

A Venice Biennale Best

Deborah Colton's Top Ten List

BY DEBORAH COLTON // 06.10.15



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Japanese Pavilion, Giardini: Chiharu Shiota's "The Key in the Hand." The artist creates this large-scale installation using several thousand strings of red yarn tied to keys, symbolizing the safeguard of our memories being stored behind the protection of the key to our true feelings. The two boats beneath the keys are meant to capture the rain of memories. One of my favorites.

Texas gallerist **Deborah Colton** reports from the **56th Venice Biennale**, where she traveled to take in exhibitions and pavilions for a number of the artists in her stable, including Egyptian-born **Khaled Hafez** and **Mahmoud Obaidi**, who is from Iraq. The nonagenarian cinematic/video/photo pioneer **Jonas Mekas** was another Biennale headliner. Scroll through the slide show for a dealer's-eye view of the platinum standard among international art convergences.

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Russian Pavilion, Giardini: Irina Nakhova's "The Green Pavilion." Part of a larger series of "Rooms," Nakhova creates a new environment with every installation, and "The Green Pavilion" forges a direct dialogue with Kabakov's Red Pavillion from 1993, which demonstrated the importance of color. Nakhova is separating herself from post-Soviet-era art in exchange for more global significance. This was the best part of the Russian Pavilion.

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British Pavilion, Giardini: Sarah Lucas' "I Scream Daddio." One of Great Britain's most recognized contemporary artists, Lucas uses irreverent humor and everyday objects to draw allusions to sex, death and the notion of "Englishness."

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Zattere: "In the Eye of the Thunderstorm: Effervescent Practices from the Arab World & South Asia," with video projection by Deborah Colton Gallery-represented artist, Khaled Hafez, featured in FotoFest 2013. Touching important topics in an uplifting way.

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The city of Venice as the ultimate white cube

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Norwegian Pavilion, Giardini: Camille Norment's "Rapture." This piece by Norment is a site-specific, multi-sensory work constructed of three parts, including performances by musicians and vocalists who also use the glass harmonica, an instrument that utilizes water on glass to create mesmerizing sounds. Very peaceful and profound.

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Korean Pavilion, Giardini: Moon Kyungwon and Jeon Joonho's "The Ways of Folding Space & Flying." This multi-channel film installation explores an archeological quest into human civilization that weaves visions of the future with truths of the past that is meant to reflect the evolution of the Venice Biennale and its rising importance. Very futuristic and cool, another favorite!

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Jonas Mekas' "The Internet Saga," took place at two locations: Palazzo Foscari Contarini, once a 16th-century noble residence and now a Burger King, and Spazio Ridotto, a new space for video art near Piazza San Marco. "The Internet Saga" is the only project dedicated to art on the web that includes several presentations and performance that together make up one complete cinematic project. The Godfather of independent film, Mekas is always amazing and creates a great buzz.

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Argentine Pavilion, Arsenale: Juan Carlos Distéfano's "The Uprising of Form." This installation is a reflection of the human condition made from reinforced polyester, and warns of possible futures. His artwork is politically charged, and upon occasions has been historically censored for "moral" reasons. Very soulful work and presents human struggle.

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Arsenale: "United Arab Emirates, 1980 – Today: Exhibitions in the United Arab Emirates." The exhibition includes a diverse collection of work by key figures in the country's history of art, highlighting the emergence of various art practices in the UAE. Artists include: Ahmed Al Ansari, Moosa Al Halyan, Mohammed Al Qassab, Abdul Qader Al Rais, Abdullah Al Saadi, Mohammed Abdullah Bulhiah, Salem Jawhar, Mohammed Kazem, Dr. Najat Meky, Abdulraheem Salim, Ahmed Sharif, Hassan Sharif, Obaid Suroor, Dr. Mohamed Yousif, and Abdulrahman Zainal. Very representative of their culture, a nice presentation.

