Nonprofit Collective Organizations in the 1960s and 1970s, Zurich 2012.

35 Lea Vergine: Schegge. Lea Vergine sull'arte e la critica contemporanea. Intervista di Ester Coen, Milan 2001, p. 38.

36 Mirella Bentivoglio: Poesia visiva, in: Unedi (ed.): Enciclopedia Universale dell'Arte, Supplemento, Rome 1978.

37 Mirella Bentivoglio was also among the few women to take part in the Biennale of dissent, see *La nuova arte sovietica: una prospettiva non ufficiale*, curated by Gabriella Moncada and Enrico Crispolti, 4 December 1977, in: Asac, VA, HF, p. 282.

38 Renato Barilli: Mostre/per sole donne, quoted in Baraldi 1998 (as note 33), p. 17.

39 Mirella Bentivoglio: Una mostra in progress riflessioni e risposte, in: Le Arti, November–December 1975, nos. 10–12, p. 47. See also Bremer (as note 2), pp. 478–479; Jacopo Galimberti: Gli applausi li voglio comunque: Milli Gandini, un'artista femminista dal marxismo al PSI (1975–1990), in: Palimpsesti 2021, no. 10, <https://air.iuav.it/retrieve/147d408e-6cb2-479d-bddc-3b0400be22f1/Galimberti%20Milli%20Gandini%20definitive.pdf>, last accessed on 10 April 2025.

40 Interview with Cloti Ricciardi, in: Seravalli 2017 (as note 13), pp. 233–239; see also Mirella Bentivoglio (ed): Materializzazione del Linguaggio, exhib. cat., Venice, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice 1978/2022, p. 3.

41 Tony Bennett: The Exhibitionary Complex, in: New Formations 4, 1988, pp. 73–102.

42 Ibidem, p. 93.

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2 Courtesy © Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia, Asac.

3 Images published in *Annuario 1979, Eventi 1978*, Venice 1982, p. 292. © Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia, Asac.