



La Biennale di Venezia

18. Mostra  
Internazionale  
di Architettura  
Partecipazioni Nazionali

# Luxembourg Pavilion Francelle Cane & Marija Marić

## DOWN TO EARTH

20.05 – 26.11.2023

Arsenale, Sale d'Armi, 1st Floor

Commissioners



LE GOUVERNEMENT  
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG  
Ministère de la Culture

Kultur|lx

Arts Council  
Luxembourg



[www.venicebiennale.kulturix.lu](http://www.venicebiennale.kulturix.lu)

Francelle Cane & Marija Marić

## Project presentation

From the development of human settlements on the Moon to the asteroid mining of rare mineral and metals—the wild imaginaries of extraction-driven growth have, quite literally, transcended the boundaries of the Earth. This displacement of resource exploitation from the exhausted Earth to its ‘invisible’ backstages—celestial bodies, planets, and ultimately, the Moon itself—calls for an urgent debate on the impact this shift will have on our understanding of land, resources and the commons. *Down to Earth* critically unpacks the project of space mining through the perspective of resources. It starts from the following questions: How does this new iteration of the space race, wrapped in the false promises of endlessly available resources, depart from the existing extractivist logic of capitalism and its destructive environmental and social effects on the ground? How will the ongoing privatisation of space, characterised by a sharp turn towards private companies as main actors in the exploitation of space resources, affect the current status of extraterrestrial bodies as a form of ‘planetary commons’? What are the materialities of space mining—its logistics, technologies, infrastructures and workers—and their relationship to the existing geopolitical power hierarchies? And finally, how are architects to mediate critically the ramifications of these material fictions, rooted in the existing paradigms of growth?

Designed as mock-ups of the Moon’s landscapes, ‘lunar laboratories’ have emerged in recent years as a default feature that many institutions and private companies around the world use as infrastructure for testing different mining technologies. However, within the context of speculative economies of the space mining industry, the role of the lunar laboratories seems to go beyond being merely spaces meant for carrying out scientific experiments, instead appearing also as media studios for the production of imagery of human technologies on the Moon. The exhibition *Down to Earth* uses the lunar laboratory as a site for unpacking the tech industry’s space exploration narratives. With the space of the Pavilion itself turned into a lunar laboratory, a stage where the performance of extraction takes place, *Down to Earth* focuses on the unveiling of the *backstages* of the space mining project, offering another way of seeing the Moon that goes beyond the current optics of the Anthropocene.

## DOWN TO EARTH

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Francelle Cane & Marija Marić



SnT University of Luxembourg, LunaLab, training robots for space mining, Luxembourg, 2022 © Armin Linke 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Vista

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## Exhibition content

### 1. The lunar laboratory

Designed as mock-ups of the Moon's landscapes, during the last couple of years, *lunar laboratories* have emerged as a default feature of many of the institutions and private companies around the world, as an infrastructure for the testing of different mining technologies. The exhibition takes the lunar laboratory as a site for unpacking the tech industry's narratives of space exploration. With the space of the Pavilion itself turning into a lunar laboratory, a stage where the performance of extraction takes place, *Down to Earth* focuses on the unveiling of the *backstages* of the space mining project. It features three different projects developed throughout the course of the research—the film, the workshop, and the book.

### 2. The film

Created in collaboration with photographer and video artist Armin Linke, the film features shots, archival footage, and conversations with researchers, lawyers, and representatives of the space mining industry and organisations based in Luxembourg, and beyond. The language of the film is English (with subtitles).

### 3. The workshop

The workshop, titled *How to: mind the Moon*, is curated by Lev Bratishenko, Francelle Cane and Marija Marić as a collaboration between the Luxembourg Pavilion at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia and the Canadian Centre for Architecture as well as an international group of researchers working on the issues of space mining and/or material histories including: Anastasia Kubrak, Jane Mah Hutton, Amelyn Ng, Bethany Rigby and Fred Scharmen. The workshop's output will result in the production of a material bank featuring the political, environmental and racial histories of five construction-related lunar materials.

### 4. The book

The book, titled *Staging the Moon*, features contributions by curators and a selection of photographs by artists Armin Linke and Ronni Campana. It introduces the curators' research on the topic of space mining, revolving around themes such as the entanglements of space mining and media, the development of legal frameworks around mineral extraction in outer space, and the possibilities of planetary commons. The book is designed by studio OK-RM (London, United Kingdom) and published by Spector Books (Leipzig, Germany).

