

Yokohama Triennale 2017

International Seminar

**“CONNECTIVITY**

**AS A**

**METHOD?**

**The Future of**

**Biennales and**

**Triennales”**

**Report**

ヨコハマトリエンナーレ2017 国際セミナー

「接続する国際展・芸術祭」

記録集



CONNECTIVITY  
A S A  
M E T H O D ?  
T H E  
F U T U R E O F  
B I E N N A L E S  
A N D  
T R I E N N A L E S

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## Outline

While we have seen a surge in the number of biennial/triennial/festivals held in Japan, the number of biennales and triennales around the world has also increased; they have become multi-centric in their locations and diverse in their methods.

Since entering the 21st century, recurring exhibitions are working in the context of a range of social issues such as community rejuvenation, city branding, tourism and creative industry, in addition to providing experimental and alternative ways of working with artists and presenting their works.

In the international seminar “CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD? The Future of Biennales and Triennales,” Fukutake Soichiro, the founder of Benesse Art Site Naoshima, gave a keynote speech on the fundamental value of art and the new social value that it generates, based on his experience of developing the pioneering contemporary art projects in the Seto Inland Sea area. In the panel discussion that followed, panelists from São Paulo, Brazil, Istanbul, Turkey, and Beppu, Japan talked about, not only how biennales/triennales/festivals respond to different social and cultural contexts, but also about how they connect art with the various aspects in society.

In conjunction with the international seminar, professionals working in the biennial/triennial/festival sector were invited to share current issues in the discussion session, “Where are we now? What are our strategies? How are we to implement them?” One of the agenda, “Why Biennales and Triennales? New challenges, models and strategies,” was to discuss the various objectives for organizing such events in the discussion session. The other agenda, “How do we develop professional skills in biennales and triennales?,” was to discuss what kind of organization and skills development is appropriate for making this sector better, acknowledging that this sector is generally not institutionalized like a museum.

This document is based on the transcription of the discussions that took place during the above international seminar and the professional discussions.

Organizers:  
Organizing Committee for the Yokohama Triennale, Agency for Cultural Affairs  
Co-organizer: Yokohama Museum of Art (Yokohama Arts Foundation)  
Cooperation: IBA (International Biennial Association)

## International Seminar

### “CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD? The Future of Biennales and Triennales”

Date/Time: September 27, 2017 / 13:30-16:00  
Venue: Lecture Hall, Yokohama Museum of Art  
Language: Japanese-English / simultaneous interpretation  
No. of Audience: 160

#### [Timetable]

- 13:30-13:40 Opening Remarks  
OSAKA Eriko (General Director, Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale / Director, Yokohama Museum of Art)
- 13:40-14:30 **Keynote Speech “From Naoshima to the Setouchi Triennale”**  
FUKUTAKE Soichiro (Honorary Adviser, Benesse Holdings, Inc.)
- 14:30-14:40 Break
- 14:40-16:00 **Panel Discussion “CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD? The Future of Biennales and Triennales”**  
Panelists:  
Thiago de PAULA SOUZA (Member of 10th Berlin Biennale curatorial team / Curator / Educator)  
Bige ÖRER (Director, Istanbul Biennale)  
YAMAIDE Jun'ya (Executive Director of NPO BEPPU PROJECT / Artist)  
Moderator: OSAKA Eriko

## Discussions

### “Where are we now? What are our strategies? How are we to implement them?”

Date/Time: September 27, 2017 / 10:00-12:15  
Venue: Circular Forum, Yokohama Museum of Art  
Language: English

#### [Timetable]

- 10:00-10:10 Introduction  
HOASHI Aki (Project Manager, Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale)
- 10:10-10:30 **Biennales/Triennales/Festivals in Japan**  
IIDA Shihoko (Associate Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts / Curator)
- 10:30-12:00 **Discussion 1\* “Why Biennales and Triennales? New challenges, models and strategies”**  
Facilitator: IIDA Shihoko  
Presentations:  
1. “Karachi Biennale,” Atteqa MALIK (Vice Chairperson, Karachi Biennale Trust)  
2. “Havana Biennial,” Margarita GONZALEZ (Artistic director, 12th Havana Biennial / Vice Director, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam)  
3. “Sinopale,” T. Melih GÖRGÜN (Founder and Artistic Director, Sinopale)  
4. “African Biennale of Photography (Rencontres de Bamako),” L. Igo DIARRA (Director, La Médina)
- Discussion 2\* “How do we develop professional skills in biennales and triennales?”**  
Facilitator: HOASHI Aki  
Presentations:  
1. “Istanbul Biennial,” Bige ÖRER (Director, Istanbul Biennial)  
2. “Kochi-Muziris Biennale,” Riyas KOMU (Co-Founder, Kochi Biennale Foundation/ Artist / Curator)  
3. “São Paulo Biennale/Berlin Biennale,” Thiago de PAULA SOUZA (Member of 10th Berlin Biennale curatorial team / Curator / Educator)
- 12:00-12:15 Wrap-up  
Facilitator: IIDA Shihoko

\* Discussions 1 and 2 were held concurrently.

\* Affiliation and positions are current as of September 27, 2017.

\* Japanese and Chinese names are spelled in the order of family name, given name with some exceptions.



Ugo Rondinone, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, 1999, 6<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial

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恵理子

山出  
淳也

International Seminar  
“CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD?  
The Future of Biennales and  
Triennales”

ISTANBUL  
FOUNDATION  
FOR CULTURE  
AND ARTS

IKSV  
BIENAL

Biennial – 2017, 15<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial



## Keynote Speech

### “From Naoshima to the Setouchi Triennale”

**MC** | Good morning everyone. Thank you for coming to this international seminar, “CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD? The Future of Biennales and Triennales”.

First of all, I'd like to invite Osaka Eriko, General Director of Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale, to give an introduction.

**Osaka Eriko [Osaka]** | Thank you for coming to this international seminar, “CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD? The Future of Biennales and Triennales” today. This seminar is commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The title of Yokohama Triennale 2017, “Islands, Constellations & Galapagos”, was chosen to indicate the desire to connect isolation with imagination, to respect originality and diversity, and to open up the possibility of coexistence. We have invited Mr. Fukutake Soichiro to open today's seminar with his keynote speech. As you might have already known, Mr. Fukutake is the Honorary Adviser of Benesse Holdings, as well as the President of Benesse Art Site Naoshima. He is the driving force behind the pioneering project that brings architecture, art, and nature together on various islands, starting with Naoshima in Kagawa prefecture. I would like Mr. Fukutake to share with us his thoughts and activities as this project has given new value to the islands and garnered much international attention. After the keynote speech, we will then pause

for a break, then gather again for the second-half of today's session where we have invited three panelists from Brazil, Turkey, and Japan to introduce their diverse activities in their countries. At the same time, I would like all of us to explore the social significance and possibilities of international exhibitions. I really hope that everyone will stay around till the end. Thank you for your attention.

**MC** | I would like to introduce our keynote speaker for today, Mr. Fukutake Soichiro, Honorary Adviser, of Benesse Holdings. The title of his keynote speech is “From Naoshima to the Setouchi Triennale”. Mr. Fukutake, please.

**Fukutake Soichiro [Fukutake]** | Thank you for inviting me to today's seminar. Before I start, I would first like to show you a 5-minute video clip of Benesse Art Site Naoshima.

#### From Naoshima to the Setouchi Triennale: Regional revitalization through contemporary art

**Fukutake** | I would like to talk about regional revitalization through contemporary art. First of all, Benesse Art Site Naoshima is actually the collective term for all art activities conducted by Fukutake



Foundation and Benesse Holdings on the three islands of Naoshima, Inujima, and Teshima. But before I go into that, I'd like to talk a little about each island first.

Our art activities have begun in 1987, which is exactly 30 years ago from now. This is a photo of Naoshima taken in 1986; there were barely any trees growing there.<sup>[1]</sup> And it is said that the reason for this is the sulfur dioxide gas that used to be continuously discharged from a copper refinery on the island. The copper refinery has been operating for exactly a century, since 1917. The population of Naoshima is currently 3,200, but there were as many as 7,800 people living there once. In a photo of Naoshima in 1953, you can see plumes of smoke and gas being discharged into the air.

Inujima also used to have a copper refinery that operated only for 10 years, from 1909 to 1919. It was also a quarrying island that supplied the cornerstones for Osaka Castle, among others. Inujima is a small island with a perimeter of merely 4 km but at its peak, there were 5 to 6,000 people living there. Currently, there are only about 25 residents and their average age is over 70 years.

