



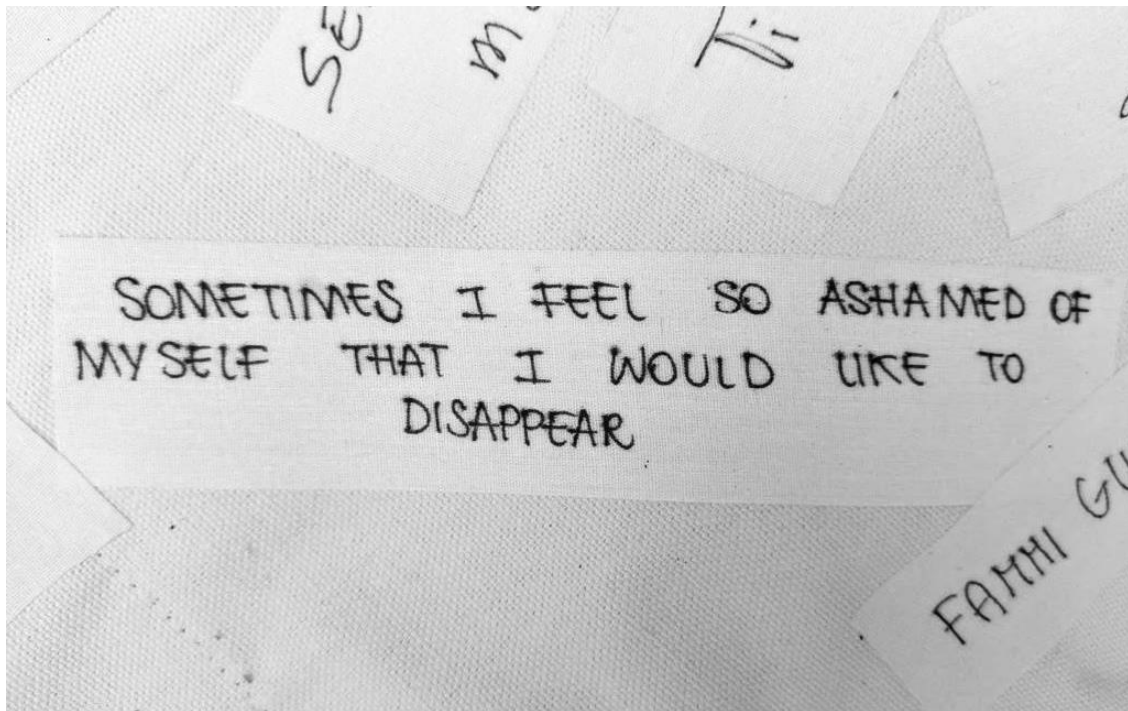
La Biennale di Venezia

59. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali

**Artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian presents her most intimate exhibition
Angels Listening as a Collateral Event of the
59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.**

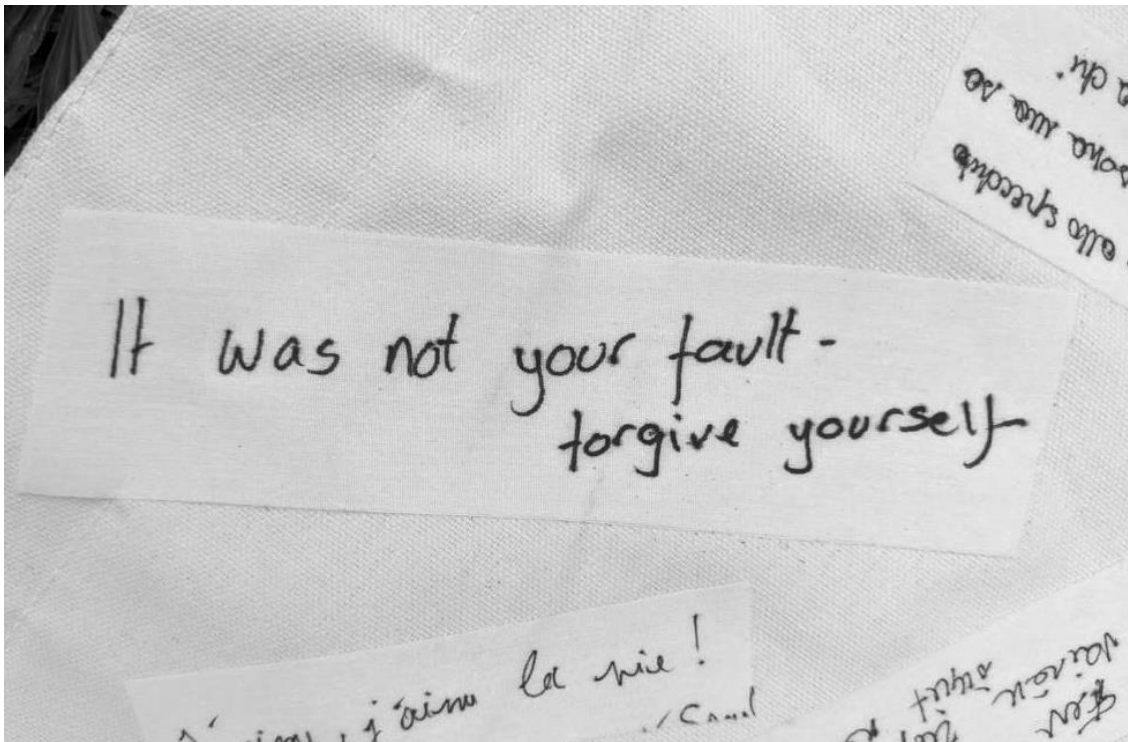
Conceived as a performative and sculptural installation, *Angels Listening* invites viewers to look within and identify thoughts they have been unable to share openly before.



