



La Biennale di Venezia

18. Mostra
Internazionale
di Architettura

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Pavilion of Poland
18th International Architecture Exhibition — La Biennale di Venezia

Datament

Exhibitors: Anna Barlik (artist) and Marcin Strzała (architect)
Curator: Jacek Sosnowski

Polish Pavilion Commissioner: Janusz S. Janowski, PhD / Zachęta — National Gallery of Art
Polish Pavilion Office: Michał Kubiak, Joanna Waśko

20 May–26 November 2023
Preview days: 18, 19 May 2023
Opening Ceremony 19 May, 12:30pm
Giardini della Biennale, Venice

*We share a world with data. Believing in its infallibility, we allow algorithms to calculate and design our houses and cities. However, without a sensitive and conscious designer, digitally processed data can create distorted solutions, such as those presented in the Polish Pavilion. Data must be treated not as a source of definitive answers, but rather as a tool for asking better questions. This is precisely the re-evaluation that *Datament* advocates.*

Anna Barlik (artist), Jacek Sosnowski (curator) and Marcin Strzała (architect)

Datament, a **monumental installation** presented at the Polish Pavilion for the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, allow visitors to **experience data in its 'physical' form**. The space of the pavilion will be filled with the wireframes of four life-size houses. These seemingly chaotic and absurd structures faithfully reproduce the source data. The exhibition is intended as a starting point for a discussion about how, while **new technologies may not offer us ready-made solutions, they can help us ask better questions**.

The sheer amount of data generated every day is staggering. The development of civilisation and technology has made us dependent on the production, collection and processing of information. The conclusions from digitally-processed content are used in architecture, urbanism and spatial planning, among other things. **Believing algorithms to be infallible, will allow them to calculate and design our houses and cities.**

In architecture, urbanism and spatial planning, statistical data analysis and the use of algorithms in design are placing a significant impact on how we live now and will in the future. However, we are less and less concerned with raw data. Information processed with new technologies creates a distorted picture of reality. **Based on this digital illusion, we make decisions with very real consequences.**

At the Polish Pavilion, the viewer has the opportunity to experience data in its 'physical' form. The installation of impressive dimensions will reproduce the spatial forms of houses from four countries on a 1:1 scale. **Made up of almost two thousand metres of coloured steel profiles, the structures are based on averaged, generalised data on the shape, size and functional layout of houses in different geographical zones.** Four countries have been selected on the basis of how much statistical data they produce and collect: **Hong Kong, Mexico, Malawi and Poland**. The installation faithfully reflects this information, but it has no bearing on the actual housing situation in the places

from which the information is derived. **A tool that was supposed to bring order to reality becomes a source of error.**

Datament is the record of a dialogue between an artist and an architect. **Anna Barlik** works in visual art, local contexts, colour and composition. **Marcin Strzala** is an architect who explores the relationship between digital data and their physical manifestation in design. Together with curator **Jacek Sosnowski**, they have developed a structure based on digital data analysis. The title's neologism, *Datament*, conveys the idea of **the ubiquitous 'data establishment' that is constantly shaping the reality in which we live, create and dwell.**

The theme of this year's Biennale Architettura is *The Laboratory of the Future*. The creators of the *Datament* project **question the infallibility of data as a factor in making development decisions, including the architecture and urban planning of future cities.** The exhibition is meant to serve as a starting point for a discussion about the extent to which a view of the world seen solely through data is distorted, and how **we might interact with it differently.** The presentation of the private spaces in the Polish Pavilion, which have been algorithmically calculated and are detached from reality, is a voice in the ongoing discussion on the state and future of housing, within the context of the Biennale Architettura 2023 and beyond.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Anna Barlik, visual artist, she uses sculpture, site-specific installations, drawing and composition to explore the relationship between people and the reality that surrounds them. Using simple forms, mostly made of powder-coated steel, she enters an existing space, highlighting the tensions and social problems within it. She draws from individual stories, which she tells using planes, lines, and colours. In 2017, she received her Doctorate in art from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. She has completed artistic residencies in Finland and Iceland. She is a lecturer at the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology, where she teaches composition and visual structures and runs a sculpture studio.

Jacek Sosnowski, curator and psychoanalyst, he specializes in contemporary art, focusing on issues related to imagined social structures, identity or transformation through trauma, and the healing process. He is a designer of exhibitions, public space projects, and art-branding strategies, and a founder and manager of PRPGND (formerly Propaganda Gallery), an organisation dedicated to producing and promoting art. He is a co-organizer of the Warsaw Gallery Weekend and a member of Sinthome – The Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis.

