



COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

Christopher Bedford

It is an honor to present Mark Bradford as the U.S. representative at the 57th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia. Mark's site-specific installation for the U.S. Pavilion, *Tomorrow Is Another Day*, builds on his social and intellectual interests in the vulnerability and resiliency of people living on the margins, and illustrates art's ability to both inspire wonder and catalyze social change. His focus on under-represented urban communities resonates strongly with both The Baltimore Museum of Art and the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, the institutional collaborators on this project. Realizing this presentation has been both incredibly rewarding and particularly relevant, as Mark's work speaks to our current moment of political crisis and the freedoms inherent in the promise of America.

Mark's work renews the tradition of abstract art, which signifies freedom of choice, and freedom from social definitions. He often speaks of elbowing his way to the table of modernism, and his re-energizing of the practice is essential to its continued life. It is fitting that when the BMA was first commissioner of the U.S. Pavilion in 1960, the Pavilion featured four New York school Abstract Expressionists: Hans Hoffman, Franz Kline, Philip Guston, and Theodore Roszak. These artists used abstraction to render visible the inner life of the individual. Mark turns this on its head. Nearly 60 years later, his abstraction urgently expresses the relationship of the individual to social context. Using found materials, Mark reveals the inherently collective nature of our world.

Mark's formal practice and social action are inextricable. He makes the analogy of standing on two legs: one rooted in the material process of creating new work, and the other dedicated to community action and mutual aid. His commitment to social engagement is anchored in his Los Angeles-based nonprofit Art + Practice, an educational platform that teaches practical skills to foster youth and provides local access to contemporary art. This commitment is manifested in Venice through his partnership with Rio Terà dei Pensieri, a nonprofit social cooperative that focuses on reintegrating incarcerated people into society. This collaboration, titled *Process Collettivo*, will provide support and employment opportunities to men and women incarcerated in Venice, and aims ultimately to become a sustainable cooperative. The initial manifestation of the collaboration will be a storefront located in the heart of Venice, open to the public throughout the Biennale.

Tomorrow Is Another Day is a narrative of struggle, agency, and possibility, exploring the vulnerability and resiliency of marginalized people. Mark elevates the everyday struggles of the individual to historic and global significance, paying these struggles the attention they deserve but rarely receive. Presenting his work at the world's most prestigious contemporary art event will continue to inspire cross-cultural dialogue on the social, political, and economic issues facing underserved communities, and demonstrate the power of art to both reveal and transcend difference, to engage us in the conversations we simply must have at this pivotal moment in our history.