Next is Teshima. Teshima was a victim of massive illegal industrial waste dumping amounting to over 900,000 tons over 16 years since 1975, the cleanup of which was only recently completed. There are about 900 residents now but at its peak, there were about 3,600 people living there. Currently, the residents are protesting to prevent the installation of a solar power facility in Teshima because it would destroy the natural landscape.

The development of Naoshima all started when my father, Fukutake Tetsuhiko and the former mayor of Naoshima, Miyake Chikatsugu met and agreed on a plan to develop a camping site for children on the island. That was back in 1985, but my father unfortunately passed away while the plan was being drafted. So, I moved back from Tokyo to my hometown in Okayama, and took over this project as well as the family business. In the beginning, I decided to build the camping site, and asked Ando Tadao to supervise the project. There is a reason why I chose Ando. During my numerous trips to Naoshima, I came to realize that excessive urbanization and modernization had polluted and damaged the once beautiful islands which then led to depopulation, in spite of the fact that the area around these islands was the first to be designated as a national park in Japan. The most beautiful place in Japan had been subjected to such, shall we say, savage treatment, with no concern whatsoever under

the guise of building a modern society. This filled me with extreme indignation, and I decided to kick-off the project of developing Naoshima, which is still ongoing today, as a form of resistance to protest against excessive modernization and industrialization and rural-to-city migration. Resistance will require weapons, and because I can't use cannons, so I have decided to use contemporary art as my weapon of choice instead. I decided not to hire an architect who lives in Tokyo, the virtual enemy of my resistance. Instead, I contacted Ando Tadao, who lives in Osaka city and was also once a professional boxer. The collaboration with him continues to this day, and I think it went really well. As I travelled regularly to Naoshima and the Seto Inland Sea, I started to think differently about a lot of things. I was particularly influenced by a research paper written by Professor Nishida Masanori from Nara Prefectural University called *Oubei-jin ni yoru Setonaikai no Fukei-kan* (Discovering the Seto Inland Sea by Euro-Americans). In this paper, he quotes the German geologist, Ferdinand von Richthofen: "This region is already Heaven on earth" (translated from Japanese). A certain Madame Vincent also praised this in her book, "Amongst the numerous travel courses, there is probably no other place that is as beautiful as the Seto Inland Sea".\* But I guess we Japanese are a particular bunch of people that is painfully oblivious to the majestic beauty and goodness right before our eyes, since we can do such terrible things as I mentioned earlier.

The first thing that I'd asked Ando to design was Benesse House, which was built in 1992. It is the first hotel in the world where guests can relax and enjoy being surrounded by nature and art.

This is one of the most iconic works of Naoshima, *Pumpkin*, by Kusama Yayoi.<sup>[2]</sup> This artwork was installed in an outdoor exhibition titled "Out of Bounds," which was held in Naoshima in 1994. At that time, I had received great advice from Miki Akiko and Nanjo Fumio – both who have experiences in directing this triennale – on what type of artworks would be good for outdoor exhibition. This is the representative work of Bruce Nauman, *100 Live and Die*. This is a series of seascapes, *Time Exposed*, by Sugimoto Hiroshi. In his photographs, you can see the horizon of the earth, but that horizon line is actually also aligned with the horizon of the Seto Inland Sea. I think that this artwork is expressing the fact that although Naoshima is a tiny island, it is connected to the seas of the world.

This will appear again later, but the artwork titled *Cultural Melting Bath* is by China's Cai Guo-Qiang, who took the 1st Benesse



1 Southern Naoshima, 1986



2 Kusama Yayoi, *Pumpkin*, 1994



Prize. There are Taihu rocks from China, a Coleman jacuzzi from America, and Japanese scenery; entering the bathtub will allow the visitor to have views of different things. In an artwork by Yanagi Yukinori, titled *The World Flag Ant Farm 1990*, where ants dig nests into flags made of sand, making their borders equivocal. The point of this artwork is to pose the question: What exactly defines a nation? We have David Hockney's *A Walk Around the Hotel Courtyard Acatlan*. Being an island, Naoshima is naturally surrounded by the sea. To contrast that, we installed a big painting of the Mexican hotel, Hotel Acatlan, in the Benesse House. We also invited Richard Long, and he created this artwork out of the driftwood collected around Naoshima. This is a work we commissioned to Jannis Kounellis.<sup>[3]</sup> He was initially hesitating as to what to create for us when he came to Japan. But the story goes that as he worked with the local students and had meals with them, the *futomaki* (thickly-rolled sushi covered with seaweed) they were eating gave him the inspiration which led to the creation of this artwork: instead of seaweed, he used lead to cover the roll. Kounellis collected things that were used once and then dumped by people in Naoshima to be rolled into the lead. The work originally covered the wall to the top, but it gradually got compressed due to its heavy weight.

Another project that we're working on in Naoshima is the Art House Project, where we restore traditional Japanese houses and convert them into contemporary art works. The first house with the work (*Sea of Time '98*) was created by Miyajima Tatsuo in 1998, where a run-down building was restored, and turned into a gallery. The 125 digital counters used in this work were set in a "time-setting" workshop in which the locals were asked to participate, the artist thereby creating the artwork together with local residents. This work also contributed to our activities being accepted by the local population. It is not like we were accepted from day one, it took us almost ten years to gain such trust. So, this work is really one of the artworks that brought us and the island's inhabitants together.

This is Go'o Shrine.<sup>[4]</sup> I think this is a commemorative work that turned Sugimoto Hiroshi into an architect from a photographer. I have some personal memories from this work. The old shrine was in such decay that it was falling apart, and the people from the households that support the shrine asked if I could do something about. I replied, "Sure, but it comes with one condition. Can you let a contemporary artist rebuild this shrine?" This created an uproar which was followed by many arguments and disputes. But in the end, we managed to get it rebuilt. Although this is a shrine that symbolizes Shintoism, it is the first shrine built by a contemporary artist since Ise Jingu was built.

As for Minamidera, while we've simply taken the name of a temple and used it on a new building here, a temple originally did exist here. Ando built a timber structure and James Turrell created *Backside of the Moon* inside, an artwork of darkness.

## Museums Located on Different Islands in the Seto Inland Sea

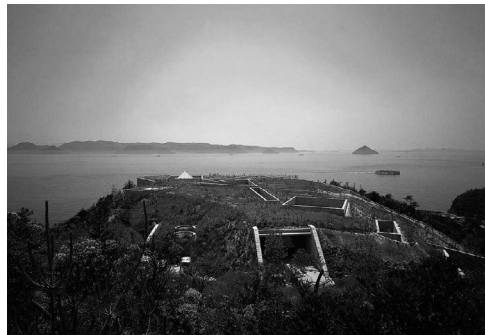
I would like to talk a little about the Chichu Art Museum, that was completed in 2004.<sup>[5]</sup> As you can see from the slide, you won't be able



3 Jannis Kounellis, *Untitled*, 1996



4 Art House Project "Go'o Shrine"  
Sugimoto Hiroshi, *Appropriate Proportion*, 2002

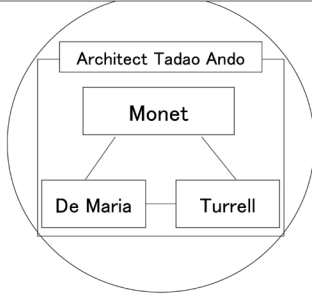


5 Chichu Art Museum, Architecture: Ando Tadao

to see the building from above the ground. Our idea of buildings is often something that is constructed on the ground and goes upwards, in which the design of the architect is transformed and encapsulated in the building or structure itself. I therefore think that this museum is a groundbreaking feat even in the architectural world. We decided to build the art museum underground out of respect for the surrounding nature, and as a space where one can reflect on spiritual matters or look deep within oneself. The impetus for building this museum is the large 2m(h) × 6m(w) Monet painting which I was able to purchase in 2000. At that time, I already owned two Monet Water Lilies paintings, 1m(h) × 2m(w). After I managed to acquire this

## Chichu Art Museum

Natural Environment of the Seto Inland Sea



6 Chichu Art Museum



7 Naoshima Bath “I♥湯”, Ohtake Shinro, 2009



8 Naoshima Hall, Architecture: Sambuichi Hiroshi / Owner: Naoshima Town

large painting, I subsequently purchased two more, 2m(h) × 2m(w), which are hung on both sides of the diptych. It took me 22 years long to collect these five Water Lilies paintings. After I obtained the Monet diptych, I told Ando, James Turrell, and Walter De Maria that I would like to build a highly spiritual, and in a certain sense, a 21st century cathedral-like space. The three of them were very interested in my idea; Walter De Maria and James Turrell subsequently created their artworks inclusive of the space housing them.

