

how to spend it

The Venice Biennale comes into view

Where to go and what to see at this year's art spectacular



Luc Tuymans' *Turtle*, 2007, from a private collection | Image: Courtesy David Zwirner, New York/London, Palazzo Grassi. Photography by Delfino Sisto Legnani e Marco Cappelletti

While it would be nice to think that the best works by any given artist are already in our international museums and galleries, invariably private collections have had the pick of the plums. Although the works showcased in the Venice Biennale (May 11-Nov 24) are not for sale, it is nonetheless always a special opportunity to see those precious pieces up close. Here are some of our highlights not to miss.

Luc Tuymans

Luc Tuymans' exhibition at the Palazzo Grassi is likely to draw significant crowds. More than 80 paintings by the artist – whose work sells for up to \$2.5m – are displayed in a show called *La Pelle*, named after a 1949 novel written by the Italian writer Curzio Malaparte when “Europe was in chaos, just like today”. The paintings address our daily lives through a set of images borrowed from the press, television and online – all dissolved in a bleak, rarefied light expressing the anxiety that is key to Tuymans' works. The exhibition includes a site-specific artwork in the atrium of Palazzo Grassi, a marble mosaic of over 80sq m. It reproduces *Schwarzheide*, a 1986 painting by Tuymans of some desultory-looking conifer trees, itself inspired by a drawing by a prisoner in a labour camp during the second world war.

Sean Scully

The celebrated Irish/American artist Sean Scully, whose paintings sell for up to \$1.7m, will be presenting *Human*: an exhibition of recent works and new, unseen pieces at the Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore. The abstract artist has created a series of new sculptures, paintings and drawings inspired by the Benedictine Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, the monks' vast illuminated manuscript collections and the adjacent 16th-century church. Beneath Palladio's magnificent Renaissance dome, Scully will install *Opulent Ascension*, his tallest sculpture to date at more than 10m tall and made of layers of multicoloured felt. It relates to the Old Testament story of Jacob's ladder. And Scully, who is best known for his large-scale abstract paintings, will also show three portraits from his Madonna Triptych, and for the first time an illuminated manuscript.



Yun Hyong-keun's Umber-Blue, 1977-78 | Image: Yun Seong-ryeol. Courtesy the estate of Yun Hyong-keun

A wealth of women

Never have so many women – 38 out of the 76 artists – represented their country at the Biennale, the most prestigious art festival in the world. The exhibitions of Switzerland, Austria, Korea, Scotland, Chile, Brazil, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Hong Kong, Israel, Australia and the UK (the latter represented by Cathy Wilkes) are just some of those in which women are taking centre stage. On the Giudecca – the island that has hitherto been a slightly sad off-piste location for exhibitions in the Biennale – an all-female collective, *October!*, is inaugurating a new “art quarter” comprising 11 new galleries and three new national pavilions in an independent initiative not formally connected to the Biennale. Sixty artists from 30 countries will be included in 20 exhibitions on the island for the launch, with shows held by the Starak Foundation, Galleria Sant’ Eufemia, Spazio Bullo, Spazio Raunich, Sudio la Città and Spazio Silos, among others. Most vibrant of the new pavilions on the Giudecca is perhaps that of Iceland, featuring an installation of nylon hair created by Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir aka Shoplifter, a Brooklyn-based artist whose works sell from as little as \$500 for a print to \$300,000 for a commissioned work. She creates sculptures and installations of real and artificial hair that climb and flow through spaces like vines, fungus or some alien creature.

Yun Hyong-keun

The first international retrospective of works by the late Yun Hyong-keun, one of the most significant Korean artists of the 20th century, will grace the Fortuny Palace. Yun, whose works sell for between \$50,000 and \$800,000, became associated with the influential Dansaekhwa movement – a monochromatic painting style that arose in the 1960s and ’70s. The show will focus on his extraordinary life and work, presenting 55 pieces that span his entire career. It also includes a meticulous reproduction of his atelier to include works by other artists (Kim Whanki, Jeon Roe-jin and Choi Jongtae).