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*“From the development of human settlements on the Moon to asteroid mining—the wild imaginaries of extraction-driven growth have, quite literally, transcended the boundaries of Earth. This displacement of mineral exploitation from the exhausted Earth to its ‘invisible’ backstages—celestial bodies, planets, and ultimately, the Moon itself—calls for an urgent debate on the impact this shift will have on our understandings of land, resources, and the commons, both on Earth and beyond it. Described as a ‘rising star in the space industry’ and a ‘pioneer in the exploration and utilisation of space resources’, Luxembourg, whose own economy was built on iron mining and steel production, appears as a key starting point to critically approach space mining—a question that goes beyond the scale of its territory, and rather appears as a shared, planetary concern.*

Quote from the *Down to Earth* project by Francelle Cane and Marija Marić.

Francelle Cane & Marija Marić

## Biographies of curators

**Francelle Cane** is an architect, researcher and curator based in Luxembourg. She has been a doctoral researcher at the Chair of Urban Regeneration, University of Luxembourg, since 2021. Her research explores the subject of ruin through the perspective of soil, thus reshaping the relations between the built environment, policies and soil ecologies. For several years, her practice has involved various collaboration types and project formats, including curating and designing exhibitions as a means of research. Cane is the author of *Machine opérationnelle* (FWB, 2021), *The World as a Pavilion. Vjenceslav Richter* (Koenig Books, 2020, with Vesna Meštrić and Iwan Strauven), and *Enter the Modern Landscape* (Bozar, 2019, with Axel Fisher and Iwan Strauven).

**Marija Marić** is an architect, researcher and curator based in Luxembourg. She works as a postdoctoral research associate at the Master in Architecture programme, University of Luxembourg, where she also teaches. In 2020, she obtained her doctoral degree from the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta), ETH Zurich, with research examining the role of media strategists in the communication, design and globalisation of urban projects. Marija's work has been presented and published internationally. Her research is organised around the questions of resources, real estate, media, and the production of the built environment and its imaginaries in the context of global capitalism and the global flow of information.



Francelle Cane © Antoine Espinasseau, 2023



Marija Marić © Antoine Espinasseau, 2023

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## Biographies of collaborators

**Armin Linke** (b. 1966, Milan) is an artist working with photography and film who sets up processes that question the medium, its technologies, narrative structures and complicities within wider socio-political structures. His oeuvre functions as a collection of tools for demystifying different design strategies and languages. In a collective approach with other creatives, researchers and scientists, the narratives of his works expand on the level of multiple discourses, centring the questions of installation and display. Linke's works have been exhibited internationally. His installation *Alpi* won the special prize at the Biennale Architettura 2014 in Venice and *Image Capital* was awarded the Kubus. Sparda Art Prize in 2019. He is currently guest professor at ISIA Urbino, artist in residence at the KHI Florenz, and guest artist at CERN Geneva.

**Lev Bratishenko** is a curator and writer producing research in public through events and series like *For those who will come* (2023), *How to: do no harm* (2022), *How to: reward and punish* (2021), *Docu-dramas* (2020), *How to: disturb the public* (2019), *My Invisible Friend* (2019), *Should we worry?* (2019), *How to: not make an architecture magazine* (2018), *No parks?* (2017) and *Come and Forget* (2017). As inaugural Curator Public at the Canadian Centre for Architecture from 2016 to 2023, he introduced new formats like the 'counter-tour' and the 'institutional performance festival'. Contributing to CCA projects since 2007, he was editor of *It's All Happening So Fast: A Counter-History of the Canadian Environment* (CCA / JAPSAM, 2016) and curator of *The object is not online* (2010). He has written about architecture, music and technology for *Abitare*, *Apollo*, *The Architectural Review*, *Canadian Architect*, *Cabinet*, *Disegno*, *Gizmodo*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Guardian*, *Icon*, *Literary Review of Canada*, *Maclean's*, *Manifest*, *Mark*, *The Montreal Gazette*, *Tribune*, *Triple Canopy*, *Opera Canada*, *Opera News* and *Uncube*.

