

THE HAPPENSTANCE.05
Venice / Local Context

Scotland
+ Venice

External filming screen event
Image: Alberto Lago

PLACE

LUOGO
090011

Deckchairs being taken to an external event
Image: Alberto Lago

THE HAPPEN STANCE

The Happenstance was Scotland's contribution to the 16th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice, 2018

In this dispatch, designer and local Venetian, Alberto Lago, who played a key role in the project, talks about how the memory of The Happenstance is still alive in the mind of the Venetian people. It has brought to the island a spirit of freedom, and community engagement that Venice is losing due to the high touristic densification. The legacy of The Happenstance raised awareness that public space for all is needed in a city that is not free anymore. He also lays out what the legacy of The Happenstance has meant to himself.



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This publication is one in a series of twelve reflections on The Happenstance. Click here or go to ads.org.uk/the-happenstance-archive-dispatches to access the other publications.



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year of young people
bliadhna na h-òigridh
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Albert Lago and musician hold impromptu music event with Venetian children



Skateboarding at, employed by Venetian children
Image: Rob Colvin

Venice / Local Context

Alberto Lago

The Happenstance is still alive around the city. I can hear voices all over the island remembering its presence: “Happenstance was the only Biennale event that was not a real Biennale event.” This is one of the typical comments that I still hear in the streets. This means it was connected with Venetians fully, rather than most of the projects that try to connect with the local people just for publicity and the seeking of a means to fulfill ephemeral needs.

One of the most significant impacts that The Happenstance had on Venice was the possibility that foreign people (called foresti) could bring to the island a spirit of freedom and community engagement that Venice is losing due to the high

touristic densification. Indeed, every day in Venice we can see the opening of new shops just for the tourist and not for locals (ice cream, pasta, candy shops etc.). Moreover, most of the houses are refurbished for tourists and not for new inhabitants. The Happenstance was a public agora, a place that was given to Venetians for daily use, not as an open-air museum like Venice has become, but for people that live the city every day.

Another recurrent anecdote is when in the city I walk on the streets of Venice, “Calli”, with friends that are part of Poveglia per Tutti* (one of the best and most active supporters of The Happenstance), I still get introduced to people that I do not know as: “This is Alberto, he was

one of the active people behind the Scottish Biennale exhibition of last year, do you remember it?" Most people's reaction is "Yes, it was the garden of freespace in Zenobio, with outdoor projections, deckchairs, games, and a kids playground." So, the memory of The Happenstance is still alive in people's minds. One of the best influences it had on people was the number of connections that the Zenobio garden activated, for me personally, and for a lot of other people that I met.

Again, I saw an old friend, who asked me: "Are you still working at the outdoor projection?" The outdoor screening was one of the most well received activities of the project. It gave the Venetians the feeling that the city is still alive and rich in spirit.

The projector, mixer and speakers have been donated by The Happenstance and freely go around the city of Venice between events, sagras, outdoor cinemas screenings and many more activities. Thanks to the help of the friends of Poveglia, who are managing the equipment, it is kept available for the whole Venetian community.

Alberto Lago enjoys an Iron Bru



**Poveglia per Tutti is an association whose aim is to reclaim Poveglia, one of the many islands scattered across the Venetian lagoon, and make it a public place for the Venetian community to enjoy rather than yet another tourist resort.*

The most important legacy left by The Happenstance in the city is the awareness of the need for public space for all - where people can stay, play, interact, relax and just enjoy the freedom of a city that is not free anymore.

RESOURCES

- [Alberto Lago](#)
- [Alberto Lago](#)
- [Northland Creative](#)
- [Related Films](#)

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The garden in the floods of November 2018
Image: Alberto Lago





Film still from The Borrae Boys
Image: Basharat Khan

How the memory of The Happenstance is still alive today in the minds of the Venetian people and and what its legacy means locally.



The armature with painted Venetian lions

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