La Mama. I had a sponsor for the show. It was an insurance company, but when they learned the show was more about erotics than procreation, they took the money back.

It was in 1975 when I had the dream of the ideal society. With the medium of exhibition you can show a personal, biographical, utopian idea. That was my idea for the Monte Verità (Mountain of Truth) exhibition on a hill in the canton of Ticino: a home for utopians, anarchists, and eccentrics where individual projects presented utopias of an ideal society. It was here where you got the feeling that these people were interpreting their lives as a total art work. Given a weaker situation—a hill, not a mountain—you give another importance for yourself to this existential situation. When I resume these exhibitions of Ascona and the Mountain of Truth, we’ll first reveal the material or alchemical guys, then the religious ones, the life reformers, and, finally, the artists. The artists will paint the landscapes (which the bankers buy), but then the bankers want to live there, too—where artists had their beautiful, bohemian days. Then architecture follows and the shit begins. That’s really always the history of these parallel things, be it Capri, Taormina, Taos, or Ascona. It’s why I did this third exhibition where the geniuses dreamt of a fusion of the arts to dissolve this individualistic behavior; a dream of a new society that believes the fusion of art is a new form of life.

The institutionalization of conceptually oriented installation art and expanded museum spaces as renovations of old histories are a link to understanding the democratization of art as a challenge to the museum’s elitism. In 1986 you took over unconventional premises, most frequently gigantic: former stables in Vienna, the Salpetrière hospital in Paris, the palace in the Retiro park in Madrid. You invited artists to set up dialogues between their work and the chosen spaces.

In Venice I was glad I had white-cube spaces, but I also had the Arsenale, where the artists had to accept the historical space as it was. From the space problem came the question of the demand for objectivity and intervention, and to give life to memory.

You are speaking of the old maritime spaces opened up for the Biennale: Corderie, Artiglierie, Tese, Depositi Polvere, Isolotto.

Yes, it’s many-layered. At the Arsenale, the Commander was great. He said, “all this, a city within a city, for marines that never won a battle.” These are historic buildings: one from the 16th century and the rest, Austrian or Napoleonic. During the last number of years in Venice, this was all about the survival of the institution of the Biennale. If you stay