

MEDIA RELEASE

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The 21st Biennale of Sydney (2018) announces first 21 artists for its 45th anniversary exhibition



Mit Jai Inn, *Junta Monochrome #1*, 2016, oil on canvas. 800 x 800 x 50 cm. Courtesy the artist; Gallery Ver, Bangkok; and Cartel Artspace, Bangkok
Photograph: Jirat Ratthawongjirakul

Sydney, Australia: Mami Kataoka, Artistic Director of the 21st Biennale of Sydney, today revealed the first group of 21 artists selected for the 21st edition of the Asia Pacific's leading contemporary art event. With around 70 artists expected to be included in the 21st Biennale, this initial selection includes internationally renowned artists Ai Weiwei, Laurent Grasso, Haegue Yang and Eija-Liisa Ahtila, and provides insight into the themes of the 2018 edition.

Celebrating its 45th anniversary next year, the Biennale of Sydney will be presented over twelve weeks from Friday, 16 March until Monday, 11 June 2018 (Preview 13-15 March), at multiple locations throughout Sydney. It will feature major new commissions and recent work by contemporary artists from Australia and around the world.

The 21 artists announced today as part of the first reveal include one artist duo, ten artists from throughout Asia, five European artists, four Australian artists and one artist from North America. The initial list of artists is as follows:

- **Eija-Liisa Ahtila** (Born 1959 in Finland, lives and works in Helsinki)
- **Ai Weiwei** (Born 1957 in China, lives and works in Beijing)
- **Brook Andrew** (Born 1970 in Australia, lives and works in Melbourne)
- **Oliver Beer** (Born 1985 in England, lives and works in Paris and London)
- **Anya Gallaccio** (Born 1963 in Scotland, lives and works in San Diego)
- **Laurent Grasso** (Born 1972 in France, lives and works in Paris and New York)
- **N.S. Harsha** (Born 1969 in India, lives and works in Mysore)
- **Mit Jai Inn** (Born 1960 in Thailand, lives and works in Chiang Mai)
- **Kate Newby** (Born 1979 in New Zealand, lives and works in Auckland and New York)

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- **Noguchi Rika** (Born 1971 in Japan, lives and works in Okinawa)
- **Nguyen Trinh Thi** (Born 1973 in Vietnam, lives and works in Hanoi)
- **Ciara Phillips** (Born 1976 in Canada, lives and works in Glasgow)
- **Koji Ryui** (Born 1976 in Japan, lives and works in Sydney)
- **Semiconductor** (Ruth Jarman, born 1973 in England, and Joe Gerhardt, born 1972 in England, live and work in Brighton)
- **Yasmin Smith** (Born 1984 in Australia, lives and works in Sydney)
- **George Tjungurrayi** (Born c. 1943 in Australia, lives and works in Kintore)
- **Nicole Wong** (Born 1990 in Hong Kong, lives and works in Hong Kong)
- **Wong Hoy Cheong** (Born 1960 in Malaysia, lives and works in Kuala Lumpur)
- **Yukinori Yanagi** (Born 1959 in Japan, lives and works in Hiroshima)
- **Haegue Yang** (Born 1971 in South Korea, lives and works in Berlin and Seoul)
- **Jun Yang** (Born 1975 in China, lives and works in Vienna, Taipei and Yokohama)

Artistic Director, Mami Kataoka (Tokyo-based Chief Curator of the Mori Art Museum) said: “We are delighted to reveal the first 21 artists who will participate in the 21st Biennale of Sydney, including some of the most exciting contemporary artists of our time. We anticipate the exhibition will include around 70 artists in total, with conversations presently underway with more than 40 artists from around Australia and the world about their participation in the 45th anniversary edition.”

Commenting on the curatorial premise for the 21st Biennale of Sydney, Kataoka said: “Next year’s Biennale will explore multiple viewpoints in search of a state of equilibrium. With a holistic view, the 21st Biennale of Sydney will also seek in-depth engagement with individuals and communities while exploring a range of perspectives and meanings of abstractions. Rather than focusing on a specific concept or theme, the exhibition will suggest multi-layered perspectives of the world and its histories simultaneously. In July this year, the exhibition title will be announced along with details of the themes and concerns informing this edition.”

Kataoka described the Biennale experience as: “a journey; a walk through microcosms of the world today based on the stratum of history, human knowledge, emotions, desires and beliefs, as well as the mysteries of natural phenomena and the whole of the universe.”