Detail of a message written by a visitor – **Rachel Lee Hovnanian**, *Angels Listening*, 2022.
Performance, mixed media. Courtesy of the artist

Venice, 2022, Italy – Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena (CSDCA), Venice, presents *Angels Listening*, an immersive and intimate installation by artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian. Curated by Annalisa Bugliani, the exhibition is a Collateral Event within the context of the Biennale Arte 2022 and is being presented at the Biblioteca Zenobiana del Temanza and in its gardens in Dorsoduro, an historic 18th-century Venetian building that has served as the headquarters of CSDCA since 1991.

On view through November 2022, *Angels Listening* is conceived as a meditative space to reflect on pressing issues related to identity, knowledge, time, as well as interpersonal experience and relationships. The installation features seven large-scale angels cast in white bronze and artfully staged in front of a silver confessional box entitled *La Scatola Catartica* (The Cathartic Box). The artist has purposely covered each angel's mouth with two bronze "pieces of tape," making their silence a permanent status-quo and inviting the viewer to explore their own relationship with repressed truth, censorship, and inability to speak up. In a performative act of emotional relief through catharsis, the artist offers the viewer the possibility to write on a ribbon their innermost thoughts and then place them into a box while ringing an awakening bell that symbolizes the role of the angels as mute listeners. At the end of each day, the messages will be taken out of the box and compiled as a collective stream-of-consciousness on prayer-like mats dispersed throughout the gardens, stimulating the audience's personal interpretation.



Detail of a message written by a visitor – **Rachel Lee Hovnanian**, *Angels Listening*, 2022.
Performance, mixed media. Courtesy of the artist

Hundreds of anonymous messages have been collected since the exhibition opening during the Biennale's preview days. Each of them represents silenced voices from all over the world, offering a reflection on the role of art in this unprecedented historical and social conjuncture.

"I have been raped. He was eleven years older than me"

"I am not like them. I am not like my parents"

"Svetlana, my friend, you cannot be dead"

"It was not your fault. Forgive yourself"

"My persona is all lies"

"I never really loved John"

"I am bisexual"

"I said no, but he didn't stop"



Installation view of **Rachel Lee Hovnanian**, *Angels Listening*, 2022.
Performance, mixed media. Photo © Nicola Gnesi

The angel is a universal figure, present in Zoroastrian religious texts and those of the major monotheistic faiths, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. A genderfluid figure with both anthropomorphic and divine features, angels are at the service of the spiritual progress of the human being. *Angels Listening* evokes seven angels, as there are seven days in the week, seven frequency bands and colors that create the visible spectrum and seven fundamental units of measurement. Seven bright stars that form the Big Dipper and Ursa Minor constellations, seven heavenly virtues and musical notes and seven deadly sins. Seven is the number of hills that comprise Rome – the core of Western culture – and seven is the Buddhist number of completeness.

