

Art, refusing to be consumed

An extraordinary project during the Venice Biennale 2015 by Adam de Neige

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The artwork needs the viewer. He is just as important for Fine Art as the observer is for performing arts, motivating the artist to do a show. In the eye of the beholder, the piece of art is recreated, truly called into being. But is this the only way it can exist? This very common view is provokingly challenged by Austrian-Iranian artist Adam de Neige in his work for this year's Venice Biennale.

Four artworks in water-proof boxes are submerged at different locations of Venice. Their positions are chosen carefully, building a perfect square – with the Giardini being its center as well as the center of the Biennale. An imaginary exhibition space, outlined by four coffers. They hide the artworks and keep them present at the same time, yet for eternity, not for our eyes.

Adam de Neige smartly shifts our view: the focus lies no longer on the artworks, which he withdraws from sight, but on what is going on around. "Venice is an island sinking slowly into the sea. Every two years, the Biennale finds itself a few millimeters closer to the water level", the artist points out. For him, the lagoon city is doomed to sink and the Biennale a gigantesque marketing event, where the artistic content often falls from view: "What makes the success of the Biennale today? Is it the artworks and ideas? The artists? Or is it the marketing surrounding it all?" When looking at the international art scene, all the fairs, auctions and biennales, one will find some truth in De Neige's critic. The event, the spectacle, the money often attract the main attention. Even if we seem to face art in front of us, have we lost our regard on it, being the essential? Isn't Venice and its Biennale turning around itself, like in a crazy dance on a sinking ship?

De Neige's works cannot be contemplated or consumed. And this is their strong point, precisely. The artworks are invisible, but still have the capacity to communicate with us. It can only be speculated about what they represent. They have, due to the artist, already "arrived at the liquid future of Venice". There, they can be (re-)discovered, accessed, and presumably viewed, too – artistic documents, both of past times and a future that has already become present. Working on the project's concept and realization since several months, De Neige tried to conceive this distant future and apply an approach he imagined to be his own at that time. Enigmatically, the artist states: "They deliver a message from a future we haven't reached yet."