

News



Halil Altindere, *Wonderland* (2013); courtesy of the Artist and São Paulo Biennal

São Paulo

The curators of the 31st SÃO PAULO BIENAL share insights about their curatorial process

This edition involved a collective approach by five international curators and two São Paulo-based associate curators. The process of research, exchange and conversation did not rely upon a specific theme. What was the outcome?

Nuria Enguita Mayo: We organized a series of conversations with institutions and individuals in major and peripheral cities throughout Brazil and Latin America. This allowed us to discuss issues about art and cultural and sociopolitical contexts without assumptions or imposing agendas.

Galit Elat: These mechanisms allowed us to go beyond research based simply on our personal contacts or the existing art circuit.

Our strategy was to define a title and a set of keywords to help our research: collectivity, conflict, imagination and transformation.

These types of counter-responses to the celebrity curator create a totally different dynamic, which can include a healthy antagonism in which conflict as well as collectivity can be embraced. The internal struggles produce imagination and a capacity for transformation that we want to transmit to visitors.

Tell me about this first use of the Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion since the death of Oscar Niemeyer.

Oren Sagiv: We considered the pavilion as a site for the Bienal, rather than a singular container. This in turn led to the articulation of three distinct architectural areas: the Park, the Ramp and the Columns. Many of the projects were produced specifically for this Bienal, so the dialogue between the architecture and art is enhanced.

Tell me about the title: "How to Talk about Things that Don't Exist."

Charles Esche: The title is actually a variable sentence that contains within it both a question and a statement. Non-existent things are experiences or thoughts that cannot be easily articulated within the rules of a society's "common sense," which today is dominated by a brutal economic and militaristic logic. The art in the Bienal can be a way to express emotions and beliefs that are not tolerated within this given logic, by pointing out different possibilities and offering insights into our collective values and how they might be remade.

What are the aims of the Second World Biennale Forum that you are organizing in parallel with the Bienal?

Pablo Lafuente: It will be a platform to talk about some of the ways in which biennials across the world have worked or may work at a time when there are tense and urgent discussions about what makes them possible and what they contribute. —LR

The 31st São Paulo Bienal is on view until December 7, 2014.

Taipei

**NICOLAS BOURRIAUD
discusses “The Great
Acceleration,” his
exhibition for the TAIPEI
BIENNIAL**

How was the concept for this edition born, and how does it differ from previous years?

I had the idea of this exhibition by reading an article saying that there were more robots than human beings surfing the internet today. A new coalition is emerging, a new subordinate class gathering humans, animals, plants, minerals and the atmosphere, all attacked by a techno-industrial system which has become much stronger than us. As the first text of *Relational Aesthetics* was written at the beginnings of the internet, in 1995, it was compelling to rethink our relational landscape at the age of the anthropocene. And formally, I wanted to come back to the basics of an exhibition, avoiding the usual biennial topics: only one venue, only artworks, and a very coherent articulation between them. And a list of artists centered on a new generation, with only a few historical reminders.

If theory has a life of its own, how can it be combined with contemporary art?

I am a curator who writes, not a philosopher, and all my thoughts come from artists' studios. Exhibitions are naturally combined with theory in my practice, but they are a different phase, a different way of thinking. I like to consider my exhibitions as operas: the libretto is mine, but the music is made of the artists' voices. In a word, theory is the trigger, but a show cannot be its illustration.

Do contemporary works of art automatically reflect current theory?

They do not “reflect” theory; artworks are the source for me. All artists are of course influenced by ideas coming from here and there, but important artists influence theory even more than they use it, I think.

Is the concept of this biennial particularly relevant to artists from Asian countries?

Most of today's artists, including Asian ones, are responding to similar interrogations — and the “great acceleration” that lead us to the anthropocene is one of them, as it interrogates our relations with life in general. —HK

Paris

**JENNIFER FLAY talks
about the 2014 edition of
FIAC and the launch of
(OFF)ICIELLE**

In past years, FIAC has felt fresher yet still very rooted in Paris. How do you manage to give the fair such buoyancy each year?

Notwithstanding the success of FIAC over recent years and the widespread recognition the event receives, I work on the principle

that nothing is ever set in stone. Each year is a new beginning. My team and I approach the organization of the upcoming event as an opportunity to rethink everything from top to bottom, strengthening what was successful and reviewing aspects which did not meet our aspirations and expectations. Our method is the antithesis of cut and paste. Our taste for innovation and excellence gives us the drive to persevere.

