



SUPERPOSITION

Equilibrium & Engagement

16 March – 11 June, 2018

21st Biennale of Sydney

Equilibrium

What is the creative tension between multiple viewpoints? How can art further our understanding of the conflicts and contradictions of our time? How can we take the pluralism of recent history and remake it as a series of political and creative projects?

Artistic Director Mami Kaotaka writes: 'According to the theory of Wuxing in ancient Chinese natural philosophy, everything in this world is comprised of five main elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Each element gives rise to the next – either through a process of symbiosis where one element encourages the formation of the other in a circulatory system; or, through a situation of mutual conflict and antagonism, in which each element resists and suppresses the other. In reality, diverse elements come together in a state of repeated collision, collapse and rebirth.'

This philosophical proposition – that there are forces of creation and destruction, collision, conflict and rearrangement that maintain balance – is a metaphor for the multiplicity of points of view expressed by artists and artworks presented in the 21st Biennale of Sydney. This presentation of multiplicity tells us that we only ever have a partial view of the world, and that our understanding can always be expanded by our encounter with new ideas.

Artists can distil large amounts of information and research, and present ideas in a visceral, visual way so that we can enter into and understand experiences and realities outside our own lives.

Large-scale exhibitions like the Biennale are an opportunity for audiences to experience several ideas from multiple perspectives. Each pathway through the many works in an exhibition presents ideas and contexts that have the potential to expand our understanding of things outside our lived experience, or that may be too distant to comprehend fully, even though they may have an impact on our lives in ways we don't realise.

At the same time, we are inundated with information and indeed misinformation, whether through social media, news feeds or fragmentary screen-reading habits. Artists' visualisation and expression of a complex idea can direct our attention and encourage our own investigation. By generating conversations, and presenting different points of view, we can start discussion of the challenges and complexity of our current moment.