There are three elements to the Chichu Art Museum: nature, architecture, and art.<sup>[6]</sup> The most suitable architectural space and the most suitable natural environment serve to maximize the expressivity

emanating from the artworks in this museum. Even though the activities we conduct in Naoshima are not large-scale, and we do not have a lot of capital funding, I wanted to build a museum that would be highly acclaimed by the world. And in order to achieve that, I was very sure that I did not want to exhibit the artworks in a typical white cube space, but rather, I wanted to create the best combination of architecture and nature to fully bring out the excellence of each individual artwork instead. And I still believe in this today. This may be one of the reasons why Naoshima became so well-known despite the fact that it's just a tiny island.

This is Naoshima Bath “I♥YU”, a work created by Ohtake Shinro.<sup>[7]</sup> Those of you who have visited Naoshima may have visited this bathhouse. For those who haven't, I would urge you to visit and take a dip for yourself. It's a sensational public bathing space where one can experience contemporary art naked, a first in the world.

This is the Lee Ufan Museum. I was able to get this built because Lee and Ando are very close friends. I think that the simple works by Lee and Ando's architecture match really well. This building also is built half-underground.

The ANDO MUSEUM was built in 2013, by tearing down a traditional Japanese house that was about 100 years old, constructing an inner space made of concrete inside which Ando's representative architectural models are nestled, before finally covering it with the old house using building elements from the original structure.

This is the Naoshima Hall by Sambuichi Hiroshi that was built in 2015.<sup>[8]</sup> The air inside is circulated relying solely on natural energy. It won the 2017 Wallpaper Design Award in the Best New Public Building category. This is the first time that a Japanese architect has received this accolade. In the very same year, the Naoshima Hall also won the Architectural Design Prize awarded by the Architectural Institute of Japan.

This is the Inujima Seirenscho Art Museum that was built by Sambuichi earlier in 2008. It won both the Japan Institute of Architects Grand Prize in 2010 as well as the Architectural Design Prize in 2011 awarded by the Architectural Institute of Japan. The very expressive artworks exhibited inside are created by Yanagi Yukinori, who used elements from Mishima Yukio's house, which I owned, as a motif. Mishima died in 1970, and in that very same year, Osaka Expo started. This may be a personal conjecture, but I think that 1970 was a turning point for Japan. From there, Japan modeled itself after the United States in placing the economy above everything else. I think the artworks in the Inujima Seirenscho Art Museum carry a strong message with respect to that.

This is the Teshima Art Museum, which was completed in 2010. It has been said that this museum revolutionized the very concept of “art museum”. It was designed by Nishizawa Ryue, and the artwork inside is by Naito Rei. The Teshima Art Museum won the Architectural Design Prize from the Architectural Institute of Japan in 2012. As you can see from the picture, this landscape is surrounded with terraced rice paddy fields that used to be abandoned and were restored by my staff together with island residents. The art museum, overlooking the Seto Inland Sea, was built in a corner of the restored rice paddies. The museum takes the shape of a water droplet and I think that it embodies the great relationship with the surrounding sea

and terraced rice paddy fields. In Teshima, we also have the Teshima Yokoo House (Yokoo Tadanori) and a work by Sputniko!, as well as *La forêt des murmures* by Christian Bolatanski, which was produced last year.

## Appraisals of Setouchi from abroad

I will talk a little about our achievements here. We are receiving a lot of visitors from abroad and more than 60% of our hotel guests are foreign visitors. I was very happy to discover the article published by the American *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine in 2,000 titled “The Next Seven Wonders” — places in the world that one should visit — Naoshima Island was one of them, together with Paris, Berlin, Alexandria, Bilbao, Rio, and Dubai. I was extremely surprised when I saw that Naoshima made the list. At that time, the Chichu Art Museum was not yet built so the island residents were also extremely pleased with this. I think this magazine is probably on display in the mayor’s office. I believe the mayor was also very pleased. In the very popular guidebook *Lonely Planet*, Naoshima is listed at 6th among Japan’s 12 best destinations too.

In an article released in the French magazine, *artpress*, where the term “Naoshima Method” was first coined, in 2010, to define our method of revitalizing a damaged rural area and its community through art. This term is now gaining recognition around the world. Perhaps in the history of art, there were not many depopulated areas that were revitalized through contemporary art. So, in that sense, I think our activities on Naoshima represent a completely new and unparalleled way to use art and this may be why it is so highly appraised. Right now, I am involved in a project to revitalize a mountain village in China using the Naoshima Method. It is a small village called Peach Flower Island in the Shandong province and we are going to use art to recreate old houses that were built in the Ming dynasty. I am told that if this project turns out well, it might branch out to other rural areas in China, too. As you already know, one of the big issues that China faces is the huge disparity between urban and rural areas. Even if they were to attempt to attract various industries to level out the economic disparity, it will not work out. The “imported” industry will become obsolete in 10 years’ time, and such regional revitalization through the establishment of industries will become a thing of the past since the factories will fall into ruins the moment they stop operating. However, for this new method of revitalization through art, I would like to help them out as much as I possibly can.

## Naoshima Method : The Way to Become Happy

Throughout this 30-year-long process, I have learned a few things that I’d like to share with all of you. Just as I have mentioned in the beginning of my speech, I would like to display art in its best form, so I pay great attention to the architecture and nature. In the process of repeatedly doing this I realized that, even though it’s been said that the present day is the era of the cities, this is definitely not true. I think that only in the countryside can we find the history and culture of a country’s regions, in other words, its identity. Especially this island — while the original scenery and landscape of Japan were left intact

since the island was not damaged during the war, it was slowly fading in obscurity, suffering from depopulation and an aging population. I really could not bear to see this continuing and my feelings about this have thus carried me this far in my journey of regional revitalization through art. I will talk about this later, and how it is eventually connected to the Setouchi Triennale.

So, I really learned quite a few things from my interaction with the island residents through our activities. My father passed away when I was 40 years old. I returned to Okayama from Tokyo and subsequently visited many islands and talked to various people. And I noticed that on these islands, there were no information, no entertainment; nothing. The contrast between the islands and modern cities such as Okayama and Tokyo was stark. However, the island residents looked so happy to me. I looked at them and I thought, what exactly is true happiness, what is true richness? So, I changed the name of our company from Fukutake Publishing to Benesse, derived from the Latin words “bene” and “esse,” or “living well.” The sales of our company actually skyrocketed, and we were able to go ahead with new business developments without any hesitation. I believe that the development of Naoshima and the change in our company’s name led to our business success.

So how do we become happy? I have some answers of my own. Not just myself, but I believe that everyone in this world, including those of you seated here, want to become happy. But this is easier said than done. Some of us devote ourselves to various religions, some of us are told that we will be happy if we donate, or that the world beyond this is heaven. But the thing is, has anyone of us met someone who has gone to heaven and come back to tell us how wonderful it was? I don’t know about you, but I personally have not. That might be true though, but no one knows for sure unless she or he has died. However, I’d rather create paradise on this earth instead. So, I tried and discovered a way to create paradise here. And the answer is simply this: in order to be happy, we need to live in a happy community. I am pretty sure that we cannot find a happy community in big cities where the strong ones dominate and the weak ones get oppressed. City life is really about survival of the fittest. But that may very well be the exciting side about living in a city.

I believe that in order to be happy, one needs to live in a happy community. But what exactly does a happy community mean? To me, a happy community is a community that is filled with the smiles of seniors, who are masters of life. Using contemporary art on Naoshima has transformed the island into one that is overflowing with smiling seniors. And everyone living there truly became more energetic and spry. The island also became more beautiful. I found it really wonderful that a depopulating island could experience such a turn-around through contemporary art, and I ended up staying in Naoshima for longer and longer periods, until I migrated to New Zealand seven years ago. By the way, New Zealand is a wonderful place.

So, what is the Naoshima Method? Simply put, the artists visit Naoshima and produce works there. They might spend two weeks to a month in Naoshima as they create artworks. During their stay on the island, the elderly folks would look after them and take care of their various needs even though, for international artists for example, both parties do not understand each other’s language. But body language

helps in communication. They have tea together, they eat together, the seniors invite them over for afternoon tea sessions or a warm bath... through this continuous interaction, the islanders get to understand the works of the artists, know their backgrounds — in short, they get to directly listen to the artists' voices. The artists then leave their works behind on the island. When young people from the cities visit, since we don't provide captions or booklets explaining what the artworks mean in Naoshima, the visitors would start to ask, "What's this? What does this mean?" Then the seniors who had helped the artists would quietly approach the visitors and proudly explain, "Ah, this artwork is created by so-and-so..." This often surprises and stuns the young people, and the seniors love to see that look on those young faces. These seniors gradually start to gain confidence, and start to weave their own narratives and to share the history of the island with the visitors. Their confidence starts to build again, and this transforms them into happy, spry elderly folks. This, my friends, is the secret of the Naoshima Method.