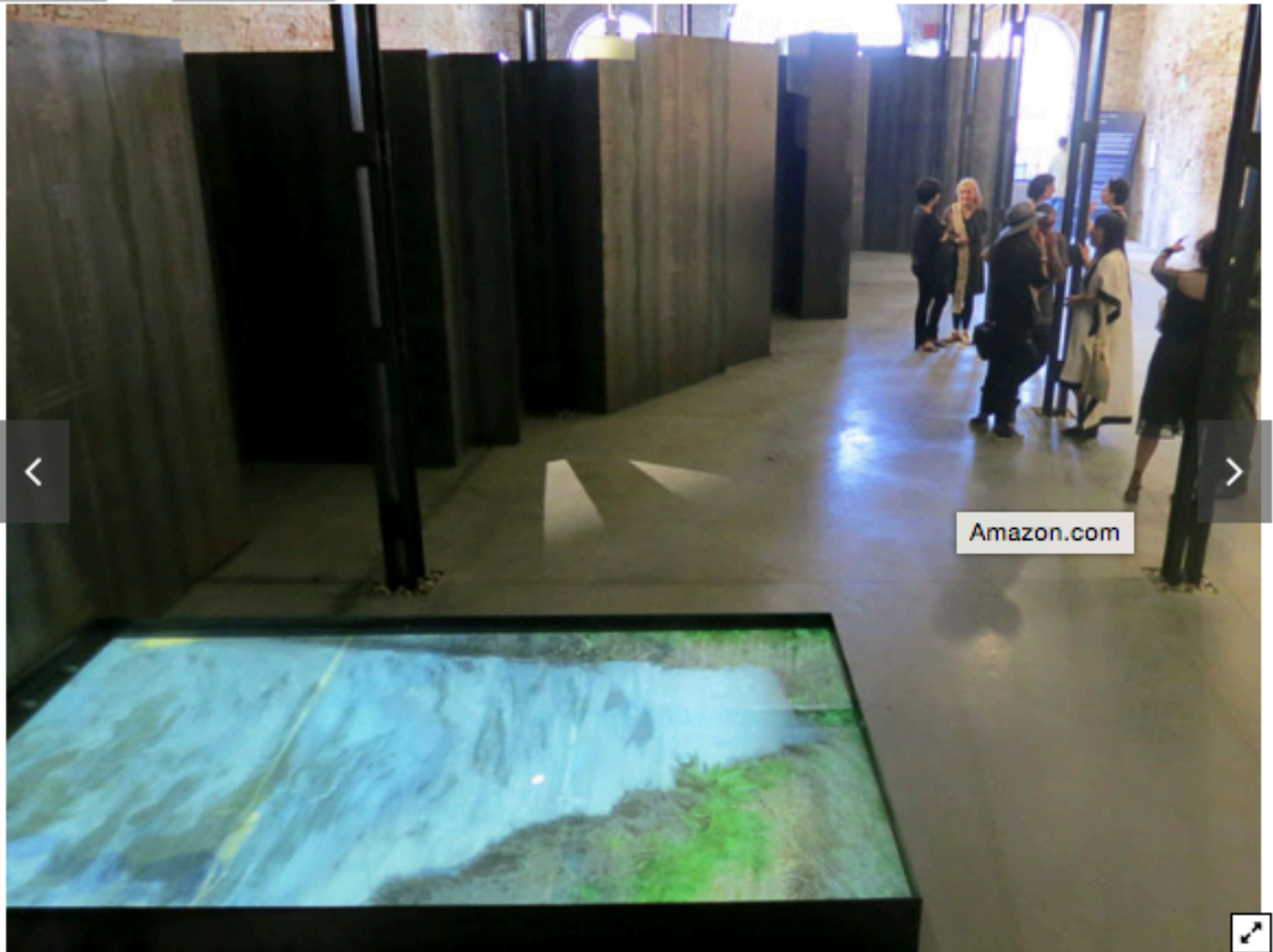
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Mexican Pavillion, Arsenale: Luis Felipe Ortega and Tania Candiani's "Possessing Nature." Using Venice and Mexico City as inspirations, Candiani and Ortega juxtapose the two cities, one a "city of canals," and the other, a "city of drains." The artwork itself is a flawed hydraulic system that reveals the natural disequilibrium that forms when political structures attempt to grow in defiance of nature, which, we learn, holds the ultimate power.

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Deborah Colton Gallery artist, Mahmoud Obaidi and Deborah M. Colton at "In the Eye of the Thunderstorm: Effervescent Practices from the Arab World & South Asia."

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