

Interview with David Chipperfield

VENICE. When the Japanese architect Kazuyo Sejima was appointed director of the last edition of the “International Architecture Exhibition” in Venice, the central show at the Venice Architecture Biennale, she broke a four-edition spell during which critics, curators and academics had set the tone for the prestigious architecture event. Paolo Baratta, the president of the biennial, announced that the move had “brought the exhibition back into the hands of an architect”. It seems the idea was a good one, as this year’s event, the 13th edition of the exhibition, has been entrusted to the British-born architect **David Chipperfield**.

Chipperfield’s theme for the show is “**Common Ground**”, for which **58 projects will be presented by 109 participants, more than usual**. *«Architecture is the most collaborative process», he says, «and this show will focus on the notion of shared ideas over individual authorship»*. The original participants were asked to invite collaborators to join forces for their projects, creating a web of architects, scholars, photographers and critics whose differing viewpoints are expected to dazzle and challenge. For example, **Norman Foster is teaming up with Marisa Gonzales and Andreas Gursky, while Luis Fernández-Galiano is collaborating with Nieto Sobejano and Emilio Tuñón**. *«Over the past 20 years, architecture has become very individualistic. As architects, we have to brand ourselves, but by doing that you’re identifying yourself as different from other architects. This suggests that we don’t have anything in common, when in fact we do»*. Chipperfield admits that some of the architects he invited had difficulties coming up with a concept because they were used simply to presenting an individual project, rather than working as part of a team. They solved their problems as he hoped they would: through dialogue, brainstorming and reaching out to others to contribute ideas. Thus, Chipperfield hopes to look at architecture *«from a societal point of view, rather than from the self»*, citing the often overlooked

common ground between the profession and society as a further source of inspiration. *«At the moment, the profession is not that well related to the public. There is discordance and mistrust. Architecture has become like art, something you go and see rather than live in, while we spend 90% of our time in poorly designed housing blocks and shopping malls».*

Meanwhile, in pavilions in the Giardini and the Arsenale, and also throughout the city, 54 national participants are due to take part in the biennial. **Angola, Kosovo, Kuwait and Peru** have confirmed their attendance for the first time.

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