



Pavilion of the Kingdom of Bahrain  
at the 16th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia

### **Friday Sermon**

Friday Sermon, is the Kingdom of Bahrain National participation at the 16<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia.

The pavilion, located in the Arsenale (Artiglierie), is commissioned by her Excellency Sheikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The curatorial team is composed of Nora Akawi, an architect and researcher based in New York, USA and Amman, Jordan and Noura Al Sayeh an architect based in Bahrain.

For its fifth participation, the participation of the Kingdom of Bahrain at the Biennale Architettura 2018 features an installation and research on the ritual of the Friday sermon and its influence on public space and public opinion. When thinking about free space, and by extension free speech for Arab and Muslim communities, the Friday *khutbah* becomes a key protagonist, especially as state, law, and religion remain as entangled as ever. From Bahrain to New York. *Friday Sermon* traces the evolution and apparatus of this ritual of preaching and collective listening, and its' implications on the transformation of common space, sometimes as an obstruction, others as reinforcement, to the possibilities for free spaces of debate and assembly.

The exhibition is designed by Apparata Studio and consists of a large-scale structure that hosts a sound installation by Giuseppe Ielasi and Khyam Alami based on recordings of Friday sermons in Bahrain. The installation defines a central void under which one can experience the sound installation and references the sacred space of the religious, while the periphery of the installation, hosts three different contributions, each exploring a different aspect of the Friday sermon Practices. The All Hearing, a video installation by artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan investigates the effects of “loudspeaker libertarianism” in Cairo and its consequences on hearing damage and noise pollution in the city. The installation by Matilde Cassani looks into the architecture of the minbar and its adaptation in the Italian context while Mezna Qato and Sadia Shirazi present 3 Scores & the People’s Mic *Khutba*, a book of scores responding to Muslim social life under siege and that reimagines different formats for the Friday sermon.

A collection of five different essays form the scientific content of the exhibition and offer a historical overview of the origins, history and evolutions of the practices of the Friday sermon, as well as its use for political purposes. The essays are accompanied by a portfolio of images by Camille Zakharia taken in Bahrain, as well as archival images of the rituals of the sermon from New York to Amman. The collection of essays and images will form the basis of the exhibition catalogue, readily available for consultation at the pavilion.

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