Now I'd like touch on Public Interest Capitalism, in which the stakeholders, Fukutake Foundation, Benesse Holdings and my family, ensure the sustainable operation of our activities. Benesse owns many artworks. I established the Fukutake Foundation and made it one of the major shareholders of Benesse Holdings, where the stock dividends also go to operating the Foundation. Of course, part of the income also comes from museum admission fees and sales of goods. The Fukutake family also purchases large artworks and donates them to the museums.

What I would like to insist on is that while regional revitalization or cultural promotion activities often rely on donations, such donations tend to be sporadic, and I find it also awkward to have to keep on bowing when you are actually doing good things. In our age, most of the wealth creation is realized through corporate activity. With public interest capitalism, part of the shares of corporations are gifted to public interest foundations, who use dividend streams from such shareholdings to promote regional revitalization and cultural promotion in a stable and systematic way. Doing so will enable us to shift from "financial capitalism" to "public interest capitalism".

You probably already know about Maslow's hierarchy of needs where the top layer is self-actualization. Self-actualization is linked to the financial capitalism that we see in America; we now live in a world where money is king, and everyone is obsessed with getting rich. But the truth is, Maslow envisioned another layer on top of self-actualization in the 1950s, and that is the desire to develop one's community. Self-transcendence is not doing what one wants to do, but to further improve oneself or better one's community. That is the most important thing and it is a very important concept for me.

## Key Features of Setouchi Triennale

I'd now like to talk briefly about the Setouchi Triennale, which started in 2010. It was held in seven islands in the beginning. The Triennale is now held in 12 islands as well as two port cities, Takamatsu and Uno. Because our activities in Naoshima, Inujima and Teshima had been so successful, other islands also were keen to do something alike. The third edition of the Setouchi Triennale took place last year, exhibiting

206 artworks from 34 countries and regions. A special format of the Triennale is that the event is held in three seasons; spring, summer, and fall, because we want everyone to experience the beauty of Japan in these three seasons. So, we had artists hailing from China, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand... This is by Yoda Yoichiro from Japan; the work is called *Island Theatre Megi*. We also got this structure installed on another island called Ogijima. This is an artwork by Toyofuku Ryo installed on Ibukijima, an island famous for their anchovies. There were many, many other artworks exhibited too.

For the Setouchi Triennale's third edition, over 1,040,000 cumulative visitors came, and this is the economic impact it exerted in the region. Our original aim for the Triennale was to revitalize the islands. But with the number of visitors we had and the near 14 billion yen of economic impact measured, something really miraculous happened. On the small island of Ogijima where the population is only about 140, the elementary school that had closed for three years was reopened, and about 40 people moved there, with another 50 people said to be on a waiting list. In Shodoshima, an island with a population of under 30,000, 1,400 people have moved in to live on the island. Islanders and outsiders and artists come together to work on various ideas, and the chemistry worked, I suppose, so they truly revitalized these islands. So, I think in this way, we did achieve our objective of revitalizing the islands with contemporary art.

Again, the Triennale promotes the culture of the region and this includes food. Trained cooks and chefs from all around the country, including Tokyo, traveled to the region and these islands teaching cooking methods to the locals, who in turn started serving wonderful local delicacies to visitors.

The outline of the fourth edition of the Setouchi Triennale (in 2019) has now been decided. It will be held on the same 12 islands, the festival will be somewhat shorter in the summer but longer in the fall.

## Departure from the economically-driven society

I'd like to talk about the Benesse Prize now. The Benesse Prize has been awarded at the Venice Biennale from 1995 to 2013. The winner for the 1st edition was Cai Guo-Qiang, the 2nd awardee was Alexandros Psychoulis, the 3rd was Olafur Eliasson, the 5th was Rirkrit Tiravanija, the 6th Tacita Dean, and the 10th was Anri Sala... Many wonderful artists have been awarded with the Benesse Prize so far and continued developing successful careers. This is the artwork by the first Benesse Prize winner, Cai Guo-Qiang. This is the work commissioned to the 4th Benesse Prize winners, Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, an installation inside Benesse House. Anri Sala, the 10th Benesse Prize winner, created this work. From 2016 onwards, we have shifted the Benesse Prize from Europe to Asia. This is merely my own view and perhaps I am biased, but I believe that now is the age of Asia rather than that of the West. The West is stalling, lost in the financial capitalism I was criticizing earlier. Money is overflowing, and people are scurrying around in their best effort to get as much as they can. But, I think the idea of people in Asia to love nature, this value of living in harmony with nature is important. Also, in order to promote the idea of public interest capitalism in lieu

of financial capitalism – and spreading this new concept from Asia – I decided to shift my focus and to award the Benesse Prize in Singapore from 2016 onwards.

The 11th Benesse Prize was awarded last year to a female Thai artist Pannaphan Yodmanee. There were also many other wonderful artworks. It made me truly feel that we definitely now entered the age of Asia.

To close, I would like to share three key points that I have learned from my 30 years of experience of conducting art activities in Naoshima and in the Seto Inland Sea. The most important thing that I have learned is that Nature is man's best teacher. No number of books can teach a person more than Nature. The most important thing is Nature. I think that we, humans, after all, are creatures that need Nature to be truly alive. Of course, material things and information and recreation are important too, but I think that the cornerstone of contemporary society should not be based on that. I truly believe and feel strongly about this. I also want to stress the importance of the concept of "using what exists to create what is to be." I believe that economic development will start from there. Contemporary society on the other hand, is an economy-driven society, which believes in creating new things by destroying what already exists.

I personally believe that this economy-centric contemporary perspective is actually very dangerous. There is a lot of building construction going on in Tokyo now; the number will shock you. But in another 50, 60 years, all these buildings will be gone. And then what happens? They're going to build again. Japan is a country without much resource, yet we continue to repeat the cycle of reconstruction. But if you look at the buildings in Europe, they are made of stone and stand for centuries. I live in New Zealand now, but in New Zealand, people don't think about construction or housing depreciation. But because we Japanese think about depreciation, we tend to care only for the short duration of the depreciation cycle. I firmly believe that such a way of thinking is wrong. This is because while we are conducting various activities including creative ones — even if we do manage to produce some kind of achievement in our lifetime, for example by focusing on this idea of using what exists to create what is to be, these things will eventually be destroyed by the next generation. And I don't think that this is a very pleasant thought.

If we could just pause for a while and think about this: the modernization that has happened in Japan for the past 100 odd years — even if we were to start from the Meiji era — or the past two centuries if we include America — if we just take a look at the past two or three centuries of history; and on the other hand look at the historical artefacts produced in Europe and China, or the old historical artefacts produced in Japan such as temples, shrines, castles, castle walls or old buildings, you know, a country's cultural heritage. But in our current contemporary world, is Japan producing anything that can be remembered as a cultural asset in say two or three centuries from now? In short, while the world sees Japan as a country with a sophisticated culture, I no longer agree. Have we not already drained and exhausted all the cultural heritage that was created since the old days up to the Edo era? I might be going too far, but even our country's cultural budget is not that big. I guess what I am trying to say here is this: if we do not deeply care about culture, any country will simply

lose its identity.

Sad to say, I think that the next generation and era, including the corporations that create wealth, are not really interested in culture. I want to insist on the idea that the economy is a servant to culture. The societies of today, especially Japan's, are all chasing after one thing: economy. Economy, economy, economy... Of course, I know that economy is important. If the country's economy is not doing well, then there's no tax revenue. If there's no tax revenue, the welfare system isn't going to work. I know all this very well. But, wasn't there a time, when people were saying "Japan as Number One"? Even then, people didn't really think or care about culture. To go a little bit further, the various buildings that were constructed in that time were destroyed one after another, even the National Stadium. So, I think, even when Japan was at the peak of its economic growth, nobody cared about culture. No one was interested in culture. And I find that really strange. Because once we lose our culture, we will lose the very foundation that the country is built on. I believe that culture is the foundation for our community and our country. So, in this respect, I think that economy should be a servant to culture.

