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American Artist Attempts To Sell U.S. Venice Biennial Pavilion To Pay U.S. Debt

By Noemi Letizia info@forsalebyartist.net | 03:29 AM

MILAN — For the last three years Honolulu based artist LG Williams has been supporting himself by selling real estate. So when he was invited to participate in the Internet Pavilion of The 54th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, he imagined creating a larger artwork outside this pavilion that addressed one of the most pressing issues in the world today—the United States Debt Crisis.

In what will undoubtedly become the most-surprising and talked-about provocation of this year's Biennial, Williams's "FOR SALE BY ARTIST" is an unusual, thought-provoking attempt to unilaterally sell the US Pavilion at the Venice Biennial to help diminish the US Debt.

The pavilion was originally built in 1930 and is currently owned by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. All proceeds from the sale (less the standard 6% commission fee) of the pavilion will be paid directly to the United States Treasury to service the United States Public Debt — a measure of the obligations of the United States Federal Government — which as of May 6, 2011, the Total Public Debt Outstanding of the United States of America was \$14.32 trillion.

No Guggenheim official would publicly comment on the action, however one was captured on tape muttering, "LG is ...".

"I know its not selling for much, and some people will laugh," says Williams, who describes this clandestine action as a reality-check artwork which "brings much needed attention and scrutiny to the US Debt." Speaking with his usual panache and flair for paradox, he continued, "Some will think this is stupid. Others will insist that this is brilliant. I don't care. I just want to bring down the debt."

But no doubt many suave art collectors and astute patrons who stand before the pavilion and see the "For Sale By Artist" sign during the event will want to know, "Where can I buy a limited-edition brochure for my art collection?"

"From the Gloria Maria Gallery, in Milan" says the artist unabashedly grinning from ear to ear.

This is an unusual project in many ways but this isn't the first mega art project this artist has brought to the international art world and global financial community.

In 2007-09, Williams created a work of self-proclaimed "House Art," a site-specific artwork, located in Happy Valley, Hawaii, a remote rainforest in Maui. While remaining determinedly focused on issues Williams defined as vital to our time and sculpture in particular, Williams devised a visual prophecy, an epicenter, another precedent setting artwork which radically examined the local and global influence of "self-interest." HWTBFO, as it became known, was the definitive artwork of the Subprime Mortgage Crisis, which started in the USA in fall of 2006 and became the global financial crisis we are faced with today.

"LG is driven with a keen interest in cardiology, black holes and making money for the poor (namely himself)," says Richard Reisman, who tried to acquire several works by him for the Museum of Modern Art in New York when he was a San Francisco art curator. "Artists give us beautiful things to look at, like amazingly tiny intricate things, but they can also raise huge questions that allow us to rethink hermeneutics or cultural identity art."

The curator describes Williams as a "prophetic artwork made to make art," perhaps most comfortable with surfing but also comfortable prompting scandalous headlines, angry manifestos, tyrannical press releases, and making esoteric artist books, photographs of scantily clad sunbathers, pornographic sculptures and architectural installations which beg for more.

In any case, Williams revels in questions raised by artworks appearing in continental, if not spectacular art settings. "Nothing says this piece couldn't have happened at the, Pompidou, Stedelijk, or the MoMA but this is the fucking Venice Biennial," he says. "My artwork now sits atop the art world at the intersection of every discipline imaginable: visual art, poetry, architecture, tourism, ecology, philately, history and implicit financial doom."

"But in the end, it will really be interesting to see how people react when I deposit the commission check I hope to receive for the sale of the pavilion."

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For more information about or purchases from "FOR SALE BY ARTIST" please contact Noemi Letizia at info@forsalebyartist.net or visit www.forsalebyartist.net. The 54th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale runs from June 4th to November 27th, 2011.

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