

ARTFORUM

VENICE BIENNALE

LATIFA ECHAKHCH

Latifa Echakhch discusses her Venice project



View of "Latifa Echakhch: The Concert," 2022, Swiss pavilion, Venice. Photo: Annik Wetter.

IN DEVELOPING THE PROJECT for the Swiss pavilion, I knew I wanted to make a radical break from what I had been doing before. The Venice proposal was an opportunity for me to unlearn my way of working as a visual artist and approach the exhibition as a musician. To help me, I recruited the curator Francesco Stocchi, who, in his former life, was a DJ of dub music. I also invited the musician and composer Alexandre Babel. I know how I project visual art in space, but I wondered what happens in his brain when he's projecting music.

I read all this fantastic history of sound and composition. I took singing and piano lessons—everything I could to shift from working like a visual artist to working like a musician. Music is more directly linked to the idea of time passing. You can feel it in your body. When you share a painting or sculpture, you see the world around you and you give it back through your artwork. This process of sharing music is much more immediate.

The idea for the pavilion is simple: I want people to feel as if they just left a concert. I want to communicate what it is to feel and play music, how it affects your body, how it forms memories. The moment you step out of a concert is a moment of transformation, and I wanted to capture that. I started with the impression people will take away from the show rather than with the works themselves. It's like I have been preparing not an exhibition, but the memory of exhibition.

I was quite conscious of the Biennale's cyclical nature. The pavilion is empty most of the time, and then you arrive with your stuff and install it, and then you pack it up and leave, and another person arrives with their stuff. It's a cycle of dismantling and selling. I wanted to simplify that. We're working with a sustainability company called Rebiennale. Most everything we use—walls, acoustic panels, wood—comes from previous editions. And after the exhibition closes, it will all be recycled again. This will help us use the entire space, indoors and out, so that it's not just one alpha room. This means, of course, you open yourself up to other cycles, like daylight and surrounding sounds.

—*As told to Kate Sutton*