FIAC has a solid base of long-term exhibitors, including most of the important galleries in the world, but every year sees exciting additions. This year we are launching (Off)icelle, a new FIAC event presenting 68 galleries from 14 countries. The common de-

*Above: An-My Lê, Ship Divers, Ice Exercise, USS New Hampshire, Arctic Seas (2011);
courtesy of the Artist and Taipei Biennal*

Below: Les Docks, Cité de la Mode et du Design; photography by Thibaut Vankemmel



nominator is discovery: new galleries, young artists and those who have been overlooked by the mainstream. Situated at the Docks, Cité de la Mode et du Design, (Off)icielle will further extend our geographic footprint in Paris.

Tell me the three most important qualities that an art fair should have.

1. An impeccable selection of galleries from different generations showing important artworks by major artists and new talents alike.

2. A cultivated and curious audience, sufficient in number to ensure steady sales for exhibitors in all sectors of the market.

3. A reliable, efficient and professional organization, attentive to detail and sensitive to the needs and desires of the exhibitor and visitor population.

Was expanding FIAC in LA and (maybe) St. Petersburg your idea? Do you think it will add value to the fair?

FIAC's operational maturity and status as one of the leading events of its kind in the world naturally incline us to investigate international development possibilities. We are particularly interested in geographic zones with a strong cultural tradition and an energetic contemporary arts scene such as Los Angeles. FIAC's specificities are particularly relevant this context. —GP

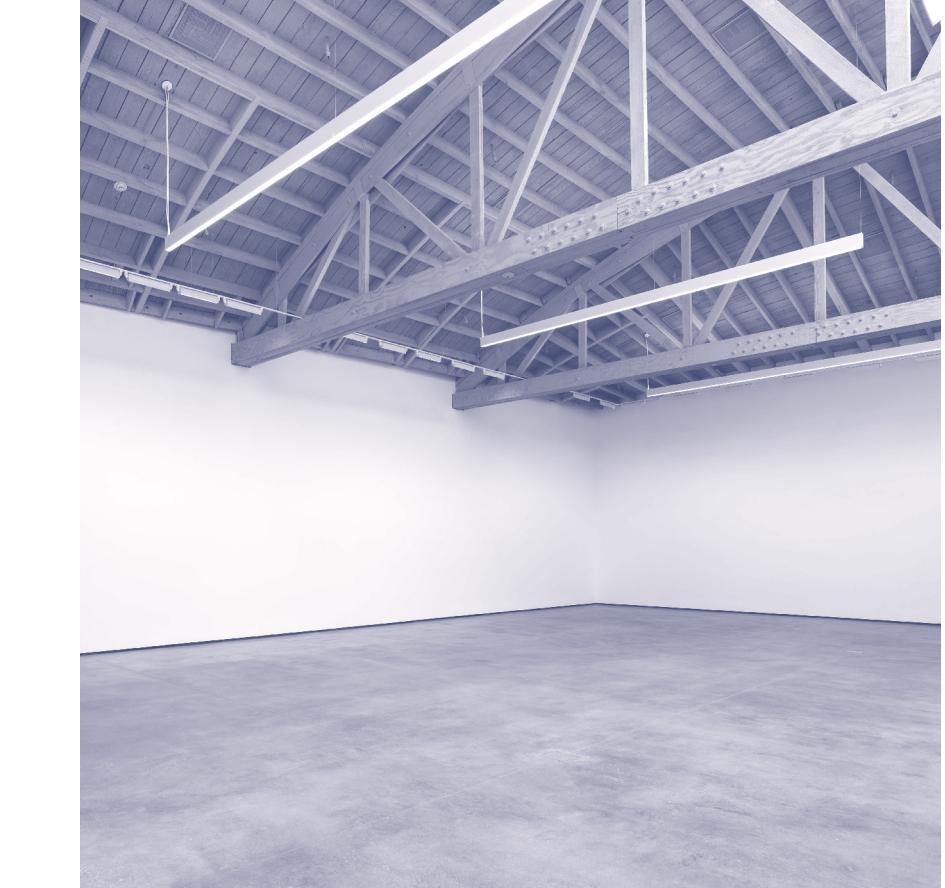
Los Angeles

Galerist DAVID KORDANSKY introduces his new headquarters and upcoming program

More and more galleries are opening branches in Los Angeles. Some are even relocating to the West Coast. As an insider, to what do you attribute this change?