As I've mentioned at the start of my presentation, as my resistance against contemporary society — albeit conducted on a small island called Naoshima — I've been conducting these activities for the past 30 years, and I've talked to various artists and architects — I truly believe that Nature is man's best teacher. It is important to use what exists to create what is to be, and to understand that economy is a servant to culture. I think these ways of thinking are extremely important. From the bottom of my heart, I truly believe so. As I've mentioned earlier, I would like to help people in China and in other countries who share such values, however much I can.

This concludes my presentation. Thank you for your attention.

**MC** | Thank you Mr. Fukutake. So that is the end of the keynote speech, "From Naoshima to the Setouchi Triennale".

\* English quotes translated from Japanese text that appears in NISHIDA Masanori's *Modern Westerners' Admiration of the Seto Inland Sea Landscape*, The Japanese Institute of Landscape Architecture, NII-Electronic Library Service: [https://ci.nii.ac.jp/els/contents/cinii\\_20180202144828.pdf?id=ART0006477169](https://ci.nii.ac.jp/els/contents/cinii_20180202144828.pdf?id=ART0006477169)



## Panel Discussion

### “CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD?

### The Future of Biennales and Triennales”

**MC** | Now we would like to begin the panel discussion “CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD? The Future of Biennales and Triennales”, facilitated by Ms. Osaka, General Director of Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale.

**Osaka** | From here, I would like to ask our three panelists to share their stories with some questions from me. First of all, let me introduce the three panelists. The person next to me is Mr. Yamaide Junya, Executive Director of BEPPU PROJECT. Next to him is Bige Örer, Director of Istanbul Biennial. Next to her is, Thiago de Paula Souza who is engaged in many activities mainly in Berlin and São Paulo. First, each of them will give a 10 to 15 minutes of presentation. We will start with Thiago de Paula Souza.

#### Berlin Biennale / São Paulo Biennale

**Thiago de Paula Souza** [de Paula Souza] | Hello, good afternoon, everybody. Thanks very much for coming. I’m Thiago. I live in São Paulo, and I’ll bring some ideas and some impressions of my experience, my background working in arts there, and then I’ll finish bringing some information about the Berlin Biennale and what we are planning for next year.

Bienal São Paulo was founded in 1951, with the special support by the local elites. It is the second oldest art biennial in the world after the Venice Biennale. If you look at this picture, you can see Ibirapuera park, that is a huge urban park, with buildings designed by Oscar Niemeyer, a popular Brazilian modernist architect. The park opened during the celebration of 400th anniversary of São Paulo. It’s located in a very wealthy district.

The pavilion, a beautiful architecture by Oscar Niemeyer is where the São Paulo Biennale usually takes place. So all these structures were built by Niemeyer. In the park is also the Museu Afro Brasil. It is the Afro-Brazilian Museum where I used to work as an educator. So we have several structures, and several monuments that were built in the same period, at the same moment, in this park. And probably the most famous one is this: Monument to the Bandeiras. It was a sculpture by Victor Brecheret. This monument is honoring the 17th-century Bandeiras, or a Portuguese word for the settlers’ expeditions into the countryside, into the deeper Brazil. And these men, who have been represented here, they are considered heroes for a lot of people in Brazil. At least, in the official narratives, or official history that is the case. But now that we are here in 2017, we need to be very honest, we need to reveal this history, and we need to face the fact that these men were murderers. In this process to go deep

into Brazil, to go deep into the countryside, they were responsible for killing thousands of native population, and also the black enslaved people who were forced to join them.

Well, the same sculpture is still there. But some people are very aware of how violent these monuments are; all the violence that the monument represents. And different groups of artists, different social movements have been playing with it. We cannot destroy it right now. I personally think that this monument should be destroyed as any other monuments that somehow honor the history of colonialism, but it will not happen soon, so an interesting approach would be to play with it.

This is what happened to the same sculpture during the gay parade last year.<sup>[1]</sup> GUARANI was the major native population from São Paulo who were killed by these men, in the name of “the progress”. This was a very interesting uprising that occurred a year and a half ago in São Paulo. So basically, people took the monument for this so-called heroes and tried to reorganize the history.

I’m talking about the park and about the monument because I want to get to Museu Afro Brasil, the place I used to work as an educator. Museu Afro Brasil is a very new museum. It was founded in 2004. The aim of the museum is to break the narratives of the black people represented in museums or represented in official history which, in most cases, is seen from the perspectives of the black people related to slavery or the slavery past. In other cases, black people would be shown in an exotic context, based on a harmonious vision, covering or ignoring the underlying conflicts. Museu Afro Brasil promotes the perspective concerning the African-Brazilian arts and culture from the black’s point of view and tries to produce a narrative that searches for a more complex manner to look at history.

**Thiago de PAULA SOUZA**

(Member of 10th Berlin Biennale curatorial team / Curator / Educator)

Through this point of view, the mediation, or the educators search for a different way to look at history, which presumes opening up another dialogue between the collection, visitors and between several social actors. As a result, it can create an open and interactive system for constructing narratives to develop criticality. That is our hope. Raising a wide range of debates concerning identity, cultural representations, and the possible ways to look at history, Brazilian history and colonial history in South America.

So last year, the 32nd edition of the Bienal São Paulo, or São Paulo Biennial, was held. It was curated by Jochen Volz from Germany, Gabi Ngcobo from South Africa, and Júlia Rebouças from Brazil, Lars Bang Larsen from Denmark, and Sofia Olascoaga from Mexico. It was called “INCERTEZA VIVA” or “Life Uncertainty” and it proposed to look at notions of uncertainty and the strategies offered by contemporary art to embrace or inhabit it. I like their statement, which said something like, “While stability is understood as a remedy against anxiety, uncertainty is generally avoided or denied.”

This is a view of the exhibition hall. As I told you in the beginning, this building is in the park, Ibirapuera park. And we can see the Frans Krajcberg installation. Before the exhibition opened, the curators organized what we call the first public program and it was called Study Days. It was part of the research to organize, in fact, the public activities that would lead to the exhibition itself.

“Accra Study Days” was organized by one of the co-curators, Gabi Ngcobo, who is now the 10th Berlin Biennale curator. Jochen Volz was also there in Accra with us. We went to Accra in Ghana, and I think probably you might be asking, “Why Accra?” There were several other cities that was part of the Study Days, such as Llamas in





1 Monument to the Bandeiras and the gay parade



2 Brazil House, Jamestown

Peruvian Amazon, Santiago in Chile, Cuiabá in Mato Grosso, Brazil. We went to Accra for a very special reason.

In January of 1835, a sizable number of African slaves in Salvador da Bahia orchestrated an uprising, known historically as the most significant slave rebellion in Brazil. In Portuguese we call it “*Revolta dos Malês*” or the “*Malê Revolt*”. All the same, this revolutionary episode is reported to have led to bloodshed killing many lives, arrests, executions, forced labor, floggings and mass deportations. An estimated number of 80,400 laborer rebels are reported to have been deported back from Brazil to Africa, settling in the West African nations, such as Nigeria, Togo, Benin and Ghana. A ship carrying about 70 Afro-Brazilians from 7 families arrived on the shores of Accra’s old port, Jamestown in 1836. Today the descendants of these deportees are known in Ghana as the Tabom people. On arrival to the Gold Coast, or how people used to call Ghana back then, these Afro-Brazilians lacked knowledge in local language, and would answer to everything by saying “*tabom*”. “*Tabom*” is the Portuguese word for “*alright*” and today we still use this. Whenever you don’t properly understand the situation or you don’t really know how to deal with the situation, you can simply say “*tabom*”.

The rebellion is said to have been the turning point of the slavery in Brazil, the last country to abolish slavery in the whole Americas. So when we go to West Africa, in a way we try to trace these resettlements that exist there. We walked around the streets, and whenever we found a street name with a Portuguese name or a spot with a Portuguese word, we assumed that it was because that place was founded by or that name was named after those people.

These Study Days were framed around a series of exploratory mapping exercises focused on historical memory and in a continuous loop, not only referring to the past, but also in the possible futures.

We investigated migratory black cultures from Ghana to Brazil, and from Brazil to Ghana, through food, music, sounds, and objects of worship with the hope that this allows possibilities to seek reparation for the past in defective dynamics of cultural memory.

So here we can see “*TABOM*”.[2] This place is called Brazil House. It’s right in Jamestown, in Accra, the place where these people first arrived. It has been here from the time they arrived and, in 2012, the building was refurbished.

