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Martha Thorne, Caroline James, Odile Decq and Fashid Moussavi led the protest

Female architects host flash mob at Venice Architecture Biennale to call for gender equality



Amy Frearson | 25 May 2018 | 5 comments

Architects [Odile Decq](#), [Farshid Moussavi](#) and [Manuelle Gautrand](#) were part of a protest that took place in Venice today, to fight against discrimination in architecture.

The flash mob took place in the Giardini, one of the two main venues for the [Venice Architecture Biennale](#).

More than 100 people attended, with other participants including architects [Jeanne Gang](#), [Alison Brooks](#), [Deborah Saunt](#) of [DSDHA](#), [Francine Houben](#) of [Mecanoo](#), [Toshiko Mori](#), [Benedetta Tagliabue](#), and [Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas](#). Curators [Paola Antonelli](#) of [MoMA](#) and [Beatrice Galilee](#) of [The Met](#) also joined.

Attendees were asked to wave fans in the air as a symbol of their support.

The event was kicked off by Martha Thorne, executive director of the Pritzker Prize, who read out a manifesto titled *Voices of Women*.

"We will not stand silent" says manifesto

Thorne called for an end to "pervasive prejudices and disrespectful behaviour that appears to be systemic in our culture and discipline".

"We are united in denouncing discrimination, harassment and aggressions against any member of our community. We will not tolerate it. We will not stand silent," she said.

"Women are not a minority in the world but women are still a minority in architecture's field. We want it to reflect better the world in which we live."



The flash mob took place in the Giardini, one of the two main venues for the Venice Architecture Biennale. Photo is copyright Dezeen

The manifesto also paid tribute to [Grafton Architects](#) founders Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara, who are the directors of this year's biennale. In 16 editions, it is only the second time that the event hasn't been curated by a man.

Thorne said it marked "a crucial moment of awakening to promote equitable and respectful treatment of all members of the architectural community irrespective of gender, race, nationality, sexuality and religion".

"We will join hands with co-workers, students, clients, collaborators, and our male colleagues to create a new path forward toward equitable work and educational environments that promote respectful discourse and open exchange of ideas," she said.

Event could be "beginning of a bigger conversation"

The event was organised by Caroline James, an architectural designer and Harvard graduate based in Boston, Massachusetts, but Farshid Moussavi and Odile Decq both played a big role in promoting it.

Both Moussavi and Toshiki Mori, another of the event's promoters, told Dezeen that they see the demonstration as the start of a bigger drive in architecture, building on the momentum of the #MeToo movement started after the Harvey Weinstein scandal.

"I don't think we should not lose the momentum that we have received here today," Moussavi told Dezeen. "This should be the beginning of a bigger conversation."

"This is just the beginning," added Mori. "Now we can connect with people all over the world. That makes us strong."

Decq has compiled a list of over 100 supporters from across the industry and plans to make it public. In an [exclusive interview with Dezeen](#) ahead of the event, she said that women in architecture need to fight harder to make their voices heard.

"It's so important that women speak and say 'we are here'," she said. "We have to care about the fact that women are not strong enough and not present enough. We have to fight against harassment, against discrimination, against everything."

The [Venice Architecture Biennale](#) opens to the public tomorrow, 26 May 2018, and continues until 25 November 2018.

Read the Voices of Women manifesto in full here:

We as Voices of Women are building conversations and taking actions to raise awareness to combat pervasive prejudices and disrespectful behaviour that appears to be systemic in our culture and discipline. We are united in denouncing discrimination, harassment and aggressions against any member of our community. We will not tolerate it. We will not stand silent.

Women are not a minority in the world but women are still a minority in the architecture's field and we want that it could reflect better the world in which we live.

The Venice Biennale 2018 Freespace is a crucial moment of awakening to promote equitable and respectful treatment of all members of the architectural community irrespective of gender, race, nationality, sexuality and religion. We will join hands with co-workers, students, clients, collaborators, and our male colleagues to create a new path forward toward equitable work and educational environments that promote respectful discourse and open exchange of ideas.

Be a fan of Voices of Women. Make a vow to uphold fairness, transparency, and collaboration in architecture NOW.