## Jury

The project *Down to Earth* by Francelle Cane and Marija Marić was selected as part of a call for applications launched by Kultur | lx – Arts Council Luxembourg in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and luca – Luxembourg Center for Architecture. The jury was made up of Michelle Friederici (President of the Ordre des Architectes et des Ingénieurs-Conseils Luxembourg) Cécile Fries-Paiola (architect, sociologist and lecturer at the École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Nancy), Claudine Hemmer (Advisor for Visual Arts and Architecture, Ministry of Culture, Luxembourg), Nikolaus Hirsch (Artistic Director of CIVA – Architecture, Landscape, Urban Planning, Brussels), Sara Noel Costa de Araujo/ Studio SNCDA (architect and curator of the Luxembourg Pavilion 2021), Guittou Muller (representative of luca) and Hélène Doub (representative of Kultur | lx).

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## **Publication**

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication by Francelle Cane and Marija Marić with contributions by Ronni Campana and Armin Linke.

Book authors: Francelle Cane and Marija Marić

Visual contributions: Ronni Campana and Armin Linke

Graphic design: OK-RM

Publisher: Spector Books

Language: English

Publication Date: May 2023

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## **La Biennale di Venezia**

La Biennale di Venezia was established in 1895 and is today acknowledged as one of the most prestigious cultural institutions. La Biennale di Venezia stands at the forefront of research and promotion of new contemporary art trends and organizes events in all its specific Departments: Art (1895), Architecture (1980), Cinema (1932), Dance (1999), Music (1930), and Theatre (1934) – alongside research and training activities.

The history of La Biennale di Venezia is documented in its Historical Archives located at Marghera Venice and in its Library at the Giardini's Central Pavilion. The International Art and Architecture Exhibitions have had a new structure since 1998. In recent years, La Biennale di Venezia promoted new Educational activities, training programmes (Biennale College), conferences and panels in its headquarters at Ca' Giustinian.

The Biennale Architettura 2023 will be held from Saturday 20 May to Sunday 26 November (pre-opening 18 and 19 May), curated by academic, educator and best-selling novelist Lesley Lokko, who has commented: “Architects have a unique opportunity to put forward ambitious and creative ideas that help us imagine a more equitable and optimistic future in common”.

Francelle Cane & Marija Marić

## **Luxembourg at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia**

Luxembourg has been a regular participant at the International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia for the past 20 years, along with around 70 other countries. Since its launch in 1980, it has been the main international event for specialists in architecture, a discipline whose major contemporary trends it helps to showcase and define. In addition to the visibility it provides to the participants, Luxembourg's attendance allows it to contribute to international exchanges and debates on architecture, whose theoretical foundations and fields of application are constantly expanding.

After first participating in 1991, Luxembourg has been attending the International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia since 2004. It was in that year that the Fondation de l'Architecture et de l'Ingénierie (FAI), the organiser appointed by the Ministry of Culture, first took over the Ca' del Duca, a 15th-century palazzo in the heart of Venice which for the previous ten years had been leased by the Luxembourg State to house its participations in the contemporary art Biennale.

Since 2018, the Luxembourg Pavilion (architecture and art) has been based in the Sale d'Armi, within the Arsenale, after a contract was signed in 2017 between the Luxembourg State and Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia guaranteeing Luxembourg's presence in the Arsenale for the next 20 years.

In 2022, Luxembourg's Ministry of Culture delegated the commissioning of the Luxembourg Pavilion (architecture and art) to Kultur | lx – Arts Council Luxembourg, in collaboration with luca – Luxembourg Center for Architecture (formerly FAI).

Francelle Cane & Marija Marić

## About the Commissioners

**Kultur | lx - Arts Council Luxembourg** was established in July 2020 as an initiative of the Luxembourg Ministry of Culture. This new tool for supporting, promoting and disseminating the Luxembourg cultural scene was the outcome of an extensive consultation and impetus from the Grand Duchy's creative sector.

Kultur | lx has since become a key partner in the support and promotion of professionals from the following sectors: architecture, design and crafts; multimedia and digital arts; visual arts; literature and publishing; music; and performing arts.