Marcin Strzala, designer and architect exploring the trans-disciplinary nature of architecture in the digital paradigm, his academic research deals with the processes of digital production and the relationship between data and its physical manifestation in architecture. His teaching seeks to exploit the potential of the synthesis of digital tools with the vernacular trend. He was a lecturer at Monash Art, Design and Architecture in Melbourne and a visiting teacher at Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology in China. He currently teaches at the School of Form of the SWPS University and at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology, where he has been involved in the Architecture for Society of Knowledge programme since the beginning of his career.

INFO ABOUT THE ORGANISER

Zachęta — National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, is the organizer of the exhibitions in the Polish Pavilion both for Art and Architecture Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia, as well as the custodian of the building. The gallery's director acts as the pavilion commissioner. Poland has its own exhibition pavilion, which is located in Giardini — one of the two main exhibition venue of La Biennale di Venezia.

zacheta.art.pl

POLISH PAVILION AT THE 18TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION — LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Datament

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Polish Pavilion Commissioner: Janusz S. Janowski, PhD / Zachęta — National Gallery of Art
Polish Pavilion Office: Michał Kubiak, Joanna Waško

Organiser: Zachęta — National Gallery of Art

Polish participation at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia was made possible through the financial support of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland.

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Exhibition partners: Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Collection dela.art
Collaboration: Polish Institute in Rome



labiennale.art.pl
[instagram.com/datament.project](https://www.instagram.com/datament.project)

FOR INTERNATIONAL AND ITALIAN PRESS

Lightbox
Teresa Sartore
teresa@lightboxgroup.net (+39) 349 66 09 573

FOR POLISH PRESS

Zachęta — National Gallery of Art
Michał Kubiak / Polish Pavilion Office
m.kubiak@zacheta.art.pl (+48) 601 69 22 09

IMAGES

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1. An infinite amount of known, unknown, measurable and unmeasurable data that belongs to a person, a group or a thing.
2. The state of data at a given point in time.
3. The tangible impact of data on life.
4. Data as establishment.

Overproduction of Data

The sheer amount of data being generated today exceeds human cognitive capacities. Any attempt to analyse it is impossible without modern technology, which we consider superior to us in its ability to process information. As a result, data is not only generated and collected automatically, but also processed without human intervention or oversight.

Data Bias

The less we can rely on our own knowledge and experience, the more we tend to trust the data that is already available and interpreted. However, as statistics are often based on a set of assumptions reflecting the researcher's biases, they can lead to generalisations or even omissions.

Automation Bias

Another key issue defining our relationship with data is our propensity to uncritically trust automated computational processes. The reason for this, on the one hand, is the opacity or even inaccessibility of the process and, on the other, the universal need for simple and readily available solutions.

Data as Establishment

Seemingly objective data, processed by seemingly neutral algorithms, creates a picture of the world that we mistakenly accept as true, especially when the data comes from sources we deem reliable, such as governments or international institutions. As a result, we are also ready to accept it as the foundation for the decision-making processes which directly impact the reality we operate in. We have defined this effect as datament – the establishment of data.

Hallucination

Datament is a state where the impact of data on reality is accepted, if appearances of an objective procedure are maintained. According to the logic of datament, it is always possible to design according to these requirements, even if the result not only disregards actual the user's needs, but also reinforces potentially exclusive initial assumptions. We can easily imagine a dystopian future in which the increasing algorithmisation of design process leads to a reality hallucinated by machines. At the same time, we must recognise the many ways in which automated decision-making allows us to achieve the goals that were once impossible to even imagine.

Transparency

The complete rejection of data and data processing technology as a primary source of knowledge is not only unfeasible, but above all, pointless. It is essential, however, to critically reassess our relationship with data, and apply a principle of limited trust in the digital representation of the world that replaces the actual experience of a place, society and local context. The Datament project postulates that the only way to benefit from data without replicating and reinforcing hidden biases is to keep the process fully transparent.

Flaw

All the components of the procedure maintain the appearance of adequacy and objectivity. At the same time, every step of the process contains all kinds of biases, deliberately incorporated to take advantage of users' trust in the authority of automatically processed data. Identifying these biases and errors requires critical thinking – otherwise we risk creating a world based on a false representation, and one that excludes the needs of those the data fails to represent.

Experience

The Architecture Biennale is a safe space for speculation. A Laboratory of the Future where every experiment can succeed, and every idea seems believable. Therefore, we have proposed an experiment based on an intentionally and overtly flawed process, visualised in a substantial and tactile form in the pavilion space. The powerful experience of interacting with the installation reveals what usually remains inaccessible and hidden, forcing the viewer to confront the reified excess of data and its role in today's world.