To commemorate the organisation’s 45th anniversary, the exhibition will revisit the Biennale’s rich history through a close examination of its **Archive**, drawing on 45 years of art and encounters. Since its inception in 1973, the Biennale of Sydney has showcased the work of nearly 1,800 artists from more than 100 countries, building a reputation as one of the leading international art events.

To view more detailed information on this initial list of artists participating in the 21st Biennale of Sydney, please visit biennaleofsydney.com.au

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MEDIA IMAGES: Please visit <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B-gOSRmI5CS5OWxHc3UxbXVMa3M> to access media images and captions.

KEY DATES & DETAILS:

- Media Preview: Tuesday 13 March 2018
- Preview: Tuesday, 13 March until Thursday 15 March 2018
- Public dates: Friday, 16 March 2018 until Monday, 11 June 2018
- Entry to the Biennale of Sydney is free to the public

ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

Eija-Liisa Ahtila

Born 1959 in Hämeenlinna, Finland
Lives and works in Helsinki, Finland

Interested in writing and literature from a young age, visual artist and filmmaker Eija-Liisa Ahtila experiments with different approaches to narrative, creating films and cinematic installations that question the traditional rules of storytelling. Earlier works by Ahtila have explored unsettling human dramas, dealing with family relations, mental disintegration and death. More recently her films have illustrated profound artistic questions; investigating the processes of perception and the attribution of meaning, often set against the backdrop of larger cultural and existential themes such as colonialism, faith and post-humanism.

Ai Weiwei

Born 1957 in Beijing, China
Lives and works in Beijing, China

Arguably the most famous, or perhaps infamous, Chinese artist living today, much of Ai Weiwei's work exists in the space between art and activism, often blurring the boundaries between the two. Politically outspoken and an avid user of social media, Ai works across a wide range of mediums including film, photography, ceramics, sculpture and installation. He creates works rich with symbolism and metaphor that expand the definition of contemporary art, frequently encompassing actions that highlight social injustice and scathing criticism of the Chinese Government.

Brook Andrew

Born 1970 in Sydney, Australia
Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia

Interdisciplinary Australian artist Brook Andrew works across the mediums of video, sculpture, photography and installation, creating multi-layered works that scrutinise the dominance of Western narratives relating to colonialism, deliberately placing Australia at the centre of a global inquisition. Drawing inspiration from archival and vernacular objects, Andrew works with different communities, as well as public and private collections around the world, to highlight alternative histories that are too often neglected, hidden beneath the legacies of modernist narrative and colonialism. Andrew provides viewers with new ways to interpret the world through intervention and expansion; reinterpreting history and re-framing our inherited experience.

Oliver Beer

Born 1985 in Kent, England
Lives and works in Paris, France and Kent, England

Studying music before attending the Ruskin School of Fine Art, University of Oxford, Oliver Beer works across the auditory, visual and performative; exploring complex relationships between sound and space. Particularly interested in the unique rapport between the voice and architecture, Beer translates his research into performances in which the spectators become participants by the mere fact of their presence. Alongside his work with sound, Beer creates subtle and diverse sculptural, installation and film projects whose provenance sometimes seems biographical; but in which his play with universal – often intimate – concerns draws on shared emotions and perceptions.

Anya Gallaccio

Born 1963 in Paisley, Scotland
Lives and works in London, England and San Diego, USA

Conceptual artist Anya Gallaccio is well known for her ephemeral, site-specific installations; temporary works that often comprise materials informed by local industries and economies such as bronze, flowers, chocolate and ice. Providing vivid, sensorial experiences of the natural processes of transformation and decay, Gallaccio's function in the space between material and meaning, allowing substance to dictate forms which frequently deteriorate into disorder, challenging accepted ideas of contemporary art and posing questions that probe and provoke traditional notions of what sculpture can be.

Laurent Grasso

Born 1972 in Mulhouse, France

Lives and works in Paris, France and New York, USA

Located at the intersection of heterogeneous temporalities, geographies and realities, Laurent Grasso's films, sculptures, paintings and photographs immerse the viewer in an uncanny world of uncertainty. Creating mysterious atmospheres that contest the boundaries of what we see and believe, Grasso employs anachronism and fusion as methods by which he reshapes reality according to his own rules. Fascinated by the manner in which various powers can affect human conscience, Grasso attempts to reveal and materialise the invisible, uncovering that which lies behind the commonly perceived and offering new perspectives of history and reality.

