

# EXHIBITIONS



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Burning questions: Sehee Sarah Bark's *Vanished Landscape*, 2013

*"The process of annihilation, renewal and regeneration underpins the thematic framework of the biennial"*

## Out of the ashes

Artists at this year's Gwangju Biennale want to torch what came before

### GWANGJU BIENNALE

Gwangju. Few other biennials are as firmly rooted in their location and historical context of the host country as the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea. Jessica Morgan, the artistic director of the tenth edition, brings together 104 artists from 36 countries, stressing that Gwangju "is not a tourist spot". The biennial is there to "commemorate a specific political event", a living memorial to the citizens, more than 200, who died in May 1980 when Gwangju's population rose up against a hardline military dictatorship, thereby starting the democracy movement in Korea. "As a result, this history and context necessarily influences the exhibition," says Morgan, who is the curator of international art at Tate Modern, London.

#### Turbulent past

Her curatorial vision, conveyed in the title "Burning Down the House", embraces the "radical spirit of 'burning down' the status quo", she says. The process of annihilation, followed by renewal and regeneration, underpins the thematic framework. Works that reflect South Korea's turbulent 20th-century past and emergence as an economic powerhouse are particularly potent.

Minouk Lim, one of 19 participating Korean artists, will show a work incorporating the remains of victims killed during the Korean War (1950-53). The bones, which were retrieved by the victims' relatives from the site of a massacre, are housed in a container



Lee Bul, *Abortion*, 1989

Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa of Guatemala, and Polish artist Cezary Bodzianowski.

Morgan also aims to celebrate the "hedonism of sound and movement evoked by the title", adding a touch of anarchy to the proceedings. "Drawing on the free and open approach [of the participating artists], I have worked with the biennale team to make an exhibition that physically embodies this commotion," she says.

Morgan singles out a work that epitomises this tumult. "The film by Anand Patwardhan is a euphoric work that consists purely of a song. *We are Not Your Monkeys*, 1996, uses song and the rhythm of the drums to drive its anticaste message. The film traces the mythological origins of the 'untouchables', or Dalit, at the bottom of India's caste system, offering the Dalit perspective on the epic Hindu legend known as the Ramayana."

The transformative power of fire, which symbolises energy and metamorphosis, is prevalent in the works of Huma Mulji and Eduardo Basualdo; the latter will present a burned house, *The Island*, 2009-14, that can be entered, allowing visitors to examine a surreal interior space at its centre. The Los Angeles-based artist Sterling Ruby presents a series of specially produced burning stoves. Placed in the Biennale Square, they will blaze a trail for visitors to the biennial.

Gareth Harris  
 • Gwangju Biennale, Biennale Hall, Jungoui Park, 5 September-9 November

on display at the biennial. Relatives will carry a series of sculptural objects made by Lim to the exhibition site. The project, *Navigation ID*, 2014, "is a process of unearthing, but one that is addressed to the present day rather than the historical past", Morgan says. Lee Bul's performance works, including *Abortion*, 1989, a searing portrayal of self-torture, mirror the fraught Korean political situation of the 1980s.

#### New commissions

The Chinese artist Liu Xiaodong has made a vast 20-panel painting about the generation of Gwangju born after the 1980 uprising, portraying high school students in various guises. The work is one of 35 new commissions. Other artists who have made new works include Slovakian-born Roman Ondak,

## Everything is connected

Nicolas Bourriaud's Taipei Biennial expands on his theory of "relational aesthetics"

### TAIPEI BIENNAL

Taipei. How artists look to nature and technology is at the core of this year's ninth Taipei Biennial, which is organised by Nicolas Bourriaud, the director of the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris. Bourriaud will use the event, "The Great Acceleration", to expand on his highly academic theory of "relational aesthetics", which he first proposed in 1995. He believes that contemporary art can convey how humans connect with animals, plants, machines, products and objects in the internet age.

"I start with the pairing of machine/nature to show how artists integrate it into their works. In a way, I reset 'relational aesthetics' by confronting it with 'speculative realism', a philosophical trend claiming equal rights for humans and natural or artificial objects," Bourriaud says.

#### Ghost dance

According to the organisers: "The exhibition will highlight the way artists focus on links, chains, connections and mutations, and how they envision the earth as a huge network, where new states of matter and new forms of relations appear, forming a new state of the 'ghost dance' between people and objects that Karl Marx described in the 19th century."

The 50-artist biennial, which is largely funded by the Taiwanese government, mixes emerging names, such as Tehran-born Tala Madani and the New York-



Rachel Rose, *Sitting Feeding Sleeping*, video still, 2013

based artist Alisa Barenboym, with established figures such as Joan Jonas, Haegue Yang and Josephine Meckseper.

The US artist Rachel Rose will show the video *Sitting Feeding Sleeping*, 2013, set in a cryogenics lab, as part of a new installation, while the Turner Prize-nominated artist Roger Hiorns has incorporated animal brain matter into a series of sculptural wall reliefs crafted from Styrofoam (*Untitled*, 2011).

Around a third of the artists will produce new works, including the Scottish artist Charles Avery, who is due to unveil a bronze pool with an egret, also in bronze, perched on the side. The pond is the centrepiece of the Jadindagadender, the park at the heart of Onomatopoeia, the capital of Avery's fictional island. "A good biennial is, first of all, a good exhibition. And any interesting exhibition, to my eyes, has to position itself within the present, and defend an idea of what art is," Bourriaud says.

Gareth Harris  
 • Taipei Biennial, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 13 September-4 January 2015

### In brief



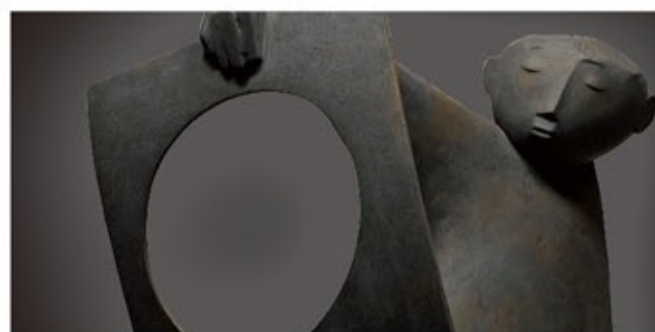
#### Chinese whispering an LA story

"The Los Angeles Project" is, according to Philip Tinari, the director of the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, less a group show than an "anthology of seven shows", each featuring an internationally prominent artist from LA. Tinari, who co-organised the exhibition (13 September-9 November) with

Paula Tsai, chose seven artists representing "a mix of positions" that, he hopes, "will add up to more than the sum of their parts". Of the seven artists—Kathryn Andrews, Aaron Curry, Alex Israel, Matthew Monahan, Sterling Ruby, Ryan Trecartin (left, *The Research*, 2009-10), and Kaari Upson—only Ruby has previously been shown in Beijing. All, except Trecartin, have made new works for the exhibition, and all have collaborated with the designer Brian Roetlinger on a series of artists' books, produced in place of a catalogue. J.G.

### BIENAL DE SÃO PAULO

For coverage of this year's edition of the São Paulo Biennial, see Brazil special report, pp2-3



**Blackwall Green** INSURANCE SPECIALISTS TO THE ART WORLD

Contact: Robert Hepburne-Scott on +44 (0)20 7234 4307 Email: Robert\_Hepburne-Scott@ajg.com  
 Matthew Costin on +44 (0)20 7234 4428 Email: Matthew\_Costin@ajg.com  
 The Walbrook Building, 25 Walbrook, London EC4N 8AW Fax: +44 (0)20 7234 4267

Sculpture by Giles Penny

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