We've seen this migration before, but something does seem different now in terms of scale and mass. The most interesting thing is the number of artists moving to Los Angeles. Artists, my former self included, used to move here to go to school; but now, they do for the space, culture and lifestyle. The obvious answer for the sea change is real estate — but I like to think of LA as a headspace and cultural space as well.

When did you have the urge to get bigger, and for what specific reason?



David Kordansky Gallery, interior view

Just over a year ago I received an off-site storage bill that made me do a double take. We had also been operating two exhibition spaces a few blocks apart from each other in Culver City since 2011. The pragmatic concern of consolidating our operations, coupled with the growing ambitions of our artists, confirmed it was time to find our own building in the city.

The gallery is conceived to host two shows at a time. Can you give us an idea of how you see your program evolving in the new space?

A guiding premise of the gallery as it has grown is to put artists, from different generations or locales, in dialogue with each other. Since 2011 we've embraced a model of two equally sized, non-hierarchical spaces precisely to showcase this diversity. Accordingly, in our new building we'll continue to program two concurrent but staggered exhibitions to encourage connections and juxtapositions, while allowing each show to be its own unique event. We'll also present solo and group exhibitions that span both of our new exhibition spaces, such as our current show with Rashid Johnson and our upcoming show with Jonas Wood.

Artists as curators in private galleries. Do you support the idea?

Very much so. Last summer Ricky Swallow curated "GRAPEVINE~," a phenomenal exhibition of historic California artists working in ceramics. And I'm currently talking with another artist-friend about curating our first group show in our new home. —GP

London

Internet-based platform OPENING TIMES releases its inaugural digital art commissions

Sixty-six days, twenty-one hours, fifteen minutes and six seconds ago, at the time of this writing, the Internet-based art platform Opening Times launched. The nonprofit is the initiative of a group of UK-based artists and curators, and Ruth Proctor's *Always* (2014) — which tallies the seconds since the website first appeared online and provides viewers with the ability to take a screen grab at the



Above: Ruth Proctor, *Always* (2010); courtesy of the Artist and Opening Times
Below: Christopher Kulendran Thomas, <http://www.when-platitudes-become-form.lk> (2013); courtesy of the Artist and Grand Century, New York



moment they experience the work — is one of the first of Opening Times's ongoing digital art commissions.

Other examples of OT's core program — residencies, research and readings — are present in its growing archive. Nicolas Sasseoon's *Pandora* (2014) plumbs the ironies of the artist's distant yet everconnected home studio through a funny mise-en-scène of animated GIFs. A digitally animated film essay by Nicholas O'Brien, *Are You Alright?* (2014), is a lucid evaluation of the possibilities that abide in real and virtual spaces. And there is Karen Archey's list of texts, archives and artist websites, which is as much a personal record of art-related digital ephemera as a collection that reframes the epistemology of art online.

Opening Times is smart to call itself a commissioning body. They are guided by what they want to support financially, and in this very basic way they ratify online art practices without imposing a logic of limited access or duration, or pressuring artists to translate their work into a gallery. More, Opening Times echoes the utopian strains that have been attached to the Internet from the beginning: its archive is a critical microcosm and it lends an ethos of shared resources, possibility and discursive openness to all the work it collects. —SK

New York

OLIVIA ERLANGER talks about her artist-run space GRAND CENTURY

Grand Century is hosted in your studio in the Lower East Side. Does the exhibition program affect your art-making process?

I co-direct Grand Century with my studio mates: Dora Budor and Alex Mackin Dolan. By sharing the studio we have opened up all of our practices to the conversations of the curators and artists working with us.

The luxury of the project, for me at least, is to see work I admire in person, to feel it and investigate it at my leisure. Recognizing the importance of experiencing artwork and how difficult this is to translate is unquestionably having an effect on my own practice.

It takes a different type of creativity to cultivate a new sensibility or even to start a conversation that is divergent from the one at large, but it is happening organically by extending invitations to diverse curatorial voices who come from varied contexts.



View of Heydar Aliyev Center, Baku

As a natural reaction to the current climate of the art market there is a silent boom of project spaces in New York that all hope to offer an alternative format. We began the project because each of us felt like there was no singular program that would be the perfect fit for any of our practices — so we decided to make our own.