Mit Jai Inn

Born 1960 in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Lives and works in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Highly regarded senior artist Mit Jai Inn is considered by many to be a pioneer of Thai contemporary art. He is a free-spirited, independent artist whose idea of painting defies conventional boundaries, both physically and conceptually. His abstract paintings bring to mind reflections of light, the colour spectrum and the molecular structure of the universe. Encounters with his work are often immersive experiences, awakening in the viewer a sense of their own being and an awareness of the very essence of life.

Kate Newby

Born 1979 in Auckland, New Zealand

Lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand and New York, USA

New Zealand artist Kate Newby creates site-specific projects that form relationships with locations through actions. Often minimal and unassuming, her works question the nature of contemporary art – asking the viewer to reconsider how an art object should be exhibited, viewed and archived. Location is an integral component of Newby's works, an installation may literally incorporate found objects and elements from the constructed landscape surrounding a space. Drawing inspiration from the commonplace and ordinary, Newby's observations of the everyday action of living produce artworks that celebrate detail, encouraging the viewer to stop, to retrace their steps, to look closer.

Nguyen Trinh Thi

Born 1973 in Hanoi, Vietnam

Lives and works in Hanoi, Vietnam

Independent filmmaker and video artist Nguyen Trinh Thi's works evoke memory and remembrance as alternative ways to access obscured or unwritten histories. Deeply informed by engagement with socio-cultural concerns, Nguyen's films draw attention to confronting and often polarising local issues, despite the many restrictions and limited artistic freedoms in her native Vietnam. Encompassing original footage obtained through extensive investigative field work as well as found material, Nguyen intentionally blurs the boundaries between documentary filmmaking, video art and performance, creating intricate vignettes that encapsulate Vietnam's complex history and its continued reverberations in the present.

Noguchi Rika

Born 1971 in Saitama, Japan

Lives and works in Okinawa, Japan

Photographic artist Noguchi Rika communicates with the universe in her own way, creating images of the world which are often described as painterly and poetic. Inspired by different photographic processes, or sometimes just by a word or a title, Noguchi notes that 'our daily lives are filled with small miracles that we don't notice. Being invisible, they are difficult to capture in a photo. Things you can't see, but they are there: those are the things I want, somehow, to photograph.'

Ciara Phillips

Born 1976 in Ottawa, Canada
Lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland

Working predominantly with the medium of printmaking, Ciara Phillips' practice is both expansive and experimental. She often invites members of the public or different community groups to participate in her projects through the act of making art, transforming galleries and exhibition spaces into a studio space or open workshop. Influenced by the historical uses of the print and printmaking in political and social activism, as well as the often collaborative physical process of production, Phillips examines the capacity of printmaking to unite people in the pursuit of a purpose or idea.

Koji Ryui

Born 1976 in Kyoto, Japan
Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

Japanese-born, Sydney-based artist Koji Ryui makes sculptures that contextualize everyday materials and found objects. A collector of the commonplace, the shelves of Ryui's studio are filled with objects that remain static until they are given a new life; repurposed and transformed into sculptural creations that blur the border between animate and inanimate, seen and unseen. Combining sensitivities cultivated in Australia with those that stem from his Japanese heritage, Ryui's practice integrates a Modernist approach with attitudes drawn from animism; working within the constraints of an object's inherent nature while also affording his chosen materials a strong empathy.

Semiconductor

Ruth Jarman: Born in 1973
Joe Gerhardt: Born in 1972
Live and work in Brighton, England

Brighton-based artist duo Ruth Jarman and Joe Gerhardt started working collaboratively under the name Semiconductor in 1999. Working across the mediums of moving image, sculpture and installation, and traversing the genres of documentary and animation, Semiconductor blend art and science to create visually and intellectually engaging artworks that examine natural phenomena and the materiality of the world around us. Inspired in part by the development of computers and the potential offered by the medium, the artists have developed their practice alongside the evolution of technology, exploring the virtual world and the physical universe simultaneously.

Yasmin Smith

Born 1984 in Sydney, Australia
Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

Taking an archaeological approach to the production of ceramics, Yasmin Smith's research-driven practice often results in the production of site-specific installations that source materials and elements directly from the local environment. Meticulously investigating the geography, ecology and geology of a particular region, Smith also engages with the social history of the area, often reproducing industrial objects with glazes and patinas that are representative of her findings. The robust appearance of the sculptural forms Smith creates belies a fragility reminiscent of the vulnerability of the natural world and the environment.