So I was bringing this background, or these things that happened a few months ago, also to talk about some of my curatorial practice and my dream. When I’m working, or when I’m trying to organize my curatorial practice, I’m trying to develop some of my dream which is to struggle against the colonial ghosts. In order to do so, or to dance against them, together with a colleague of mine, we created this platform called “*We Cannot Build What We Cannot First Imagine*”. And it’s a visionary platform created by myself and Jota Mombaça. With the purpose of gathering works and perspectives from racialized artists and thinkers in Brazil and abroad on the topics of radical imagination, outer futurism, disruptive archives, queer politics, and black philosophy. Again, it’s all about my dreams.

With this in mind, I joined the 10th Berlin Biennale curatorial team. We are opening in June next year. I’m not alone, we are a team, with Gabi Ngcobo, Nomaduma Masilela, Yvette Mutumba and Moses Serubiri.

So, together we are trying to imagining, shaping, giving forms to our collective dreams. In conversation with artists and contributors, who think and act beyond the arts, our curatorial process will confront the incessant anxieties perpetuated through the misunderstanding of complex subjectivities. And we will try to face the current widespread state of collective psychosis. Our curatorial process will be selective, non-comprehensive, and will not provide a coherent reading of histories or the present of any kind. The curatorial team’s key starting point will be strategies of self-preservation as acts of dismantling dominant structures in building a non-hierarchical position. And we propose a plan for how to face our collective madness. Last July, we released our first edition of our public program, that is called “*I’m not who you think I’m not*” and we are trying to disavow assumed beings and know-hows which tend to be based on existing constructed social frameworks in the associated speculations about particular



Osaka Eriko (General Director, Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale / Director, Yokohama Museum of Art)



subjectivities.

I think somehow the image with a quote from Fela Kuti songs “Teacher Don’t Teach Me Nonsense,” tells a lot what we are trying to bring, what we’re trying to discuss. Thank you very much.

**Osaka** | Thank you very much. Counting from its inception in 1951, São Paulo Biennial celebrated its 32nd edition in 2016. Meanwhile, I assume the environment surrounding the biennials has changed a lot. I think you talked about the biennial, rather than the specific artwork; you shared how through the international exhibition you will be involved, how you will connect your past and future, how you will build multiple perspectives and a non-hierarchical environment, and how you will, from a specific angle, revisit various challenges and suffering that people face. Let me add a few points before asking Bige Örer to make her presentation.

In the 21st century, numerous international exhibitions or art festivals of contemporary art called biennials or triennials were born in Japan and worldwide. Obviously, the background, the objective or the scale of each festival are diverse and different. However, what are the common perspectives across such different international exhibitions/art festivals that make them what they are? Opening up possibilities is something that I want to discuss in today’s session.

Now, the Istanbul Biennial is also an international exhibition with long history which celebrates its 30th anniversary.

**Bige Örer**  
(Director, Istanbul Biennale / IBA Vice-Presidents)



## Istanbul Biennial

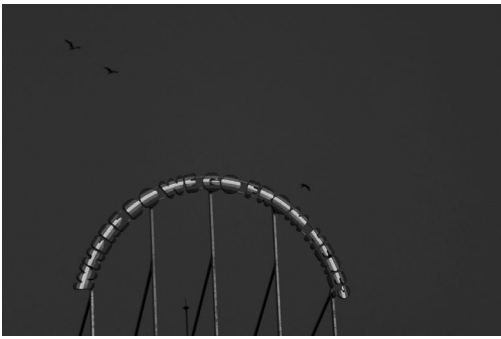
**Bige Örer [Örer]** | Minasama Yokoso. Sorry I cannot continue in Japanese, I wish I could. I love your language and it’s a great pleasure being here and I would like to thank the organizers for the generous hospitality and organizing this wonderful meeting on such an occasion. It’s truly a great honor and pleasure to be here with you today. And thank you very much, Thiago. Your presentation was very inspiring. I don’t know how to continue after your beautiful talk.

Before I start my introduction to the Istanbul Biennial, which some of you may know about, or maybe planning to visit, I would like to share with you some questions that I had in mind, working with the biennial for 15 years, but these questions are getting more and more urgent for me, particularly in the last couple of years,

Being the witness of the rising sentiments of the populist nationalism all around the world, at times when social traumas and political earthquakes have increased anxieties about the future in an unprecedented way, and individual freedoms have been cornered in various parts of the world, “How do art institutions deal with the situation?” “Can we think about reevaluating and to reexamining the roles of biennials?” “As art institutions, how we respond to the rising xenophobia and populism in the world?” “What can be our strategies or our tactics that we can develop together?” And “What are some lessons to learn from each other’s experiences? So as to not feel isolated?” Referring to the concept of the current Yokohama Triennale, “How do we create this connectivity in our world?” Sometimes I feel very isolated in my environment, but when I talk with colleagues and peers from all around the world, I can believe in the art community and international art community, that we can still think of a better future for all of us.

So in the last couple of years, we have been following terrorist attacks that took places in cities including Brussels, London, Orlando, New York, Barcelona and many others and incidents took that deeply shook Turkey as well, around the same time, followed by the failed coup attempt of 15th of July, which had a direct impact on the arts and culture world in Turkey. Many events had to be postponed, or cancelled. It was 3-4 months after the incident that we started working with the curators of this edition, Elmgreen & Dragset, and I remember inviting them just after 2 weeks after the coup attempt, talking to many opinion leaders in the society, journalists, political scientists, representatives of political parties, and, of course, artists, just to get a better understanding of the context that we were to deal with. The common voice was that the art and culture would play an even more significant role in this context. So we carried on preparing for this biennial once with the hope that producing and thinking about art and discussing art can create zones in which we can breathe and also to see where connectivity really happens.

Now I would also like to give you a brief introduction on Istanbul Biennial which was established in 1987 by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, which is a non-profit and non-governmental organization. In the meanwhile, I’ll be showing you some images of the artworks, which were produced for the Istanbul Biennial in different spaces at different editions, some historical places, alternative



3 Ugo Rondinone, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, 1999, 6th Istanbul Biennial-2017, 15th Istanbul Biennial

spaces, and outdoors, so that you can also enjoy traveling through time with these amazing works. I always like to be inspired by the artworks that we have produced and I think it gives us the will to continue.

Since its inception 30 years ago, the Istanbul Biennial has been the driving force of contemporary art and culture in the city and also in the region. Its efforts have been instrumental to the growth of new artistic and cultural platforms in Turkey and Middle East and have provided a unique space for international collaborations. Through the 15 preceding biennials a variety of different artists brought from Turkey and international have had the opportunity to develop new artworks, test ideas and experiment social and aesthetic possibilities in relation to the vision of each successive curator or curatorial team.

So the Istanbul Biennial seeks to transform the event into a perpetual zone of education, production and criticism by bringing the actors of the art world together in various ways.

Istanbul Biennial plays an important role not only in opening up of new forums for debating contemporary art but also in providing alternative cultural infrastructures. It offers opportunities for rediscovering the city's historical venues, as well as non-conventional and alternative exhibition spaces, promoting art. So, during the first couple of biennials, the venues mainly focused on the historical sites, because as the Istanbul Biennial doesn't have a permanent location. We work in different locations and it gives us the opportunity to look for spaces depending on the conceptual framework of the exhibition. So here you see the works from the really previous biennials from the 1987 and 89. And on the 30th anniversary of the Istanbul Biennial we were able to host a work of Ugo Rondinone, one of his neon sculptures from his 'rainbow poem' series: *Where Do We Go From Here?* [3] In fact, this work was first exhibited for the 6th Istanbul Biennial in 1999. We were really happy to bring this work back in Istanbul in 2017. And to meet also thousands of people passing the bridge from Europe to Asia, and hopefully inviting them to think about the present and the future. And starting from this edition, we are very happy to leave the city a permanent work.

We would like to commission work for each edition in the next 5 editions and they will be permanently located in public space. And the fact that this work was installed in 1999, in Taksim Square which is a very contested space, it also empowers the meaning around the work.

We have opened the 15th Istanbul Biennial just 10 days ago. We had a really great opening and I really felt like the whole city



4 Hosting neighborhood associations

was celebrating the biennial. And there are also so many events, neighboring events which are happening at the same time with the biennial. More than hundred events, not only organized by cultural institutions and museums, but also independent initiatives, and artist-run spaces.

The title of the biennial is "a good neighbor," and for the first time in our history, it's curated by an artist duo: Elmgreen & Dragset. This edition explores how our perception of "home" has changed over the past decades, how we protect, shelter and express our identities within our domestic settings but also how these private spheres—our homes function next to each other. How do we become good neighbors? Are we good neighbors? Do we accept the differences we might have in relation to the people next to us? These were the questions raised during our process of working on this biennial. The biennial will continue until November 12th, so I would like to invite you all to join us in Istanbul and visit the exhibition.