Can you depict the community of people around Grand Century?

The community among my peers is extremely strong right now. As a result, each opening is packed with a mix of artists, writers, readers, curators as well as new friends, yet-to-be-friends, etc. What we are creating is not about any one individual, but offering a platform that is flexible and run with complete transparency.

Is Grand Century financially independent? How do you sustain the program?

Alex, Dora and I pay the studio rent independently of whether or not there are shows happening. As a result, we have no budget and we only do shows for two days. Neither Grand Century nor the curators we have worked with view this as a limitation. Rather, it is simply one of the parameters of the project.

Can you share a preview of Grand Century's future?

Grand Century is about to have an amazing year! This fall we will put on shows with curators Franklin Melendez, Romain Dauriac and Tobias Czudej; art collectives S.O.A.P.Y and Gasconade; and will participate in art fairs such as NADA Miami. —TC

Baku

Spotlight on HEYDAR ALIYEV CENTER

Since it opened in May 2012, the Heydar Aliyev Center has become one of the most easily recognized landmarks of Baku, in no small part due to its fascinating architecture: this ultramodern complex is the brainchild of the brilliant architect Zaha Hadid, who has been honored with multiple awards.

The immense building, which includes a concert-hall, conference rooms, offices and a nine-story exhibition space, is the first complex equipped with state-of-the-art technology in Azerbaijan. The uniquely conceived internal area, with its curved hallways flowing into each other, allows for the installation of scaled exhibitions at different levels of the building and also provides an ideal venue for various cultural events.

Over the last few years, the Center has implemented a number of significant exhibitions and events that have drawn visitors from all over the world. With a focus on modern and contemporary art, these projects are gradually transforming Baku into the most important art destination in the region.

One of the first exhibitions in the Center was a 2013 Andy Warhol retrospective titled "Life, Death and Beauty." More than a hundred works by the Pop artist were shown, a major portion of them from the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, USA.

No less significant was an exhibition of works by sculptor Tony Cragg, which occupied both the interior and exterior of the Center in a surprisingly harmonious fashion.

An exhibition of photos by Henri Cartier-Bresson, considered to be the godfather of street photography, was also a recent success. In September, the Heydar Aliyev Center will launch an exhibition of French expressionist painter Bernard Buffet, who is associated with the mid-century *miserabilisme* movement. —SM

Beijing

PHILIP TINARI talks about the group show "The Los Angeles Project" at UCCA

LA in Beijing. Why?

The two cities have similarities that speak to each other. Even just starting with smog, sprawl and traffic, three basic elements of the urban condition that both cities have either encountered or are now encountering, we thought there was something there. Add to this the notion, dear to Americans, that the West Coast is part of the "Pacific Rim," even though specific connections between these particular cities on the level of contemporary culture have been more or less absent. We thought LA offered one possible model of what Beijing might be as a global artistic capital — both have great schools and institutions, artists from all over their respective countries, and ample (relatively) affordable studio space.

How will the show question and stimulate the very different local art scene?

There is a general shortage of major international art exhibitions in China and Beijing specifically. While institutions like the NAMOC and NMC often do high-profile exchange exhibitions with major foreign museums, it is extremely rare for institutions on the ground in China to commission new shows with living, working artists. This means that hopefully our exhibition will be seen as something new and fresh, presenting in detail a group of artists who have largely not yet had the opportunity to exhibit in China.

This is not a thematic group show, rather a group of individual exhibitions.

We were not interested in doing a research-based "summary" of the LA scene similar to the many "China shows" that have

been mounted around the world in the last two decades. We know how inevitably partial such shows end up being. For this reason we decided to embrace specificity by choosing seven artists whose work we thought occupied different places on a continuum of artistic practices in LA today and gave each of them enough breathing room to be fully exhibited.

