

Curator believes contemporary art can illustrate the current entanglement between the human and nonhuman in the emergence of a new era — the Anthropocene

'Great Acceleration'

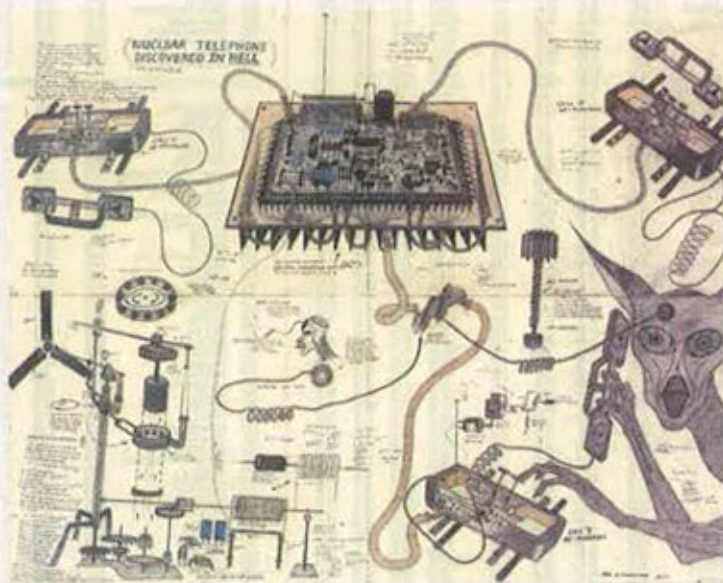
tells of new era

Exhibition

BY DIMITRI BRUYAS AND
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The China Post

The Taipei Biennial 2014 (台北雙年展) kicked off last week, featuring artists from Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and the U.S. and exploring the topic of "The Great Acceleration" (劇烈加速度) of human technological progress and environmental impact. Curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, the biennial includes a contemporary art exhibition, film screenings, live performances, talks, reading, conferences, publications and other special events at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (臺北市立美術館) and other art spaces and public spaces throughout the city until Jan. 4, 2015.

This year's biennial also takes a wider, more inclusive interpretation of the curatorial theme of the biennial by reflecting on how human activities impact the Earth's biosphere. The resulting global warming, deforestation and soil pollution have resulted in the emergence of a new era, the



Anthropocene, after ten thousand years of the Holocene.

Still, the arrival of the Anthropocene also points to a paradox: the more powerful the "collective impact of the species" is, the less we feel capable of "influencing our surrounding reality," explains Bourriaud. "The resulting collapse of the human scale, helpless in the face of a computerized economic system whose decisions are derived from algorithms capable of performing operations at the speed of light, has turned human beings into spectators and victims of their

own infrastructure," he told The China Post.

As a result, Bourriaud hints at the emergence of an unprecedented political coalition between the individual/citizen and a new subordinate class: animals, plants, minerals and the atmosphere, all assailed by a techno-industrial system now clearly detached from civil society.

Against this backdrop, contemporary art can illustrate the current entanglement between the human and nonhuman, highlighting the contradictions and bewilderment in our lives such as refuted speaking, the living petrified, illusions of life and illusions of the inert amid biological maps redistributing constantly.

"The Great Acceleration" is presented as a tribute to this co-activity, the assumed parallelism between the different kingdoms and their interactions. "This exhibition is organized around the cohabitation of human consciousness with swarming animals, data processing, the rapid growth of plants and the slow movement of matter," Bourriaud continued.

So the artists are looking into the



(Left) "Nuclear telephone discovered in Hell" by Abu Bakarr Mansaray (2003), 100 x 130 cm, graphite, colored pencil on paper
(Above) "Meccano" by Van Caekenbergh Patrick (1998 - 2005), 178 x 90 x 40 cm, maquette, mixed media

Courtesy of TFAM

concepts of ancestry (the world before human consciousness) and its landscape of minerals, alongside vegetable transplants or couplings between humans, machines and beasts. "At the center is this reality: Human beings are only one element among others in a wide-area network, which is why we need to rethink our relational universe to include new partners," he remarked.

For the biennial, a new generation of artists is thus exploring the intrinsic properties of materials "informed" by human activity, including polymers (Roger Hiorns, Marlie Mul, Sterling Ruby, Alisa Barenboym, Neil Beloufa, Pamela Rosenkranz) or the critical states of materials (the nebularization creations of Peter Buggenhout, Harold Ancart or Hiorns).

Yet, polymerization has also become a principle of composition, with the invention of flexible and artificial alloys of heterogeneous elements — as can be seen in the videos of Laure Prouvost, Ian Cheng, Rachel Rose or Camille Henrot, the installations of Mika Rottenberg, Nathaniel Mellors and Charles Avery, the paintings of Roberto Cabot or Tala Madani. Others explore weight, transposing the lightness of pixels onto monumental objects (David Douard, Neil Beloufa, Matheus Rocha Pitta). ■

Taipei Biennial 2014 — The Great Acceleration (台北雙年展—劇烈加速度) ▶ Until Jan. 4, 2015 (Sun.) / Taipei Fine Arts Museum (臺北市立美術館) / No. 181 Zhongshan N. Road Sec. 3, Taipei (臺北市中山區中山北路三段181號) / NT\$15 ~ NT\$30 / www.tfam.museum



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Courtesy of TFAM