

## PROMOTERS

### Global Campus of Human Rights

The Global Campus of Human Rights represents more than 100 universities in all world regions and is the biggest institution for human rights education in the world, initiated and supported by the European Union. Its vision is a world in which human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as shared values of the European Union and the United Nations and as internationally binding legal standards, are fully realized. Based in Venice, the Global Campus of Human Rights seeks to connect arts, culture and human rights. — [www.eiuc.org](http://www.eiuc.org)

### Fondazione Berengo

Founded in 2014 by Adriano Berengo, Fondazione Berengo is a Venetian cultural institution that supports artistic endeavors and disciplines with a focus on contemporary art and glass. With other art institutions, most recently the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Fondazione Berengo sponsors exhibitions of contemporary art, architecture and design in a historic palazzo in Venice and other venues. Since 2009, in the context of the Venice Biennale, it has presented Glasstress, an exhibition of artworks created in glass in its furnace on Murano with internationally renowned contemporary artists whose work engages human rights issues, including Ai Weiwei, Erwin Wurm, Koen Vanmechelen, Lucy & Jorge Orta and Vik Muniz. — [www.fondazioneberengo.org](http://www.fondazioneberengo.org)

### MOUTH Foundation

MOUTH, Museum of Understanding, Trust and Humanity, is a private non-profit foundation, set up in 2013, by the immunologist and philanthropist Dr. Philip Remans and internationally acclaimed artist Koen Vanmechelen. The foundation links art with science and communities worldwide. It brings together a wide variety of global experts at unique locations and uses the transformational power of art to inspire cross-disciplinary public debate, research, and social evolution. MOUTH's ultimate mission is to bring art, science and communities together to convey the beauty and need of biocultural diversity. To this purpose, the foundation develops and supports exhibitions, cultural exchanges, international art projects, conferences with experts in various disciplines, research and community projects. — [www.mouth.be](http://www.mouth.be)

[humanrightspavilion.com](http://humanrightspavilion.com)

KOEN VANMECHELEN

ARTIST & CURATOR

# Human Rights Pavilion

MAY 2019 — MAY 2021



fondazioneberengo

## CURATORIAL STATEMENT Human Rights Pavilion

Referring to the American author Ursula K. Le Guin's notorious 2014 speech: hard times are indeed coming. We need the voices of Artists, Writers, Thinkers, Dreamers "who can see alternatives to how we live now, who can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being, and even imagine real grounds for hope. We'll need people who can remember freedom – poets, visionaries, artists – realists of a larger reality."

We need people who can bridge to the Other. Every organism needs another organism to survive. The other is crucial for defining myself and for my own existence. I am the Other who is me. Shared fundamental and unalienable human rights are a matter of life and death to us as individuals, as a group, a species and the superorganism called Earth. Recently, globalization has shown that the human rights narrative is under continuous pressure by the banality of evil, by the destruction of nature, nationalism, climate change, inequality, and growing authoritarianism. The time has come to rewrite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, based on what we have so far experienced and learned and to also include the rights of the non-human Other, our co-species on the planet. Our interconnectedness with them make the rights of nature as valuable as human rights.

In that context, we should situate my initiative to create the evolving artwork The Human Rights Pavilion. Its realization is facilitated by the Global Campus of Human Rights, Fondazione Berengo and the MOUTH Foundation. With the Human Rights Pavilion, I want to explore the complexities of human nature, the possibility of a universal concept of human rights and the role of art in its development. I firmly believe that in the Anthropocene, the era in which the human impact on the Earth's geology and ecosystems reaches critical proportions, art can help in the development of this much needed new universal concept of human rights, taking into account local sensibilities. Connecting the universal with the local and making human rights not or less controversial.

The work is initiated at the same time as the 58th Biennale of Arts in Venice with an exhibition in an old glass furnace on the island of Murano and will come together over the following 18 months in and through different global locations, partners and individual contributors. I will collect and curate inputs from all over the world, through dialogues, travel, correspondence, explorations, and creations. My tools include both living and non-living materials: wood, marble, glass, ceramics, photography, living bio-installations, as well as video messages, letters, private conversations, round table settings, café's, and accidental encounters.

Different partners are invited to contribute to both the artistic research and the development of the artwork, aiming to include as many disciplines, perspective, and cultures in the creation. At the end of 2020, all inputs are consolidated and reworked into a unifying OPUS, a collective memory of our moment in time and space. The OPUS will be presented to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Commission and to the President and Curator of the 59th Venice Biennale of Art with a call to establish a recurrent supra-national Human Rights Pavilion as part of the structure of the Venice Biennale of Art.

The Human Rights Pavilion comes together in three chapters: SoTO Dialogues, SoTO Environment and SoTO Legacy. SoTO which is short for Survival of The Other gives a name to the different sections and weaves my fundamental philosophy through the various elements of the work: every organism needs another organism to survive. We are them.

Koen Vanmechelen

