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melissa mcgill choreographs 50 traditional sailboats with red sails in the venetian lagoon

for the duration of the 2019 venice biennale, but independently organized, the public art project *red regatta* by NY-based artist melissa mcgill sees 50 traditional venetian sailboats, hoisted with hand-painted red sails, activate the city's lagoon and waterways. choreographing the boats in an unprecedented series of large-scale regattas, the artist celebrates local maritime culture and history, while calling attention to the forces of climate change and mass tourism that threaten the city's future.



image by marco sabadin, header image by matteo de fina

reflecting on venice's fragile future, *red regatta* invites locals and visitors alike to consider the impact of sea level rise and mass tourism in the city that lives and works by water, and yet is at risk of being overtaken by it. venetians have been sailing the vela al terzo boats in the canals and lagoon for more than a thousand years. their flat bottom and removable mast is designed to navigate venice's unique maritime terrain, while they traditionally hoist sails painted in earthy colors of graphics representing each sailor's family. in red regatta, each boat has sails hand-painted in distinct shades of red, developed by melissa mcgill.

'red regatta encourages a new appreciation of the interaction of the defining forces of venice – water, wind, art, and architecture – that both continue to inspire and challenge its residents,' states mcgill, 'as the sails glide though the lagoon in unison, the distinct reds will visually mix, join, and blend. against the contrasting sky and sea, the reds reference the forces of life and passion, of alarm and urgency, and venice itself – from its bricks and terra cotta rooftops, to its flag and history of trade in red pigment, to paintings by titian, tintoretto, and other venetian masters.'



image by marco sabadin

curated by chiara spangaro, and presented in collaboration with associazione vela al terzo venezia, magazzino italian art foundation, and more than 250 venetian partners, including boat owners, captains, crews, sailmakers, and students, the project unfolds in multiple parts over the duration of **the biennale**. performances include four regattas in the bacino di san marco of approximately 50 traditional vela al terzo sailboats, and a series of smaller regattas sailing in routes mapped by mcgill and local sailors. each performance will be readily visible from various locations throughout the city. additionally, artist-led workshops and public programs will explore the project's themes in relation to the traditions that have shaped venetian life for a millennium. the project is the first artwork to be registered as a clean regatta, a program of sailors for the sea that mobilizes sailors to protect the ocean through education and activism. more information on dates, times, routes and viewing locations can be found here (<https://www.melissamcgillartist.com/work/red-regatta/>).



image by marco sabadin



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image by yuko gherardi





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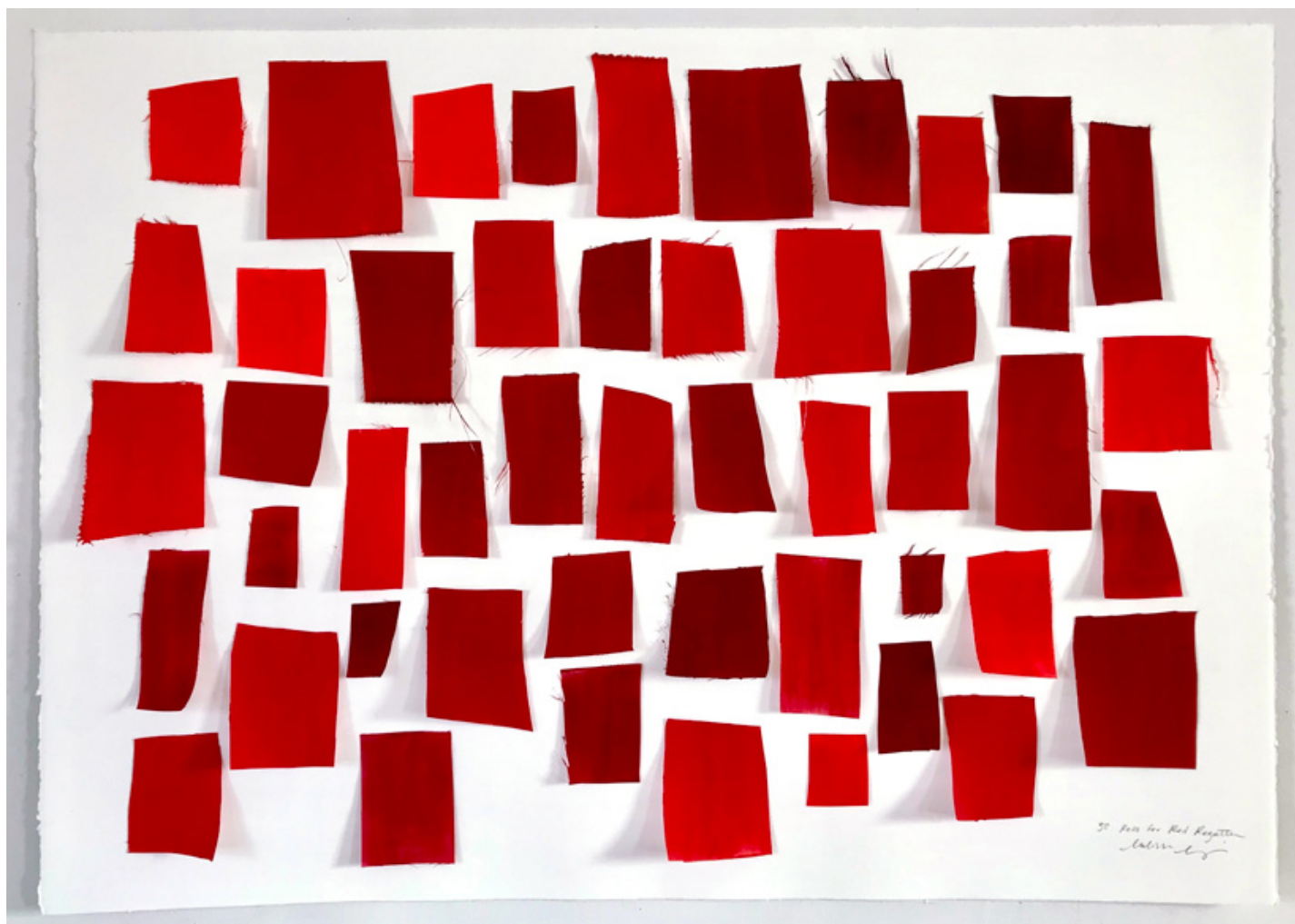


image courtesy of the artist

project info:

name: red regatta

artist: melissa mcgill (<https://www.melissamcgillartist.com/>)

curator: chiara spangaro

project manager: marcella ferrari

collaborators: associazione vela al terzo venezia, magazzino italian art foundation

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