

**S≈A B≈YOND**

**KIND≈RGART≈N  
OF THE LAGOON**

## **KINDERGARTEN OF THE LAGOON LESSONS GETS UNDERWAY**

### **A Prada Group project in partnership with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in the context of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030**

**Today marks the first outdoor education experience for pre-school children in Venice**

**Venice, 24 January 2023** - To mark the International Day of Education (24 January 2023), Prada Group and UNESCO are launching "**Kindergarten of the Lagoon**", an innovative outdoor education experience for pre-school children in Venice, taking place today on Torcello Island. The initiative is an important step for children to understand more about the ocean and the central role that it plays in sustainable development.

Presented in May 2022 at Ca' Corner della Regina - the Venetian headquarters of Fondazione Prada - Kindergarten of the Lagoon is part of **SEA BEYOND**, a 2019 project led by **Prada Group** and **UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)**, aiming to **promote education for the preservation of the sea and its resources**. It also supports the IOC/UNESCO-led UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, as part of the "Ocean Literacy With All" (OLWA) Ocean Decade Programme, a global initiative to build a greater understanding of the ocean.

Today's programme includes outdoor activities throughout the morning for 40 pupils from six schools joining the project, with attendance from **Lorenzo Bertelli**, Prada Group Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, UNESCO representatives **Vladimir Ryabinin**, **Ana Luiza M. Thompson-Flores** and **Francesca Santoro**, as well as local institutions, **Massimiliano De Martin**, Councillor for Urban Planning, Environment and Private Building and **Laura Besio**, Councillor for Education Policies of the Venice City Council.

The Kindergarten of the Lagoon's **lesson programme** is based on the principles of outdoor education, a didactic approach whose pillars are **experiential learning**, the **environment**, and the **well-being** of those involved, with the aim of **creating a link between children and**, in this specific case, **the lagoon ecosystem**. In addition to placing nature and science at its centre, this project strives to preserve and enhance the local culture and tradition of Venice which, together with its lagoon, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a witness to the effects of climate change.

The **educational plan** contributes to the development of children and their learning processes by gradually getting them interested in observing fauna and flora and discovering the characteristics they have in common. It is an accessible way to discover and nurture a love of natural sciences.

The **outdoor lessons** will cover **different thematic areas**, including the relationship between plants, animals and the natural elements of the lagoon, their characteristics, similarities, and their differences. Children will explore the beaches, learn through drawing activities, collaborative games, and small science experiments, to recognise and value the lagoon habitat. This will help them to become, one day, "civil ambassadors" and "spokespeople" for this heritage. An **open dialogue with schools and families** was key in the active involvement of all the children, and fundamental in defining the actual programme.

**A strong relationship with the Venice Municipality** was integral to the success of the project.

An open dialogue with the local departments for Environment and Education has led to support for the initiative since its announcement. Venice City Council provided a water bus and a tram dedicated to the children's transfers and the support of the **Emilia Bosis Foundation** lent the spaces of its villa on the island of Torcello to host the first lessons' cycle.

The **bond with local culture and traditions** is also expressed through the work of a Venetian artist, **Sofia Sarria (Atelier Volante)**, who will support the children's educational workshops, helping them make papier-mâché masks inspired by lagoon animals, as well as **Elisabetta Mitrovic**, a natural scientist and artist, who will work with the children on the design of a "nature notebook".

*"I am proud to attend this first day together with the children of Venice, wishing that the Kindergarten of the Lagoon will continue to grow and that a larger number of young explorers and families will have the pleasure to be part of it. Our ambition is to see the programme growing over time and to develop the project in other cities in the future,"* said **Lorenzo Bertelli**, Prada Group Head of Corporate Social Responsibility.

*"IOC of UNESCO believes that childhood ocean education can become a foundation for lifelong emotional well-being. Finding a way in which humanity could learn how-to live-in harmony with the Ocean is one of the pillars of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. I am very happy to inaugurate today, together with Prada Group, a project that brings the ocean into kids' lives. And we can dream that they will grow happily, will live sustainably and in peace, and that some of them will become future ocean stewards,"* said **Vladimir Ryabinin**, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and Assistant Director-General of UNESCO.

The first cycle of classes will end in June 2023; the new programme will start again in September, coinciding with the schools' calendars.

