



# The Antarctic Pavilion: Alexander Ponomarev – *Concordia*

Fondaco Marcello, Calle dei Garzoni, Grand Canal, Venice  
56<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale of Art

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May – Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2015

Press View: Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2pm - 4pm

Vernissage: Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May, 6pm – 9pm

**Following the critical success of the Antarctic Pavilion’s inaugural exhibition at the 14<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale, *Concordia* is a major installation by the celebrated Russian artist Alexander Ponomarev.**

Concordia is Latin for ‘harmony’ – the personification of concord, a treaty or pact. It is also the name basis of the Costa Concordia, wrecked off the coast of Italy in 2012 after a catastrophic blunder by its captain who abandoned ship before the safe evacuation of his 3,229 passengers.

For the 56<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale of Art, Alexander Ponomarev’s installation, curated by Nadim Samman, deploys the Costa Concordia disaster – specifically, the broken pact between Captain Schettino and his passengers – as a provocative lens through which to view the fragility of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. This agreement suspended military activity and sovereign claims on the continent’s territory, limiting human activity there to the pursuit of peaceful scientific endeavour. As the global struggle for resources intensifies, the future of this treaty is in peril. In Ponomarev’s sculptural intervention a scale model of the grounded Concordia, tilting like a tipped iceberg (or perhaps a shift in the polar axis itself) stands as an image of terrestrial re-orientation: a new worldview.

Elsewhere in the exhibition, fire invokes a notorious act of arson by a staff doctor from the Argentinean Almirante Brown station, who burnt his base to the ground when the setting sun announced the onset of winter. Further works are based on the artist’s recent expedition to the (Russian Orthodox) Trinity Church of Antarctica when the whole expedition party received

marriage sacraments from the southern continent's only resident monk. In addition to its invoking of paradigmatic disasters, *Concordia* is a meditation on community, responsibility, security and the strength of the ties that bind us together amid shifting personal and political landscapes.

The Antarctic Pavilion is a long-term project whose status as a '[trans]National Pavilion' constitutes a polemical engagement with the Biennale's nationally over-determined structure: a quasi-institutional claim to represent a transnational community, out of line with the festival's politics of territorial representation. Its programme is inspired by the vision of Antarctica as a cultural space.

The Antarctic Pavilion is a European interface platform for The Antarctic Biennale, to be held in Antarctica in 2016 aboard international research vessels. The Antarctic Biennale is also devised and implemented by artist Alexander Ponomarev and curated by Nadim Samman and is conceived as a cultural exchange between artists and the continent's scientists and support staff.

The Guardian described *Antarctopia* - The Antarctic Pavilion's exhibition at the 14<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale of Architecture - as making '*a compelling argument for the ice sheet as a frozen Giardini of sorts, "in which the sovereignty-obsessed cultural ambitions relevant two centuries ago still seem to hold sway"*'. While The Daily Telegraph said, '*Standing proud from their snowy surroundings, almost looking like new elements of the landscape, are the projects on display at the Antarctic Pavilion [...] a series of fascinating interventions*'.

Alexander Ponomarev and Nadim Samman were named by Foreign Policy Magazine among the '100 Leading Global Thinkers' of 2014 '*for designing a blueprint for Antarctic culture [...] the duo's vision of Antarctica was futuristic, beautiful and hospitable*'.

## Notes to Editors

Commissioner	Alexander Ponomarev
Curator	Nadim Samman
Exhibition Architect	Alexey Kozyr
Exhibition Manager	Anja Henckel
Graphic Designer	Alëna Ivanova-Johanson
Web	Alexandra Macdonnell
Organiser	Oceanic fund projects (Paris)
General Partner	AVC Charity Foundation / Andrey Cheglakov
Website	<a href="http://www.antarcticpavilion.com">www.antarcticpavilion.com</a>

How to get there      The Fondaco Marcello is located on the banks of the Grand Canal, very close to the Palazzo Grassi and between the Academia and Rialto bridges, in front of the San Tomà vaporetto station. Fondaco Marcello can be reached by vaporetto Sant'Angelo; traghetto from San Tomà to Sant'Angelo; and direct taxi boat landing at Pavilion.

Thanks go to: One Ocean Expeditions, Università Ca' Foscari, Venice (Italy).

### Alexander Ponomarev

Alexander Ponomarev graduated from the USSR Nautical Engineering College in 1979, following a period at the Orel Art School. He is an Officier d'Arts et de Lettres (France) and a member of the Russian Academy of Arts. In 2007 he represented Russia at the 52nd Biennale di Venezia and in 2009 docked his handmade submarine, SubTiziano, on the Grand Canal as an Official Collateral Project of the 53rd Biennale. In 2012 he represented Ukraine at the 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale of Architecture. His works are in major public collections worldwide including the Centre Georges Pompidou, FNAC (Fonds National d' Art Contemporain), France, the State Russian Museum, St Petersburg, the Collection of the Great Duchess of Luxembourg, the National Museum of Singapore, and the University Jaume I, Castellon de la Plasa (Spain).

### Nadim Samman

Nadim Samman is an independent curator and art historian based in London and Berlin. He read Philosophy at University College London before completing a doctorate at the Courtauld Institute of Art. He has written for publications including Third Text, The Art Newspaper, Art Review, Contemporary, Asian Affairs, Art India, Artchronika, Erotic Review, Naked Punch, Under/current and WestEast. He has also been an invited speaker at MoMA Warsaw, Università

Ca' Foscari, the 798 Beijing Biennale, Christies and SoAs. His curatorial projects in London, Moscow, Berlin, Venice, Zurich and Marrakech have included presentations of leading modern and contemporary artists. In 2012 he curated the 4th Marrakech Biennale with Carson Chan. Projects in 2014 include *Antarctopia: The Antarctic Pavilion* and *Treasure of Lima: A Buried Exhibition* - a unique site-specific exhibition on the remote Pacific island of Isla del Coco Nadim is Co-Director of Import Projects (Berlin). For more information see [www.import-projects.org](http://www.import-projects.org) and [www.nadimsamman.com](http://www.nadimsamman.com)

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