

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Kelly Crow, "The Olympics of the Art World," The Wall Street Journal, May 6th, 2017.

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The Olympics of the Art World

The Venice Biennale is trying to lighten up. Organizers of the century-old exhibition of contemporary art, which opens to the public May 13, encouraged artists in its main show to steer clear of geopolitical conflict and focus instead on playful themes—joy, fear, color, time and sexual freedom.

The tenor of the exhibition, which takes place in pavilions and piazzas all over town, is largely determined by the biennial's sprawling main show, "Viva Arte Viva." This round-up of 120 new and established artists was picked by the biennial's artistic director Christine Macel, a former Centre Pompidou curator. Her two predecessors focused on folksy, self-taught artists and political artists from marginalized regions—but Ms. Macel's choices suggest she's projecting a playful tone. She has organized her galleries like a book, with artists' stories unfolding in rooms under headings like "The Pavilion of Time and Infinity."

"In a world full of conflicts and shocks, art bears witness to the most precious part of what makes us human," she said in a statement, adding that she hopes to hold up the rollicking world of the artist's imagination as an antidote to geopolitical ills.



Sharon Lockhart's 'Little Review.' PHOTO: SHARON LOCKHART/GLADSTONE

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GALLERY/NEUGERRIEMSCHNEIDER/NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WARSAW

POLAND

When Los Angeles-based artist Sharon Lockhart went to Poland eight years ago for a show, she fell hard for its people and has since traveled back nearly two dozen times to make films and mentor teenagers she befriended at a home for young women in Rudzienko called the Youth Center for Socio-Therapy. For Venice, she said she enlisted 47 girls from the center to comb through back issues of "Little Review," a popular children's weekly that ran in Poland in the 1920s and 1930s. The girls picked 29 issues to be translated into English, and Ms. Lockhart will distribute them, once a week, at the Polish pavilion. (She and the girls are writing and editing their own new issue of the "Little Review.")