## **ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS:**

### **Elisabetta Mitrovic**

Born in 1969 on the seashore of Rome, running between the dunes of Capocotta and the pine forest of Castel Fusano, Elisabetta studied natural sciences at university but specialised in environmental education. For the past 25 years, she has been accompanying adults and children to observe nature through her eyes. She began by working in WWF oases, with school camps, summer camps and guided tours; then for many years, she worked in the Lazio Region Environmental Education Laboratories, dealing with environmental communication and training educators and teachers. For the last few years, she has been working as a freelancer, collaborating with parks, cooperatives and associations dealing with education and communication for nature conservation, also through European projects such as ERASMUS and LIFE.

But there is a road Elisabetta has travelled, parallel to this one. Drawing. Both as an artistic practice and as a learning tool in nature conservation education. Today, she lives with her family in a house in the woods, next to the centuries-old beech forest in Oriolo Romano, but she often travels around Italy and Europe, drawing and narrating the nature she observes in her notebooks and works on paper. Watercolour, tempera, pencils, chalks and Indian ink are her tools. Her sign follows the rhythms of nature, the shapes of animals, the moments of wild beauty that she observes from afar with a telescope.

She is also a nature illustrator working as a freelancer for publishing houses, for the Environment Department of the Lazio Region and the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park.

### **Sofia Sarria (Atelier Volante)**

Growing up in Venice in her family's papier-mâché creations workshop, Sofia still carries on this dying tradition. Sometimes, however, she sets aside the moulds she has inherited and looks for new ways to re-appropriate the processes and techniques she has been taught to experiment in new directions and find new lifeblood for her creativity. Making traditional processes her own, adapting them to her own research and to the changing world: Atelier Volante is not just craftsmanship, it is also Sofia's very personal way of having her say. And to remind everyone that even a parcel of old newspapers destined for the scrapheap and cardboard boxes used only for the time of a shipment can still be useful. Perhaps giving life to a world populated by strange creatures ready to be part of a fairytale.

### **Prada Group**

Pioneer of a dialogue with contemporary society across diverse cultural spheres and an influential leader in luxury fashion, Prada Group founds its identity on essential values such as creative independence, transformation and sustainable development, offering its brands a shared vision to interpret and express their spirit. The Group owns some of the world's most prestigious luxury brands, Prada, Miu Miu, Church's, Car Shoe, the historic Pasticceria Marchesi and Luna Rossa.

### **UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission**

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC/UNESCO) promotes international cooperation in marine sciences to improve management of the ocean, coasts and marine resources. The IOC enables its 150 Member States to work together by coordinating programmes in capacity development, ocean observations and services, ocean science and tsunami warning. The work of the IOC contributes to the mission of UNESCO to promote the advancement of science and its applications to develop knowledge and capacity, key to economic and social progress, the basis of peace and sustainable development.

### **The Ocean Decade**

Proclaimed in 2017 by the United Nations General Assembly, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) ('the Ocean Decade') seeks to stimulate ocean science and knowledge generation to reverse the decline of the state of the ocean system and catalyze new opportunities for sustainable development of this massive marine ecosystem. The vision of the Ocean Decade is 'the science we need for the ocean we want'. The Ocean Decade provides a convening framework for scientists and stakeholders from diverse sectors to develop the scientific knowledge and the partnerships needed to accelerate and harness advances in ocean science to achieve a better understanding of the ocean system and deliver science-based solutions to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The UN General Assembly mandated UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC/UNESCO) to coordinate the preparations and implementation of the Decade.

### **Fondazione Emilia Bosis**

The Emilia Bosis Foundation, established in 1998, is dedicated to the reception, care, rehabilitation and, where possible, integration of people with mental distress. Much attention is placed on restoring dignity to the psychiatric patient. The Foundation also pursues its goals through residential and semi-residential facilities.

### **For further information:**

#### **Prada Group Press Office**

[corporatepress@prada.com](mailto:corporatepress@prada.com)  
[www.pradagroup.com](http://www.pradagroup.com)

#### **UNESCO Press Office**

Anne Ajoux (Communications Officer)  
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe  
+39 0412601522  
[a.ajoux@unesco.org](mailto:a.ajoux@unesco.org)

Vinicius Grunberg Lindoso (Communications Officer)  
Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO  
+33 (0)145681170  
[v.lindoso@unesco.org](mailto:v.lindoso@unesco.org)  
[www.ioc.unesco.org](http://www.ioc.unesco.org)