N.S. Harsha

Born 1969 in Mysore, India
Lives and works in Mysore, India

Acclaimed contemporary artist N.S. Harsha's oeuvre spans a range of mediums and genres comprising painting, paper-based works, intricate miniature drawings, sculpture, site-specific installations and community-based public projects. Deftly interweaving observations of everyday life in the community of Mysore where he lives with broader socio-political, global narratives, Harsha also incorporates threads of his own personal history into his practice. His meticulously detailed works demonstrate a multitude of subjects and influences including traditional Indian painting, the Western canon of art history, popular culture, the natural environment and the effects of developing technology on contemporary society.

George Tjungurrayi

Born c. 1943 in Kiwirrkurra, Australia
Lives and works in Kintore, Australia
Pintupi (Language group)

George Tjungurrayi has been creating paintings using linear patterns since the 1990s. His abstract canvases, derived from the distinctive painting style of the Papunya Tula Artists of the Western Desert, are often interpreted as reflections of the desert landscape. The shapes and lines can be read as representations of waterholes and the ripple marks on the sand caused by the wind, while the optical effects created by colliding colours are reminiscent of minimalism and op art. For Tjungurrayi, the characteristic patterns are also a reference to the invisible energy fields of his ancestral country and traditional stories deeply rooted in sacred law.

Wong Hoy Cheong

Born 1960 in Penang, Malaysia
Lives and works in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Working across a wide range of mediums including drawing, painting, photography, performance and film, Wong Hoy Cheong reimagines and reconstructs histories in an effort to transfer power and authority to marginalised groups. Wong's artistic practice is assertively political; permitting the existence of multiple versions of any one story and suggesting that historical accuracy is neither possible nor desirable. Within this framework, Wong explores a variety of subjects including colonialism, migration, identity and globalisation, producing multifaceted works that are speculative, rather than definitive.

Nicole Wong

Born 1990 in Hong Kong
Lives and works in Hong Kong

Working beyond the bounds of any single medium, Nicole Wong's practice adopts a process-driven approach to investigating philosophical questions associated with time, the tenuous connection between word and object, and the limits of communication. Often quiet and unassuming, Wong's works invite introspective thought through their appeal to universal sentiments and desires. Deftly weaving together wordplay and double-entendre throughout her practice, Wong explores the connections between literal and connotative meanings. Entering the realm of semiotics, Wong uses everyday objects and common materials to question the relationship between signifier and signified.

Yukinori Yanagi

Born 1959 in Fukuoka, Japan
Lives and works in Hiroshima, Japan

Conceptual artist Yukinori Yanagi explores fundamental questions of human existence through site-specific installations that negotiate a diverse range of media. Interested in questions of identity, both on a social and national scale, many of Yanagi's earlier works have examined individuality and the ways we are defined by constructs such as class, gender and ethnicity. More recently, his increasingly ambitious large-scale installations pose questions relating to the consequences of modernisation in his native Japan, and the uncertain future of the inhabitants in regions where commercial production has ceased and industrial progress has ground to a halt.

Jun Yang

Born 1975 in Qingtian, China
Lives and works in Vienna, Austria; Taipei, Taiwan; and Yokohama, Japan

Jun Yang works across a range of mediums including film, installation, performance and public engagement, creating multi-layered artworks that investigate the position of the foreigner in relation to processes of assimilation and acculturation. Born in China, Yang immigrated to Austria with his parents as a child, and now divides his time between Vienna, Taipei and Yokohama. Yang's practice closely examines globalisation and its associated value systems, with particular focus on an Asian context. His works are often deeply tied to personal experience, exploring transition, liminality and conflicting notions of idealism and reality.

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Haegue Yang

Born 1971 in Seoul, South Korea

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Seoul, South Korea

Haegue Yang is internationally renowned not only for her sensorial installations, but also for her sculptural language that consists of hybrid materials, both made and found, as well as natural and artificial, in a mode of assemblage. Exploring the language of visual abstraction through the diverse range of materials she selects, Yang often employs manufactured objects that reference the history of industrialisation, while alluding to social and political histories, as well as her personal stories.

ABOUT THE BIENNALE OF SYDNEY: Since its inception in 1973, the Biennale of Sydney has provided a platform for art and encounters, showcasing the work of nearly 1,800 artists from more than 100 countries. Today it is considered one of the leading international art events, recognised for commissioning and presenting innovative, thought provoking art from Australia and around the world. In 2016, the 20th Biennale of Sydney attracted more than 643,000 visits. With an average 40 per cent of visits made by people from outside of Sydney, the Biennale holds an important place on both the national and international stage.