



## The Venice Biennale Is an Ecstatic Celebration of Artists That Falls into Its Own Trap

by Tess Thackara  
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If you begin at the beginning of the 2017 Venice Biennale exhibition, “Viva Arte Viva,” you might think this is a show primarily about artists’ sleeping habits.

The vast exhibition, assembled by the Centre Pompidou’s chief curator Christine Macel, brings together 120 artists and collectives—70 percent of whom are making their Biennale debut—and opens in the Giardini’s Central Pavilion with a series of self-portraits of an artist idly passing time in bed.

This interest in the spaces where artists do nothing but gestate and ideate extends to American artist Dawn Kasper’s piece, for which she’s transplanted her whole studio into the pavilion, complete with a drum kit, work tables piled with art and scraps, and the artist herself, milling around, chatting to people, and fiddling with her work from time to time.

In these opening rooms, the rather vague claims of Macel’s Venice Biennale to being about artists, for artists, begin to take (very literal) form. This loose premise is a jumping-off point to reflect on the nature of creativity and to make an argument for the value of the artist, even the value of inefficiency, as one wall text alludes to, as a vital origin point for new ideas.