Rachel Lee Hovnanian comments, *“The way we perceive the world and connect with each other today has been deeply altered by the recent social distancing imposed by the global pandemic as well as the polarized nature of today’s political and cultural systems, which cemented the dominance of technology and alienation over faith and communal experiences. Angels Listening offers a space that transforms hundreds of silenced voices into a chorus of confessions, demonstrating the liberation associated with catharsis and the sanctity of meditative environments in moments of shared isolation.”*

Hovnanian’s multidisciplinary practice spans from photography, video, sculpture, painting, and installation, delving into the social codes surrounding femininity and gender relations, as well as broader value systems and the means by which we formulate our public selves. Questioning the role of art in today’s society, Hovnanian’s work navigates the post-internet world, investigating contemporary notions of narcissism, obsession and intimacy, and alienating addiction to modern technological devices and media. Her installations establish surreal and immersive environments that challenge viewers to examine their own cultural values. With a decade-long relationship with Italy, Hovnanian comes to Venice with her most intimate exhibition to date, releasing the transformative power of our inner selves.

Rachel Lee Hovnanian

rachelleehovnanian.com

Rachel Lee Hovnanian is a New York-and Miami-based artist whose multidisciplinary practice explores the complexities of modern feminism, cultural ideals regarding physical perfection, and the psychological effects of new media and technology. Born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and raised in Houston, Texas, she received her BFA from the University of Texas, Austin, and completed postgraduate studies at the Parsons School of Design in New York. Recently, Hovnanian has been the subject of several solo exhibitions in Italy, where she has lived and worked for several months every year for the past decade. These include a one-woman museum show at the Palazzo Mediceo di Seravezza (2019), a large-scale installation at the Church of San Cristoforo in Lucca (2020), as well as an exhibition in Pisa at the Church of Santa Maria della Spina in 2021. With *The Women's Trilogy Project*, a three-part solo presentation at Leila Heller Gallery (her representation since 2006) in 2018, Hovnanian became one of the only female artists to be given three consecutive exhibitions at a New York gallery. She has exhibited internationally in solo exhibitions in the United States, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, at venues including Leila Heller Gallery, New York and Dubai; Pechersky Gallery, Moscow; Joyce Gallery, Beijing; and Fundación Pons, Barcelona. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the United States Embassy in Budapest, Hungary; Parasol Unit Foundation, London; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines; Imago Galleries, Palm Springs; Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi; Loretta Howard Gallery, New York (curated by Beth Rudin DeWoody); and at the Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor; among other venues. Hovnanian's work resides in numerous private and public collections, including the Multimedia Art Museum, the Moscow Collection, the collections of the Royal Family of Dubai, the Mallin Collection, the collection of Lily Safra, the collection of Darren Walker, the corporate collections of AT&T, Dior, Graff Diamonds, TD Bank, and the 21c Museum Hotels Collection.

The Promoter

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Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena studies and preserves the rich architectural and musical heritage of the Armenian world and the cultures of neighbouring countries. The installation is set in the 18th century Venetian Loggia del Temanza designed and built by the homonymous architect Tommaso Temanza. The Neo-Palladian pavilion was originally built as the "casin", family library of Palazzo Zenobio, and later served as "Moorat-Raphël" Armenian College library. Since its restoration in 1991, the Loggia is the headquarters of the Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena and Oemme Edizioni.

The Curator

Annalisa Bugliani (1973) studied literature, history of art and cinema at the University of Pisa. She is a journalist, exhibition curator and gallery owner. She has worked as a television journalist and was a reporter for Canal + and Sky Cinema. She is collaborating with Sky Arte and important Italian magazines. In 2013, she curated the exhibition and the publication "Non luogo" on the Olympic champion and photographer Luca Tesconi at the Panichi Museum in Pietrasanta - Lucca (2013) and at the Palazzo Medici Riccardi Museum in Florence (2014). She collaborated with the Mexican artist Gustavo Azevedo in the realization of the "Lapidarium" exhibition in Pietrasanta (2014) and Berlin (2015). Since 2016 she has been the artistic director of the Lucca Film Festival and Europa Cinema. Since 2019 she has curated Rachel Lee Hovnanian's exhibitions in Italy. In 2021 she founded the exhibition space The Project Space in Pietrasanta (Lucca) where in December 2021 she curated the exhibition "On beauty and other demons" with the artists Ozmo and Giovanni Ricci-Novara.

Exhibition Details

Location: Dorsoduro 1602, 30123, Venice IT.

How to get there: a few minutes walk from the vaporetto stops of Ca 'Rezzonico (on the Grand Canal), Zattere and San Basilio (on the Giudecca Canal).

Admission: The exhibition is free and open to the public.

Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm.

To join the conversation, follow [@rachellehovnanian](https://www.instagram.com/rachellehovnanian) and use the hashtag **#RLHVenice2022**

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