



SUPERPOSITION

Equilibrium & Engagement

16 March – 11 June, 2018

21st Biennale of Sydney

Biennale of Sydney Archive

The extensive archive of the Biennale of Sydney has been a key starting point for Artistic Director Mami Kataoka's 21st Biennale of Sydney, SUPERPOSITION: Equilibrium & Engagement.

After 45 years, the archive is a rich source of information about art practice and the production of the exhibition, but also about the social, cultural and political life of Sydney – and Australia – in a global context.

Each exhibition has been an opportunity for the institution, as well as artists and audiences, to question who we are at a given moment in time and in material, social and political contexts.

The archive is a survey of significant art from around the world, and maps shifts in both art and curatorial practice. At the same time, it demonstrates the ways artists and curators have used archives and archival methods and materials as both research and content and modes of display. It is also a living legacy of dialogue and influence between the work of artists from previous Biennales, and the ongoing work of Australian artists and curators.

More broadly, this legacy has had an impact on Australian culture through art history and criticism, and through dialogues between artists. The discourse that has emerged from the work of international and Australian First Peoples artists, for example, has changed the landscape of how we talk about First Peoples cultures and sovereignty.

The legacies of the archive inform and contextualise the 21st Biennale of Sydney, but also connect with other art and exhibition practices internationally; and with philosophical and theoretical areas of inquiry that have explored ideas about personal and cultural memory – and the construction of knowledge and discourse – especially since the 1990s. Much of this commentary has been used to critically analyse the nature of museum collections and the cultural institution, and the impact of philosophical schools of thought on ideas about visual culture, culture and society, and subjectivity.

By focusing on the Biennale of Sydney Archive and the organisation's history through public programs and a display at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Mami Kataoka invites us to consider the role of the Biennale in the past and future.