Now I would also like to talk a bit about what we are trying to do in terms of dealing with the situation, also having witnessed the aftermath of the Brexit referendum and Trump being elected as the US president. How can we connect with our peers locally and internationally even more, to create a zone of resistance? As we believed in the importance of the grassroots artists-run organizations, we made collaborations with them. To give you an example, we were in Diyarbakir, which is located in the eastern part of Turkey, with a highly Kurdish population. We were there just one week before the opening of the biennial to do a talk at the artist-run space "Loading". There were more than hundred people — young students, artists, art professionals — so it was really great to feel strong together. We also initiated a public program, coordinated by an artist and academician from Istanbul, Zeyno Pekünlü, that encompasses various events and discussions around the concept of family and neighborhood. In addition to the opening and closing symposiums, there are periodic events in which the audience has the opportunity to participate in discussions, debates and workshops entitled "chosen families" and "mutual fate". There are also cooking sessions, jam sessions and meetings where neighborhood associations gather in order to discuss their strategies against the urban transformation, gentrification and other issues. It was really great to host the neighborhood associations, as they were also redefining the notion of "neighbor" and "neighborhood".[4] We also believe in the importance of the international collaborations, so we established an exchange program of biennial staff, starting last year with Liverpool Biennial.



5 International Billboard Project

So, one of the exhibition coordinators of the Istanbul Biennial, Özkan Cangüven was in Liverpool to help with the production and installation of the exhibition for 3 months, and the education curator Polly Brannan from Liverpool Biennial is at the moment in Istanbul to work with our education teams.

We have also initiated an international billboard project, to share the team of the good neighbor in different cities around the world. Through collaborations with cultural institutions all around the world, many of them being the biennials or triennials, the international billboard project designed by Rupert Smyth, who was also the designer of the whole visual identity of the biennial, displays a selection of photographs by artist Lukas Wassmann, which capture unexpected encounters paired with questions asking “what makes a good neighbor?”<sup>[5]</sup> Host cities include, Ljubljana, Moscow, Sydney, Milan, Singapore, Seoul, Guangzhou, Liverpool, Manchester, Chicago and many others. And the project will continue until the end of 2017. I would like to thank all of my colleagues who made these collaborations possible. Some of them are here with us together. And I’m sure we will grow them together more in the future.

So finally, regarding the questions I raised in the beginning — I’m sure we will continue asking these questions again and again, and we will try to find answers on the way — but my answer so far is to work harder, even harder, and listen, listen and listen. Create a new language together and create our own language, which is different than the language of the governments and mass media. Act collectively. And build up and develop more local and international collaborations, to avoid the feeling of isolation and to feel strong together. Thank you.

**Osaka** | Thank you, for the presentation which also related to the concept of Yokohama Triennale, “isolation” and “connectivity” from the Istanbul’s point of view. You highlighted the importance of collaboration, whether it is international, local or regional. Now, we would like to ask Mr. Yamaide to share a very unique activity called BEPPU PROJECT in Japan. He will share how he practices developing art locally not only through international exhibitions but also through various approaches.

## BEPPU PROJECT

**Yamaide Jun'ya [Yamaide]** | My name is Yamaide. I would like to talk about BEPPU PROJECT, which is the name of NPO that I have founded and represent. It is a great pleasure to be able to talk to you today and I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to people from IBA and all other people involved. While I was listening to the two presentations, I became to think if my presentation was appropriate here because our approach is quite different from them. Anyway, it would be great if you can listen to me.

Since not all of you have visited Beppu, let me briefly talk about the city of Beppu. As many Japanese know, Beppu is a famous hot-spring city. Like this you see steam rising everywhere.<sup>[6]</sup> There are 2,217 hot spring vents within the city, accounting for 10% of the hot spring vents in Japan. Hot springs and wells in Oita discharge more than 80,000 liters of thermal water every minute, which is more than 1 liter of hot water supplied to everyone in Japan. It would be great if it were oil... well, I don’t know. Anyway, Oita has the one of the highest yields of renewable energy in Japan. Furthermore, the city escaped war damage so many old narrow streets remain from before the war. In 2000, an international university, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), opened in Beppu and today the rate of foreign resident is one of the highest in Japan. We started our project in 2005 and rolled out various projects since then. Last year, we counted how many projects we carried out to date with my staff and there were more than a thousand, which scared me. I felt sorry for my staff for keeping them very busy. We are a non-profit organization that places art at its core and work as a creative engine that produces diverse values in society, with a focus on the city of Beppu and the prefectural area of Oita.

This is the overview of our activities. Our main focus has been planning and implementation of art projects. We run projects of various scale, from big projects to small workshops. Our recent project involves sending artists to schools. Through such activities, we bring many artists to Beppu; some have enjoyed their stay and we have seen them actually move to Beppu. A local newspaper once did a survey and reported that more than 120 people engaged in art, design and creative activities have moved to the city since 2009. We also do outreach projects for social welfare institutions, in which we



6 Beppu City



**Yamaide Jun'ya** (Executive Director of NPO BEPPU PROJECT / Artist)

work with Oita Prefecture and private companies to develop various activities. There is a facility called the House of Sun in Beppu. The person who proposed the idea of Paralympics in Japan was from Beppu; in fact, Beppu is where the Paralympics were born. Partly due to such reason, many disabled people, more than 3,000, which is almost the same number as exchange students, live and work in Beppu. We also send out local information of Beppu. The city is known as a sightseeing town, so we introduce information on restaurants and entertainment. Since I dine out every night to for research, I gained more than 25 kilograms since I started BEPPU PROJECT. Anyway, we share that kind of information.

Through such activities and projects, I have been involved in a range of projects in Oita Prefecture, not only based in cultural institutions and art centers, but also in the hilly and mountainous areas. When I started working in those areas, I turned to the local

people engaged in forestry or agriculture because they have the most knowledge about the location. As I talked to them, I found out that, in order to release this clean water as a product, we have to protect the mountain. I had several rounds of such conversations with them, and started to think that we could protect this beautiful landscape by supporting these people. That's how we came up with "Oita Made", launching three brands in Oita. We established a company with the local Oita Bank to promote these brands; we hope to develop this company into a trading company that trade local goods. Such initiatives have led to collaborations with various companies.

What I want to say is that we do not confine ourselves to working within the framework of art or culture; rather, we try to come up with how to make this region or society better through our practice of engaging with artists or creative people. Having said this, since we are talking about international exhibitions today, let me share with you some of such projects in which we have been involved.

This is Kunisaki Art Festival in 2014, organized by Oita Prefecture, Kunisaki City, Bungotakada City and Oita City Tourist Association. Do you know Kunisaki Peninsula? It is a round-shaped peninsula located in the north of Oita Prefecture and said to be the place where Shinto syncretism was born. The area has continued with this tradition over 1,300 years; very distinct religious views and prayers remain. I worked as the director of this project. We installed artworks in exceptionally unique locations. For example, the artwork by Antony Gormley was placed on the rocks very close to the summit of the mountain.<sup>[7]</sup> If you park a car at the foot of the mountain and walk, it takes about 80 minutes to reach these rocks. Since it's a rocky area we prepared shoes and rented them to the visitors. The officers of Kunisaki City government said it was probably an artwork mounted in the most dangerous place in Japan. The sculpture is made from iron



7 Anthony Gormley, *ANOTHER TIME XX* Photo: KUBO Takashi / ©Beppu Contemporary Art Festival "Mixed Bathing World" Executive Committee

without coating so it will probably eventually get rusty, turning into sand and then return to the mountain. We are presenting this whole process as an artwork. This area was the base for Buddhist training, so we initially experienced a huge resistance against installing the art, which eventually turned into a social problem that was reported by the newspapers every day. But the people from prefectural offices and others concerned patiently negotiated with the local residents which resulted in the final installation. The work remains as a permanent installation today, but I hear that an offertory box is now placed in front of the sculpture. It was interesting to know that coins from many different countries have been thrown into the box.

Miyajima Tatsuo's work is 40-meters-wide digital counters on a huge rock. Similar to the project in Naoshima, this was produced in collaboration with the local residents.

The work by Kawamata Tadashi refers to a missionary called Father Petro Kasui Kabe who was born in this area. He was the first Japanese priest to visit the Vatican, during the time when Christianity was banned in Japan. There is a record that he walked through the Asian continent and deserts. He started his journey at the foot of this mountain. To honor and walk with his journey, Kawamata made an artwork similar to a pathway.