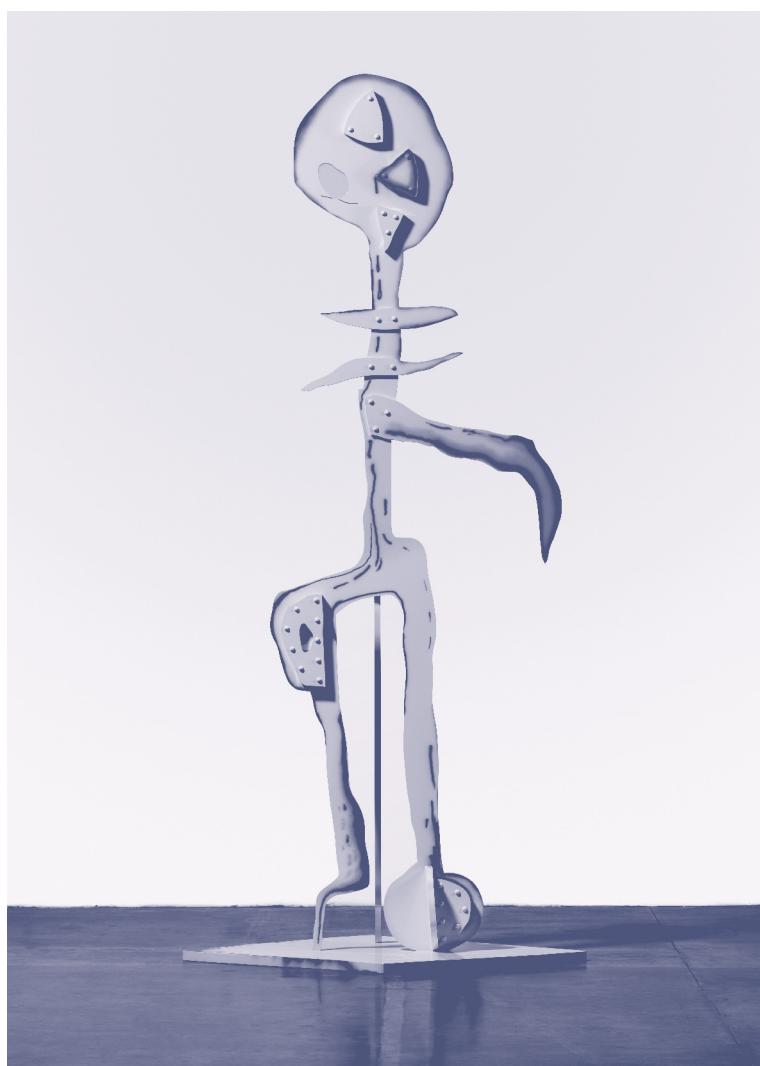
—PS

"The Los Angeles Project" features Kathryn Andrews, Aaron Curry, Alex Israel, Matthew Monahan, Sterling Ruby, Ryan Trecartin and Kaari Upson. It is on view until November 9, 2014. Read the full interview at "LA talks..." on flashartonline.com.

JRP | Ringier releases SCOTT KING's latest artist book

In his latest artist's book, *Anish and Antony Take Afghanistan*, Scott King explores the format of the graphic novel. Illustrated by Will Henry, the book is the story of two blue-chip British artists who are commissioned by the United Nations to revamp Afghanistan's attractiveness by means of public art interventions. "We are sick of your blue-sky-thinking-Band-Aid-solutions!" an Afghanistan representative yells at US, German and UK heads of state; "But — gentlemen — we are on our knees! This is our only hope." Reached in a London gentlemen's club, Sir Anish and Sir Antony — the two characters are inspired by artists Antony Gormley and Anish Kapoor — respond to the commission with a steadfast belief in the noble potential of their art. "Oh, look at that! 400,000 square kilometers of *collective space*," utters Antony before the wasteland of Afghanistan. Parcels labeled Arts Council England rain on the Afghan land as humanitarian aids. Soon the duo's gigantic, Tower of Babel-inspired monuments presage the birth of a New Afghanistan. The country turns into a "hotbed for innovation, vintage poster emporiums, gastronomy public houses and rustic cafés" with an economic growth rate comparable only to that of China.

