



# Catalonia in Venice 2017\_ La Venezia che non si vede

Collateral Event of the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

A project by Antoni Abad.

Curated by Mery Cuesta and Roc Parés

Organized and produced by the Institut Ramon Llull

Cantieri Navali. Fondamenta Quintavalle, Castello 40. Venice

May 13th - November 26th, 2017 / Inauguration: May 11th, 5:30p.m.

**The Institut Ramon Llull** is participating in the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia with the project **La Venezia che non si vede / Unveiling the Unseen** by Antoni Abad, curated by Mery Cuesta and Roc Parés. The project is being presented at the Cantieri Navali de Castello from May 13th to November 26th. It is a sensorial interpretation of the city of canals, created in collaboration with people who are blind or visually impaired, a collective who uses their senses in a different and unique way. Through the shared exchange of both the experiences and difficulties of their daily lives, less obvious urban forms are revealed, allowing for a new map of public space to be drawn up that is usable by everyone.

**Abad** works with digital communities where mobile phones take on an important role as means of social communication. He is creating a locative sound map of Venice using the **BlindWiki app** - an app created for people who are blind, but usable by anyone with a smartphone. Impressions of any part of the city can be registered and published using the app and can be listened to at any moment. A true citizens' network that improves the services to the community, and that is becoming an **international network** to share experiences, stories and thoughts about all that is not visible.

The Catalan project for the Biennale Arte 2017 is a proposal to civil society: that research on collective intelligence seeks universal **accessibility** and suggest alternative ways to occupy public spaces, both physical and digital.

The **La Venezia che non si vede / Unveiling the Unseen** project is divided into four parts:

1. Creation of the new **BlindWiki app** dedicated to the event;
2. Setting up the exhibition space at Cantieri Navali - conceptualized by the Catalan graphic design studio, **Avanti-Avanti Studio** -who specializes in *Design for All-*, with *Universal Design* criteria for all the visitors - which will function as a reception and information area.
3. The **boat tour** that leaves from the dock located in front of the exhibition space. Guided by people who are blind, passengers explore the city aboard a rowboat *sampierota*, the traditional Venetian *voga* boat. (The tour lasts 20 minutes and is free for 4 passengers at a time.)
4. The **international seminar, "Cartographies of the Unseen"**, which will take place on **May 15th and 16th** and is being coordinated by Mario Ciaramitaro, researcher at the luav, and Roc Parés, co-curator of the Catalan project and a researcher at the Pompeu Fabra University, along with the participation of the artists, academics, activists, accessibility professionals and representatives from associations of people who are blind.

Created under the direction of Antoni Abad and developed by Matteo Sisti and AKX, the **BlindWiki app** is adapted to the needs of people who are blind and can be installed for free on any Android or iOS phone. The geolocated recordings started in February, and continued during the weekly expeditions coordinated by the artist in collaboration with **Valeria Bottalico**, an expert on art and accessibility. The primary participants of these mappings were **people who are blind** alongside **volunteers from community associations and students from the luav and Ca'Foscari University** in Venice.



In order to shed more light on the BlindWiki project, Abad also directed a documentary produced by Daniele Zoco, with subtitles in Italian and English as well as an audio description in Italian and English, which will be projected in the exhibition space.

The project also includes the publication of a **tactile comic with *haut-relief*** designs by **Max** (who is the cartoonist Francesc Capdevila, winner of the 2007 National Award for Comic in Spain). The drawings were created in collaboration with the participants who are blind, under the direction of Mery Cuesta, co-curator.

This will be the fifth time that the **Institut Ramon Llull** promotes Catalonia's presence in the Venice Art Biennale. The Institut Ramon Llull is a consortium formed by the governments of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands and Barcelona City Council to promote the Catalan language and culture internationally. The project by Antoni Abad, Mery Cuesta and Roc Parés was selected during a public competition by an independent jury, presided over by Xavier Antich.

The project is indebted to the collaboration of its **sponsors**: Colección Beep de Arte Electrónico – NewArtFoundation, el Departamento di Culture del Progetto de la Università luav di Venezia, Elisava – Escola Universitària de Disseny i Enginyeria de Barcelona, Fabulor and is accessible for people with intellectual disability thanks to Museo per Tutti, a project by Associazione l'Abilità Onlus Fondazione De Agostini. The complete list of participants and collaborators is available at: [www.blind.wiki](http://www.blind.wiki).

#### **Antoni Abad.**

Born in Lleida, Spain 1956. Lives and works in Barcelona, Spain  
[www.blind.wiki](http://www.blind.wiki)

From 2004 to 2013 he has devoted his activity to undertaking the [www.megafone.net](http://www.megafone.net) online communication projects based on publications from smartphones done by various groups at risk of exclusion in Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Spain, Switzerland, United States, and the Algerian Sahara.

In October 2014 he began developing the BlindWiki project in the Spanish Academy in Rome, a prototype of an online citizen network conceived for people who are blind or visually impaired. Participants use smartphones to make geo-located audio recordings of their everyday experiences in the city. Through the BlindWiki application, the previously posted recordings are always accessible from mobile phones on the streets, reflecting the urban landscape as experienced by people with vision loss. The project promotes the collaborative creation of a sensorial public map to be extended to other cities. Various editions of the BlindWiki project were implemented in Sydney 2015, Berlin 2016 and Wrocław, Poland 2016.

His work has been presented at the following art biennials: Venice, Italy 1999; Lima, Peru 1999; Seville, Spain 2004 and 2008; Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil 2009; Curitiba, Brazil 2013 and Berlin, Germany 2016.

Among other venues, his work have been presented in Europe and the Americas, including the following: Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1997 and 2008; Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, 1999; ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany, 1999 and 2008; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 2001; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2002; Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2003 and 2014; PS1, New York, 2003; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, 2005; La Casa Encendida, Madrid, 2005; Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona, 2006; Centro Cultural Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2007; Centre d'Art Contemporaine, Geneva, 2008; Matadero, Madrid 2014; Laboratorio de Arte Alameda, México DF 2014; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil 2015. In 2006 he was awarded the Visual Arts National Prize of Catalonia and the Golden Nica Digital Communities of the Prix Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria.

[www.llull.cat](http://www.llull.cat)   <http://blind.wiki/venezia>   [www.facebook.com/CataloniaInVenice](http://www.facebook.com/CataloniaInVenice)

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