

Spazio Thetis, in collaboration with the Michela Rizzo Gallery and with the support of the Municipality of Venice, presents:

bunker/chapel di Francesca Sganzerla



Photo © Fabio Barbieri



Type of event: permanent installation

Opening: Friday June 1st 2007, 6 pm
from June 1st to November 21st 2007

Entrance: free

Opening hours: Monday - Friday, 10.00 am - 6.30 pm

Location of event: Spazio Thetis, Arsenale Novissimo, Venice

Actv Stop: Bacini (lines 41, 42, 51, 52)

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Press release

In the gardens of Spazio Thetis, in the Arsenale Novissimo in Venice, Friday 1st June at 6pm opens the permanent installation **bunker/chapel** of artist Francesca Sganzerla, in collaboration of the Galleria Michela Rizzo and the support of the municipality of Venice. The work, set within major sculptures and installation of great masters and contemporary emerging artists, transforms a historical building – a massive bunker from the Second World War – in a precious **bunker/chapel** available for visit from 1st June to 21st November 2007 (10.00am - 6.30pm), to coincide with the opening days of the 52nd International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale.

On entering the gardens at the Spazio Thetis, one immediately has the impression of being in a space that can tell many stories. It's a space where, in a mysterious and spellbinding atmosphere, you'll unexpectedly find the presence of a historical bunker, hidden among the vegetation. Artist Francesca Sganzerla reflects on this architectural form and replaces it with a place for the inner experience.

This traditional structure of the "casamatta" (a house reinforced to defend a strategic industrial system) respects the typical cylindrical form, buried at half its height with a dome at its top, and has willingly been left unaltered. The highlight of the piece reveals itself through a narrow

entrance corridor, at the foot of the stairs, inside a small circular edifice. Here it seems a place of meditation, or prayer, and suggests a different order to the story. From an entrance painted in a white that seeks and reflects the outdoor light, the visitor accesses an ambient surrounding brightened by light reflected from the gold-leaf dome. Meanwhile, the walls, acceding to an inner pull, have been treated with layers of acrylic - white, yellow, ochre, rose and green grey - staining and scratching in a minimal style, adding and placing in relief the imperfections and signs which already existed on the walls.

A candleholder in worked iron - donated by the church of San Polo on behalf of the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice - is the singular object which recalls a human presence, with a tacit invitation for offerings and participation. Aesthetically, this is a strong element, by absorbing the light, and preventing vertigo from a gaze that follows the vertical rhythm of the narrow windows that dialogue with the external surrounds. Outside, on the walls, there is a date inscribed that can be read only during certain hours of the day, when the light hits the incision: July 1944.

The architect, urbanist and philosopher, Paul Virilio, in a research project exploring these reinforced constructions which were erected during the Second World War in Europe (Bunker Archèologie, 1975), has already proposed that these spaces have the power, like modern monoliths, to impress, "small temples without religion". It is in this sense that Francesca Sganzerla acts on the perception of space and concentrates on a universal spiritual dimension. The solid cement architectural exterior protects a sober, but precious interior, which maintains the signs of its history... as if it had always been a place of introspection.

With kind request of divulgation/publication

Information and catalogue:

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