

Site-Responsive Public Art Project Choreographing 50 Traditional Venetian Sailboats in a Performative Regatta to Premiere in May 2019 During the 58th Venice Biennale Vernissage

**Independent Project Created by Melissa McGill and Curated by Chiara Spangaro
in Collaboration with more than 250 Venetian Partners**

***Red Regatta* Celebrates Local Maritime Culture and History and
Calls Attention to the Fragile Balance Between the City of Venice and the Sea**

Additional Performances Extending Beyond the Lagoon and into the Canals
To be Presented Through November 2019



Melissa McGill, *Red Regatta (Coppa del Presidente della Repubblica)*, 2018
Unique framed archival digital C-print with pigment
60 x 36 in. (152.4 x 91.4 cm)

Artist rendering currently on view at Magazzino Italian Art Foundation in Cold Spring, NY

New York, NY – February 4, 2019 – In May 2019 during the vernissage of the Venice Biennale, artist [Melissa McGill](#) will launch *Red Regatta*, an unprecedented series of large-scale choreographed regattas of traditional *vela al terzo* sailboats, hoisted with hand-painted red sails, that will activate Venice's lagoon and waterways. The project unites Venetians and visitors to celebrate the cultural and maritime history of this iconic city to call attention to the forces of climate change and mass tourism that threaten its future. *Red Regatta* is presented in collaboration with [Associazione Vela al Terzo Venezia](#) and more than 250 local partners, led by McGill, curator Chiara Spangaro, and project manager Marcella Ferrari, and is co-organized by [Magazzino Italian Art Foundation](#). Unfolding in multiple parts over the duration of the Biennale, artist-led workshops and public programs developed in collaboration with [No Longer Empty](#) will explore the project's themes in relation to the traditions that have shaped Venetian life for a millennium.

Red Regatta is the first artwork to be registered as a [Clean Regatta](#), a program of Sailors for the Sea that mobilizes sailors to protect the ocean through education and activism.

Red Regatta navigates the delicate and liminal relationship between Venice's built and natural environments, between land and sea, and between humanity and nature. The project comprises evanescent performances, including four regattas in the Bacino di San Marco of approximately 50 traditional *vela al terzo* sailboats and a series of smaller regattas sailing in routes mapped by McGill and local sailors. Each performance will be readily visible from vistas throughout the city. A meditation on Venice's fragile future, *Red Regatta* invites local citizens and visitors alike to consider the impact of sea level rise and mass tourism in this city that lives and works by water yet is at risk of being overtaken by it.

Venetians have been sailing the *vela al terzo* boats in the city's waterways and lagoon for more than a thousand years. Designed with a flat bottom and removable mast to navigate Venice's unique maritime terrain, *vela al terzo* boats traditionally hoist sails painted in earthy colors of graphics representing each sailor's family. In *Red Regatta*, each boat will have sails hand-painted in distinct shades of red, developed by McGill.

"*Red Regatta* encourages a new appreciation of the interaction of the defining forces of Venice - water, wind, art, and architecture – that both continue to inspire and challenge its residents," states artist Melissa McGill, "As the sails glide through the lagoon in unison, the distinct reds will visually mix, join, and blend. Against the contrasting sky and sea, the reds reference the forces of life and passion, of alarm and urgency, and Venice itself – from its bricks and terra cotta rooftops, to its flag and history of trade in red pigment, to paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, and other Venetian masters."

Aiming to offer a meaningful and engaging public art experience, *Red Regatta* involves more than 250 local collaborators, including boat owners, captains, crews, sailmakers, students, and others. *Red Regatta* is made possible through ongoing partnership with the [Associazione Vela al Terzo Venezia](#), an organization dedicated to preserving this storied maritime tradition. Members of the association will sail their boats with the red sails throughout the duration of the Biennale, some using vessels passed down through generations and hundreds of years. McGill has also invited art and architecture students from local art schools and universities to collaborate with her on the project, including working alongside her on the process of the painting of the sails.

"We are enthusiastic about the collaboration with Melissa McGill and the *Red Regatta* team," says Giorgio Righetti, President of Associazione Vela al Terzo Venezia, "Working together, we hope to share our knowledge of the lagoon and North Adriatic sailing traditions, of wooden boats and the benefit of wind power over motorized motion. We are thrilled to celebrate the legacy of our shipyards and sailmakers, in addition to raising awareness about the environmental issues we face."