King's book — which premiered in the context of the artist's "Totem Motif" exhibition held last summer at Between Bridges in Berlin — offers a scenario that parabolically ironizes on the so-called Bilbao Effect: the phenomenon has seen not just public art commissions but diverse initiatives by creative industries that power processes of financial, social and political upheaval in de-



Above: Aaron Curry, Mr Machine Gun Bodymind (2013); courtesy of the Artist and Fondation Guy & Myriam Ullens
Below: spread from Scott King, Anish and Antony Take Afghanistan; courtesy of the Artist and JRP/Ringier



pressed localities — often resulting in sterile celebrations of bigness and the broadening of economic inequality. Indeed, Anish and Antony's venture dramatically echoes 2014's most grandiose piece of public art, that is, Richard Serra's *East-West/West-East* installed in the middle of the Qatari desert. "Art can be common, recognizable and human, but also by being iconic and synthetic, it can catalyze an inner, reflective response," recites Antony to his enslaved construction workers. The history of mankind teaches us that any ideology-driven strategy can lead to dystopia. —MDA

Primary Information releases *The George Kuchar Reader*

George Kuchar was born in 1942, together with his twin brother Mike, on the Isle of Manhattan. The world of the Kuchar brothers changed radically when they were given an 8mm camera for their twelfth birthday. By the early 1960's, the brothers were releasing notorious features such as *I Was a Teenage Rumpot* (1960) and *A Town Called Tempest* (1962). George's 16mm solo effort *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (1966) brought him wider recognition in both the rarified underground cinema world and popular culture. To this day it remains his most rented title and frequently cited point of reference. A clip from the film featuring George even turned up in the annual "In Memoriam" montage during the 2012 Oscars telecast.

An underground pioneer and influence on filmmakers like John Waters, George Kuchar is legendary for his "no budget, no problem" approach. His films have been defined as campy, naive, transgressive and brilliantly humorous.

The George Kuchar Reader, edited by Andrew Lampert, is a 336-page collection of writings, comics, letters, drawings, paintings, UFO stories and other material — much of it previously unpublished.

Hilarious comics such as *The Dietrich Dossier* and *Herzog Holiday* are accompanied by photos spanning from his teenage years in the Bronx until his death at age 69 in San Francisco. Over the course of fifty years, Kuchar created a huge body of work that made an indelible mark on American art and cinema.

As Lampert writes: "Whether making dozens of his own 16mm shorts and features, collaborating with his twin brother Mike on their early 8mm films, scripting and co-starring in the bisexual porn epic *Thundercrack!* for his

partner Curt McDowell, producing movies with students at the San Francisco Art Institute, or churning out video documents of his ongoing adventures and holiday gatherings, George tirelessly transcended the visual and verbal limits of aesthetic acceptability, puckishly undermining generic templates of dramatic form. He had a good time doing it, too." —GP

