

The Work Begins: The Restoration of the Royal Gardens of Venice by the Venice Gardens Foundation in partnership with Assicurazioni Generali

Venice, April 7, 2017 – The Restoration Project for the Royal Gardens in Piazza San Marco was presented today at a **press conference** held in the Santi Pavilion, the Royal Gardens' historic Coffee House. Talks were given by **Adele Re Rebaudengo**, President of the Venice Gardens Foundation, **Philippe Donnet**, Group CEO of Assicurazioni Generali, **Luigi Brugnaro**, Mayor of the City of Venice, **Roberto Reggi**, Managing Director of the State Property Office for the City of Venice, architect **Anna Chiarelli**, representing the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio for the City of Venice and the Lagoon, and **Paolo Pejrone** and **Alberto Torsello**, two of the architects involved in the restoration project.

“The restoration of the Royal Gardens is the first concrete project our Foundation has undertaken” said Adele Re Rebaudengo, President of the Venice Gardens Foundation. “We are proud to start a project that will return this enchanted site in the historic heart of Venice to its ancient splendor and significance. When restored, the Royal Gardens will be formal and precise, in keeping with its historic nineteenth-century design, but at the same time filled with the unexpected. It will be a garden where visitors will walk in the shade of its long, centuries-old wisteria covered pergola, and hidden from view by dense screens of evergreens will discover the vast, intimate, timeless path that crosses the rebuilt drawbridge and leads to the Correr Museum, in a renewed dialogue with Piazza San Marco and the Marciana area. It will be a meeting place open to the profound qualities of the arts, where nature and artistic languages unite to safeguard the garden and all its living elements.”

The Generali Group CEO Philippe Donnet said, *“We are proud to be the sole partner of the Venice Gardens Foundation in this important project for the restoration of the Royal Gardens. Venice is a place of utmost importance for our company, given the strong historic tie that has linked the city and Generali for 185 years. The time has come for us to **rediscover our roots and revitalize our presence in this city**, as we have done in other cities in which we boast an equally historic presence, beginning with Trieste where the company was founded. **The Restoration Project of the Gardens is our first step.** Our contribution will be made not only through participation in activities planned for the public that will be held in the Royal Gardens, carried out together with The Venice Gardens Foundation, but also through **the restructuring of the Procuratie Vecchie**, enabling these buildings to serve as a place open to the outside world and a venue for discussions of **the crucial contemporary social issues affecting humanity.**”*

On December 23, 2014, the **Venice Gardens Foundation Onlus** signed a formal, renewable concession agreement with the **State Property Office for the City of Venice**, thereby assuming responsibility for the **restoration** of the Gardens and for the **safeguarding, maintenance, promotion and management of the garden complex** for **19 years**. This project, which will be carried out in **partnership with Assicurazioni Generali**, will entail the **botanical and landscape restoration work** detailed in the plans of the architect **Paolo Pejrone**, the **rebuilding of the pergola** and of **Lorenzo Santi's neoclassical pavilion** envisaged by architect **Alberto Torsello**, the **restoration of the greenhouse**, based on the plans drawn up by architects **Aymonino, Barbini and Torsello**, and **restoring the historic drawbridge** that connects the **Royal Gardens with Piazza San Marco** and the museums in the **Marciana area**.

The Venice Gardens Foundation chose to entrust the project of **botanical restoration** to **Paolo Pejrone**, a gardener and architect who studied with Russell Page and Roberto Burle-Marx and is currently President of Piedmont's Garden Academy (*Accademia Piemontese del Giardino*) and of APGI, The Association of Parks and Gardens of Italy, who has planned and built public and private gardens in Italy and abroad for over forty years. "A garden in Venice is a challenge," Pejrone stated, "The lagoon, with its well-known sudden changes in temperature and its treacherous damp, is highly selective. Only strong, generous plants can prosper here: wisteria, hydrangea, agapanthus, ligularia, camellia, clerodendrum, iris and bamboo, as well as plants native to the Mediterranean area will be its green inhabitants, between East and West, amidst orange and pomegranate trees, parts of a lively, many-hued, exuberant whole. After many years the Royal Gardens are finally returning to life and becoming an example of botanical elegance and exuberance, as well as a modern symbol of sobriety and sustainability."

Architectural restoration was instead entrusted to **Alberto Torsello**, whose project was based on the one drawn up by **Carlo Aymonino and Gabriella Barbini at Studio di Venezia**. "The restoration and requalification of the monumental complex renews the principles and urban and architectural themes that gave life to the original nineteenth-century project for the Gardens" Torsello said. "Our objective is to restore correct relations between the parts and the environments in which they are composed in symbiosis with their context. Once the now derelict nineteenth-century pergola and Lorenzo Santi's neoclassical pavilion have been rebuilt and the greenhouse and historic drawbridge have been restored, the Royal Gardens will once more become an integral part of the Marciana area, giving back to the city and its inhabitants a special space that had come to exist only in people's memories and in history books."

Once the work has been completed, the Venice Gardens Foundation, with the collaboration of specialized professionals using specific programs of maintenance in which there is a synthesis of traditional expertise and state-of-the-art techniques, will manage and maintain the monumental complex.

The Venice Gardens Foundation

The Venice Gardens Foundation, a nonprofit organization with headquarters in Venice, was founded in 2014 to restore, maintain and manage historic gardens and sites. Listed in the National Register of the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the Foundation is also involved in the study, development and application of programs for the sustainable management of places of outstanding natural beauty and in training programs related to these ends. Focusing on culture and art, it brings together nature, artistic expression and gardening in all it does. The Venice Gardens Foundation is a member of the Association of International Private Committees for the Safeguarding of Venice.

The Generali Group

Generali is an independent, Italian Group, with a strong international presence. Established in 1831, it is among the world's leading insurers and it is present in over 60 countries with total premium income exceeding € 70 billion in 2016. With over 74,000 employees in the world, and 55 million clients, the Group has a leading position in Western Europe and an increasingly significant presence in the markets of Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia. In 2017 Generali Group was included among the most sustainable companies in the world by the Corporate Knights ranking.

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