"*Red Regatta* is an astonishingly powerful and timely public artwork that will invite local audiences and visitors alike to investigate and appreciate Venice, its aquatic landscape, its architectural layers, its historical traditions and contemporary context," says curator Chiara Spangaro, "*Red Regatta* brings up the urgency of conserving the balance between human scale, city landscape, and natural environment."

Leading up to May and throughout the run of the Biennale, McGill in collaboration with No Longer Empty will host public open house programs and workshops to bring together both the Venetian community and visitors and spur conversations on project themes in relation to the traditions that have shaped life in Venice for a millennium.

"*Red Regatta* is a public project born out of the very soul and physical reality of Venice," comments Manon Slome, Chief Curator of No Longer Empty, a partner in the development of the public programming, "All too often, for visitors, Venice has been but an elegant and fantastical background to the international festivals that take place here. But *Red Regatta*, from the start, will involve the residents of the city in the planning and production of the work. A well-publicized Open House, led by the artist, will introduce the concept to the city while workshops during the run of *Red Regatta* will ensure that everyone, from local families to international visitors alike, can find a way to engage with the project and the wonders of the city from which it rose"

McGill is a New York-based artist who previously lived in Venice and continues to be engaged with the city. Building upon her social practice, *Red Regatta* is the artist's second major project that raises awareness of Venetian life and culture: [The Campi](#), a sound and sculptural work that explores the vitality of the city's piazzas, was installed during the 57th Biennale in the Carlo Scarpa-designed Casa Studio Scatturin, Ca' Tron and Giorgio Mastinu Fine Art. *The Campi* was curated by Chiara Spangaro and sponsored by Magazzino Italian Art Foundation.

Additional details on programs and opportunities to view *Red Regatta* will be announced. For more information visit www.redregatta.org.

Information on the artist, project leadership, and partners follows below.

About the Artist

Melissa McGill lived in Venice from 1991-93, and returns regularly for inspiration, for work, and for friendship. *Red Regatta* was inspired by her observations over more than two decades of the challenges Venice is facing given the impact of climate change and intense tourism. Melissa's intimate knowledge of Venice and her deep personal and professional relationships in the city have made it possible for her to develop this ambitious project. She is particularly passionate about the collaborative aspect and the fact that *Red Regatta* will involve many members of the local community. The project has been intentionally designed to welcome the participation and enjoyment of local citizens and to honor their abiding love for their city.

McGill is an interdisciplinary artist based in New York who creates ambitious, large-scale site-specific art projects, and works in a variety of media, including photography, painting, drawing, sculpture, sound, light and immersive installation. Her works connect viewers to overlooked histories and traditions, explores the conversation between the visible and the invisible, and heightens awareness of our surroundings.

Her previous sculptural sound work, *The Campi*, May 2017, invoked daily life in the Venetian Campo and was presented at Carlo Scarpa's Casa/Studio Scatturin, Università Iuav di Venezia and Giorgio Mastinu Fine Art in Venice, Italy. *Constellation*, 2015-2017, installed on an island in the Hudson River, New York, lit each night creating a new constellation transforming Bannerman castle ruin. McGill has been exhibiting her artwork nationally and internationally since 1991, including recent solo exhibitions at Francesco Pantaleone Arte Contemporanea, Milan; White Cube, London; Power House, Memphis; Palazzo Capello, Venice; and CRG Gallery, New York.

Project Team

Chiara Spangaro, Curator

Chiara Spangaro is an art historian and independent curator based in Milan. Operating in the fields of contemporary art, architecture and design, she is curator of Fondazione Aldo Rossi. In collaboration with

Germano Celant, she served as the curatorial associate for Triennale di Milano, 2009-2012, as well as: *Arts & Foods*, 2015, *Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Water Projects*, 2016, *Giovanni Gastel*, 2016, *Arman 1954-2005*, 2017, *Post Zang Tumb Tuuum. Art Life Politics: 1918-1943*, 2018, and more. Chiara curated I 2017 *Aldo Rossi e Milano* and McGill's previous Venice-based project, *The Campi*. in 2018, *Gio Ponti – Archi-Designer*.

Marcella Ferrari, Project Manager

Marcella is a public art and land art project manager and producer. In 2004, she began working as a production assistant for Germano Celant and she continues to be General Manager of Studio Celant. In 2014, she was appointed the CEO of The Floating Piers Srl, the Italian company that organized the event and the construction of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work of art at Lake Iseo, Italy. She currently collaborates with Eight Art Project, as project manager, for the construction of Alberto Garutti's works of art at Ca' Corniani – Terra d'Avanguardia, Caorle, Italia, curated by Elena Tettamanti and Antonella Soldaini, commissioned by Generali Italia Spa.

