

It only takes a few bridges and clotheslines to feel like a real Venetian

This week's diarist is executive director/chief curator at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery in Toronto, who served as the commissioner/curator for the Canada Pavilion at the Venice Biennale earlier this month. She kept her diary while in Venice. After 10 months of preparations, we are immersed in the final days of installing Mark Lewis' projected films at the Canada Pavilion. Working in

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Venice has been an exhilarating and at times heart-stopping privilege. Walking from our apartments and hostels to the core of the Biennale, our daily walks take us through the narrow alleys and across many bridges, beneath clothing lines and through Via Garibaldi, and from the pavilion,

we can watch the laguna waterways. All this has us feeling immersed in the everyday life of Venice, far apart from the seething tourist crowds at the Rialto or Piazza San Marco, and from writing "wish you were here." *National Post*



Proof that detritus can detract awfully from one's artistic statement

This week's diarist served as the commissioner/curator for the Canada Pavilion at the Venice Biennale earlier this month. She kept her diary while in Venice. During the last week, the work at most of the other pavilions has grown quiet, though no less intense. Our project has been to strip the Canadian Pavilion bare, reducing it to the faceted purity of a glazed, architectural skeleton high-

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lighting its iconic plan, and to make it into a generous space for Mark Lewis' four new films. Clarifying the architectural setting had been as physically challenging as the Russians' crates making their way through the canals of Venice. But it is the moment of clearing out all detritus that finally makes

visible the work that had gone into it, by its startling clarity. As the films begin to play, the moment of the opening seems to have been brought here as if by a magic wand. An opening like nowhere else in the world. *National Post*



The throngs of people and endless talks make it all worthwhile

This week's diarist served as the commissioner/curator for the Canada Pavilion at the Venice Biennale earlier this month. She kept her diary while in Venice. June 3 is the pre-press preview day. It becomes impossible to leave due to the continuous ebb and flow of friends, colleagues, directors and sheer art-world power that comes through the pavilion. For our team, the day — which is also

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packed with collateral events, including talks and Mark Lewis' screening of his new documentary, *Backstory*, soon to be featured at the Toronto International Film Festival — ends with our VIP dinner of 160 of the most generous supporters of Mark Lewis/Canada's project. The day was

the high point of everything we had worked for, starting with the excitement of opening the pavilion, the glowing feedback from crowds of peers and ending with a sense of elation at the dinner. *National Post*