Kultur | lx operates in three priority areas: fostering the career development of Luxembourg artists and creatives; supporting and encouraging the dissemination of artistic creation; and boosting the impact and promotion of artistic creations within Luxembourg and internationally. Among other things, it oversees Luxembourg's presence at major international gatherings.  
More information: [www.kulturlx.lu](http://www.kulturlx.lu)

**luca – Luxembourg Center for Architecture** is a private non-profit foundation set up 30 years ago as the Fondation de l'Architecture et de l'Ingénierie with the primary task of promoting quality architecture as a cultural reality. Its aim is to develop, among the public in general and professionals in particular, an awareness of the continuity of architectural heritage: past, present and future.

In order to address, through a multidisciplinary approach, the issues related to the current challenges facing our society, luca works in close collaboration with Luxembourg's main actors in the fields of architecture, engineering and heritage. This has made it possible to position the foundation as a platform for exchanges between public authorities, professionals from different disciplines who work on the built and non-built environment, and the general public.

Each year, luca implements a cultural programme adapted to the diversity of its audiences: cycles of conferences and debates, exhibitions, guided tours, educational workshops, study trips, film and documentary screenings, and so on. Over its 30 years of existence, luca has organised more than 240 conferences, 90 exhibitions – including nine Luxembourg Pavilions at the International Architecture Exhibitions organized by La Biennale di Venezia– and eight editions of the Luxembourg Architecture Award.

More information: [www.luca.lu](http://www.luca.lu)

Francelle Cane & Marija Marić

**Side programme in Luxembourg by luca – Luxembourg Center for Architecture**

The International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia is an important moment of reflection for architects and an opportunity to gather to celebrate their profession.

This year, luca is organising a programme with the support of Kultur | lx:

22 March at 6.30 p.m.

**Exhibiting Architecture at the Venice Biennale – History, Politics and Challenges”**

Talk by Léa-Catherine Szacka, Senior Lecturer in Architectural Studies at Manchester University, about La Biennale di Venezia history and challenges  
Venue: luca;

19 April at 12:30 p.m.

**“Lucnh with curators”**

Round table with previous curators of the Luxembourg Pavilion;

21 September at 06:30 p.m.

**Public lecture by Francelle Cane and Marija Marić**, curators of the Luxembourg Pavilion.

Venue: luca.

Francelle Cane & Marija Marić

**18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia  
Luxembourg Pavilion**

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Francelle Cane and Marija Marić

*Down to Earth*

**Commissioners appointed by the Luxembourg Ministry of Culture:**

Kultur | lx – Arts Council Luxembourg

luca – Luxembourg Center for Architecture

**Curators**

Francelle Cane and Marija Marić

**Exhibitors**

Francelle Cane and Marija Marić in collaboration with Armin Linke and Lev  
Bratishenko

**Visual identity**

OK-RM

**Videographer**

Armin Linke

**Support**

Oeuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte

LuXembourg - Let's Makt It Happen

**Acknowledgements**

Master in Architecture, University of Luxembourg

Luxembourg Embassy in Berlin

Luxembourg Embassy in Paris

Luxembourg Embassy in Rome

## DOWN TO EARTH

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### **Official opening of the Luxembourg Pavilion**

Thursday 18 May, 04:00pm

### **Press preview of the Luxembourg Pavilion**

Thursday 18 May, 11:00am (to be confirmed)

### **Preview days of the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia**

Thursday 18 and Friday 19 May

### **Exhibition**

20.05–26.11.2023

Opening hours from 20 May to 30 September: 11 am - 7 pm (last admission 6:45 pm)

Until 30 September (Arsenale venue only): on Fridays and Saturdays extended opening until 8 pm (last admission: 7:45 pm)

Opening hours from 1 October to 26 November: 10 am – 6 pm

Closed on Mondays

Extraordinary openings: Monday 22 May, 14 August, 4 September, 16 October, 30 October, 20 November 2023.

### **Press contacts**

Kultur | lx – Arts Council Luxembourg

Emilie Gouleme | [emilie.gouleme@kulturlx.lu](mailto:emilie.gouleme@kulturlx.lu)

Tel. +352 621 680 028

[www.kulturlx.lu](http://www.kulturlx.lu)

Pickles PR for international inquiries

Alfonso Cabello | [alfonso@picklespr.com](mailto:alfonso@picklespr.com)

Tel. +34 687394056

[www.picklespr.com](http://www.picklespr.com)

[www.venicebiennale.kulturlx.lu](http://www.venicebiennale.kulturlx.lu)

Instagram: [@venicebiennaleluxembourg](https://www.instagram.com/venicebiennaleluxembourg)

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