Magazzino Italian Art Foundation, Co-Organizer

Magazzino Italian Art Foundation is a museum in Cold Spring, New York, devoted to Italian Postwar and Contemporary art. Under the guidance of Director Vittorio Calabrese, his team and its curatorial programs, Magazzino Italian Art Foundation bridges collaborations with American and Italian organizations not only to support contemporary Italian artists but also to foster discussions on Italian Postwar and Contemporary art in the United States and beyond. Additionally, Magazzino sponsors international artist projects whose work is strongly tied to the Italian artistic heritage and to advancing Italian culture, such *Red Regatta*. Magazzino, which means warehouse in Italian, was co-founded by Nancy Olnick and Giorgio Spanu. Designed by Spanish architect Miguel Quismondo, the 20,000 square-foot structure was completed in June 2017. Magazzino serves as a resource for scholars and students and offers an extensive library and archive of Italian Art. In addition, Magazzino has become a cultural hub for the vibrant Hudson Valley community thanks to joint programs with local organizations. For more info: www.magazzino.art

Partners and Collaborators

Associazione Vela al Terzo Venezia

The Association brings together one hundred members to support and spread the knowledge about Venice's lagoon and its millenarian maritime tradition. The association's members own their own traditional vela al terzo vessels and operate them. The expertise of Associazione Vela al Terzo is essential to the plotting of the regatta's courses and overall organization of the project. For more information: www.velaalterzo.it.

No Longer Empty

No Longer Empty is *Red Regatta's* collaborator in the development of related public programming, with Manon Slome, co-founder and curator in an advisory role. Based in New York City, No Longer Empty (NLE) is a nonprofit organization committed to bringing bold, site-responsive exhibitions and public programming to unconventional locations, foregrounding art as a catalyst for community-led conversations about place. For more information: www.nolongerempty.com

Sailors for the Sea

Sailors for the Sea is the world's only ocean conservation organization that engages, educates, inspires, and activates the sailing and boating community toward healing the ocean. Since its start in 2004, Sailors

for the Sea has worked towards building a community of ocean stewards by offering tools, education, and inspiration so that sailors may become change agents and harness the power of their passion to heal the ocean. Sailors for the Sea is headquartered in Newport, Rhode Island and has three affiliates; [Sailors for the Sea Japan](#); [Sailors for the Sea Portugal](#); and [Sailors for the Sea Chile](#).

Clean Regattas

Clean Regattas is the world's only sustainability certification for water-based events. The program enables sailors to protect their local waters by empowering them with tips and resources to implement sustainability initiatives. Since 2006, more than 1,350 Clean Regattas have been run in 36 countries and in over half of all the United States. To learn more contact Robyn Albritton (robyn@sailorsforthesea.org) or visit sailorsforthesea.org.

Golden Artist Colors, Inc.

Golden Artist Colors, Inc. has donated the paint that will be used in creating *Red Regatta*. Golden Artist Colors, Inc. is a manufacturer of artist quality materials including colors and mediums for painting in acrylics, oils and most recently, watercolor. With two locations, a 100,000-square-foot facility in rural Columbus, N.Y., and a 45,000-square-foot commercial warehouse and distribution center in Norwich, N.Y., the company's over 220 full-time employees are committed to producing materials that encourage exploration of form and concept, while assuring archival integrity. The GOLDEN brand of acrylics is known for quality and archival integrity as well as being the most innovative and extensive system available. The company also owns Williamsburg Handmade Oil Colors, which is known for its quality and extensive palette of colors including genuine Italian and French earth colors. QoR®, a new, thoroughly modern watercolor is made with an exclusive Aquazol binder, providing more pigment in every brushstroke, as well as color strength, range and versatility unmatched in the history of watercolors. Furthermore, the Custom Lab at GOLDEN serves artists and organizations by formulating materials to fit their needs and purposes. Not only committed to its customers and local community, GOLDEN is dedicated to its employee owners as well. In April 2010, GOLDEN employees became the majority owners of the company and in 2008, the company became a 100% Tobacco Free Campus for staff and visitors. For information about Golden Artist Colors and its comprehensive product offering, call 1-800-959-6543 or visit www.goldenpaints.com, www.williamsburgoil.com or www.qorcolors.com.

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