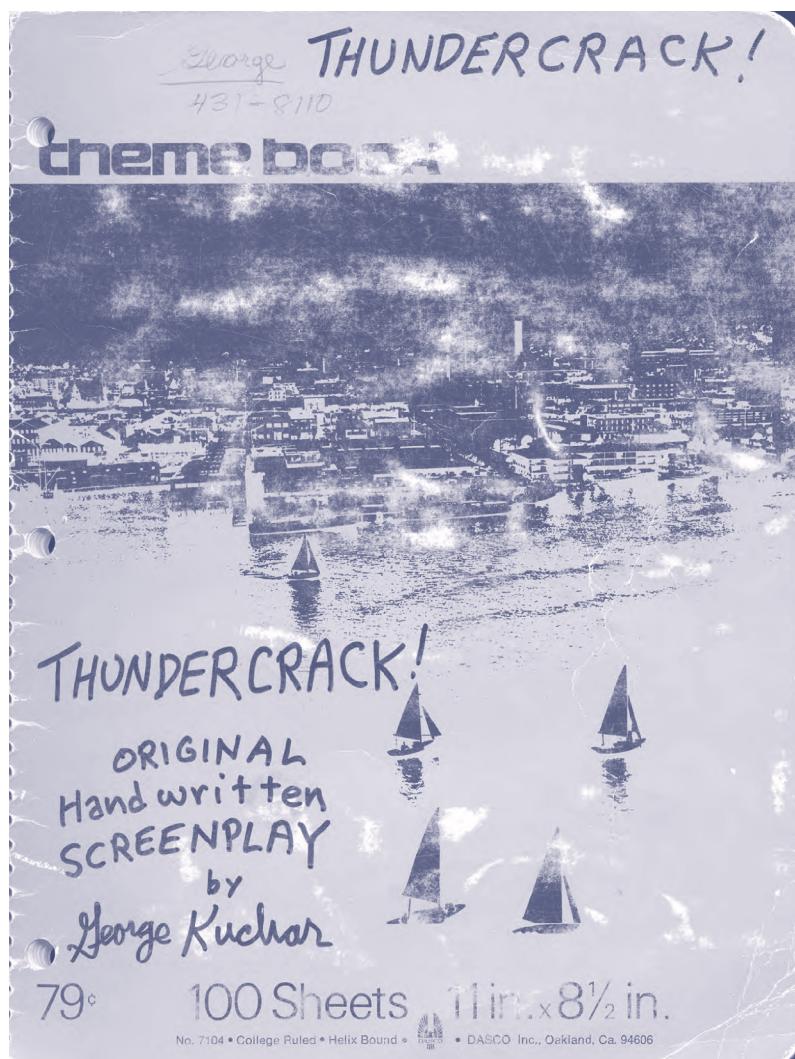
Gwangju

GWANGJU BIENNALE opens amid controversy and a promise for change

The 10th Gwangju Biennale exhibition "Burning Down the House," which opened on September 5, was soon followed by news of the resignation of Lee Yong-woo, president of the Gwangju Biennale Foundation.

Curated by Jessica Morgan, this year's edition explores the process of loss and renewal — the cycles of obliteration and transformation that can be witnessed throughout history. Looking at aesthetics and historical events within the increasingly rapid progression of redundancy and renewal in commercial culture, the Biennale reflects on the sometimes-dramatic process of destruction that is often followed by the promise of rebirth and change.

The Biennale team became enmeshed in controversy when a satirical painting was removed from the Gwangju Biennale's 20th-anniversary exhibition "Sweet Dew – After 1980": the painting depicts family members of the children who died last April in the worst ferry disaster in South Korea since 1970. In response to the act of censorship, a group of Japanese artists from Okinawa removed their works from the exhibition. Exhibition curator Yun Beom-mo and Biennale Foundation president Lee Yong-woo both resigned.



Page from *The George Kuchar Reader*. Courtesy of Primary Information

"It is vital that art move past efforts to normalize and standardize," Lee Yong-woo said in an interview published in *Art in America* on August 28. "This has to start with freeing itself from a self-censoring attitude that excludes ethical and moral self-examination. The Gwangju Biennale has upheld these principles for the last twenty years. In Gwangju, the phrase 'Gwangju spirit' has taken hold—less because of the institutionalization of democracy than because of a promise regarding the hundreds of people sacrificed in resistance to an oppressive power in 1980."

The Gwangju Biennale is indeed Asia's first and most prestigious contemporary art biennale. It was founded in September 1995 in memory of the Gwangju Democratization Movement. —TC



Woodstock, Oxfordshire

Newly appointed director MICHAEL FRAHM talks about the BLENHEIM ART FOUNDATION

Michael, you are known for being very current with the Asian market. Will that be your focus at Blenheim — bringing contemporary Asian art to Woodstock?

The intention with the Blenheim Art Foundation is to give the greatest number of people access to the most innovative contemporary artists working today. We don't look geographically at where the artists are from; we look at the art and determine if it fits into what we are trying to achieve with the foundation. Our goal is to show the artists we believe in and who are the most relevant to our time. By doing that, we hope to be able to excite and inspire our visitors.

How will you structure the upcoming year? Will you hire different curators or will you define the program yourself?

There is no set formula. We remain open to working with people who can bring ideas and add value to that thinking. We are thrilled to be able to launch the foundation with Ai Weiwei, one of the most important contemporary artists working today.

In terms of conceiving an exhibition for a foundation, is the process than different from working with a collection?

No, I don't think that it is. I have always believed that behind any good collection

there is a specific vision, a red thread that runs through the collection and conveys a sense of identify. The difference is that the foundation is a non-profit organization responsible for contemporary art exhibitions in a building that dates back to 1705. That makes for a very different thinking, as it breaks the traditional white-cube setting, but that is exactly what I find so remarkable about working at the Blenheim Palace.

Will you still be dedicating part of your time to art advisory?

No, my time is fully dedicated to the Blenheim Art Foundation. —GP



Above: Huma Mulji, Lost and Found (2012). Installation view at Gwangju Biennale (2014)

Photography by Stefan Altenburger

Below: Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire

GP Gea Politi
HK Helena Kontova
LR Lucy Rees
MDA Michele D'Aurizio
PS Patrick Steffen
SK Sam Korman
SM Shirin Melikova
TC Tan Cheng