These artworks remain, so although, they don't have hundreds of people come see the work every day, the residents show hospitality to the visitors who come all the way. Actually, the locals built an oven near Miyajima's work to bake pizzas to serve the visitors. Many different exchanges are taking place in this location.

This is one of the main projects of NPO BEPPU PROJECT, called "Mixed Bathing World". We initially planned to do this only for three editions, in 2009, 2012 and 2015, like a triennial. We spent about ten years, including the years for preparation, on this project. We initially thought that if we could continue with the project for that span of time, the local conditions can change. We wanted to find out what kind of project would be necessary in such a context.

In 2009 and 2012, we installed many artworks in the different parts of the city and the visitors toured the area with a map, which is a very standard approach. But in 2015, in our last edition, we completely changed the scheme. The visitors could see the artworks only if they joined the pre-arranged tour.<sup>8</sup> We ran two tours a day, in which only 15 could join one tour. So access to the artworks was very limited, and the tour could be sold out and this made some people angry. This tour was arranged so that a small group of people would

be given keys to spaces that are usually not accessible.

For example, Kuwakubo Ryota's work was installed in the underground district of Beppu, which had been closed for 50 years. We also had a former porn cinema, where the tour guide would open the key to the now abandoned space where Eda Shiori's work was placed on the stage. Public hall would be the next stop.

In the many hot springs in Beppu, the second floor of the bathing facilities are used as public halls. This means that the hot springs are at the heart of the community. Otomo Yoshihide installed his work in one of those public halls. He gathered all the old electric appliances that were made more than 30 years ago and no longer in use, and placed them in the hall. Led by the guide, the visitors come to see the work. There is a staff who opens the curtain and presses the switches according to the score written by Otomo. The score shows which switch should be pressed when. Once the staff hits the switch, the electric appliances start to move. At first, you regard it as mere noise, but gradually it forms a rhythm and finally turns into a melody of *La vie en rose* by Louis Armstrong. It is like experiencing a concert of 15 minutes.

We are no longer interested in pursuing quantity; we are interested in working on projects that are, however small in scale, rich and profound in the artistic experience and rooted in the community. That's what we learned from the 2015 edition of "Mixed Bathing Bath".

So the "Mixed Bathing Bath" series finished in 2015. We launched a succeeding project called "in BEPPU" last year. In this project, we place the names of artist in front of "in BEPPU". When we did the "Mixed Bathing Bath," we used an average budget of approximately 100 million yen per edition. I would call this a mid-sized project. Around 60 artists joined the project, so the budget for honorarium and production per artist was not so abundant, but we were able to succeed with the support of many people. For "in BEPPU," we decided to select a single artist per edition using the same budget. Hence we switched from organizing a group exhibition to a solo exhibition. Of course, this was a new attempt for us, but the government officers and those involved in the project committee were all in support. The city mayor, in particular, backed us up by saying that Beppu has to do something really edgy.

We decided to host the first project in the municipal hall. We invited the artist group Me who created a large space filled with mist, where a luminescent material floated in the air.<sup>9</sup> You really could



8 Visitors on tour in Beppu Photo: KUBO Takashi / ©Beppu Contemporary Art Festival "Mixed Bathing World" Executive Committee



9 Me in BEPPU Photo: KUBO Takashi / ©Beppu Contemporary Art Festival "Mixed Bathing World" Executive Committee

not tell from where the art begins and where it ends. It was a project where you felt like you were traveling through a theatrical space. This project continued for a month. The windows of the town office from the basement floor to the third floor had to stay closed during that period. It must have caused a lot of inconvenience to the officers and I am grateful for their kind understanding. This year we will organize “Tatzu Nishi in BEPPU”. We hope to turn various locations in Beppu into his art space.

Since we switched to organizing solo shows instead of group shows, the number of artists directly involved in our projects decreased. So we decided to simultaneously hold the “Beppu Art Month,” a community cultural festival open to all citizens involved in artistic activities, so that we continue to provide broad access to art to all kinds of people.

We have been expanding beyond Beppu and working across Oita prefecture. As one of the summation of our efforts, we are going to work on the National Cultural Festival in collaboration with the 18 cities, towns and villages across the prefecture. There will be contemporary art, but also traditional Shinto music and dance, festival, food-related events and programs for local experiences. We hope to see you next autumn in Oita. Thank you.

## Learning / Education in Biennials/Triennials/ Festivals in Different Contexts

**Osaka** | Thank you very much. After listening to the presentations, I suppose many of you now recognize how diverse biennials, triennials and festivals could be depending on the different contexts and history. I'd like to ask some questions on the points that I found common among all of you. Even though the political background, historical background or cultural background are different, everyone touched on their efforts to open opportunities for young people, that is, inspiring people and changing the environment of the local community. Perhaps this is all about education. I would like to know your thoughts on the educational aspects of biennials and festivals, and what impact it has on the public, or how it is disseminated to the public and what impact it has on the younger generations.

**de Paula Souza** | I don't know the right word in English, or in Japanese, but the word I am thinking of is something like “enlightenment,” or perhaps, “learning.” Yes, “learning and unlearning” sounds better. Well, my background is an educator, but I'd like to say I'm an educator for a curatorial practice. There may be a cultural and generational gap in a way, but right now, what I'm trying to produce is not only for the younger generation, but it's for all of us. In other words, I'm trying to create possibilities for dialogues, conversation with all of us. I think that the older approaches are still here and they need to stop repeating or reproducing certain problematic ideas or problematic concepts that get stuck, or that keeps us in this space. When I think about my process, when I think about how to display work, when I think about how to share knowledge, I'm thinking about talking to all of us, not only to the youngsters. I think my goal is to create new possibilities and new language to talk about certain objects or certain themes.

**Örer** | Yes, I think, I really see the biennial platform itself as an educational, learning program. Maybe because of the structure of the Istanbul Biennial when it was established, there was not even a contemporary art museum in the city, and the cultural infrastructure was not developed. So for many people and art students, to experience the real artworks coming from all around the world for the first time was to see the Istanbul Biennial. So imagine late 1980s or the early 90s, when it was not so easy to travel. I think it started creating this space for experiencing real artworks and having a dialogue with artists, talking about their works. And then of course, what do you do as a biennial to reach the audience, to reach your public? Or what do you do in order to have a real engagement? How do you engage your people, your public? I also don't like to differentiate exhibition from the public programs, or from the educational programs, because the biennial structures or teams are so small that everybody needs to be engaged with different roles and responsibilities. So as an exhibition coordinator you also need to think, or as a director, or even, I mean, a project coordinator you also need to think how this thing we create together reaches the public. But maybe I will give you a couple of concrete examples, if you'd like to emphasize.

In 2013, after the Giza resistance, we were planning to have works outdoors. Then we decided to use 5 exhibition spaces, instead, so we re-shifted the whole exhibition. We decided to make the biennial free of charge because we really wanted the biennial to be a public space, without any restrictions. So I think that decision was very important also to be able to reach different groups, and more people in the society. Maybe also because of the fact that art education in Turkey is very conservative, and there are not so many art academies where you can really get to know what is happening in the current contemporary art world, we have been trying to develop some programs like curatorial programs or residency programs for artists, or portfolio reviews for younger artists, etc.

**de Paula Souza** | I think I didn't make myself clear when I was talking about the “enlightenment”. From my perspective, when we think about art, I don't like the idea that art will somehow teach something to someone. It's a very elitist perspective in my opinion. I like the idea that maybe, people can or cannot create some relation with certain objects, with certain works, but I definitely don't like the idea that art is in some kind of layer that all of us should access that space or that work in order to learn something. I think it's important to break this reading. It doesn't work for me, at least.

One of the reasons I'm moving to Berlin is somehow to get connected and get closer to the local community. I was talking with Gabriel Horn, director of Berlin Biennale, and she said that maybe Berlin Biennale is more popular in Manhattan than in the local context. I'm really interested in creating bridges with those who are around us. Maybe because I really have this thing with the São Paulo Biennial, which is free of charge and everybody goes because it's in the park. So I think the public program in a way will help us to reach and to open a dialogue with people who are not from the art world.

**Osaka** | Mr. Yamaide knows how to connect with local communities because he has been involved in many of them. I want to ask what he

values including that context of art.

**Yamaide** | So, on education. I am now managing a NPO, but I never went to school to learn about business management. I started my career as an artist, but I never went to an art university to study art. But in both cases, I started because I had a desire to learn things that I needed to know.

My activities are rooted in the local community. So, even if art could bring an extraordinary element to the everyday, I am very conscious to avoid disconnecting from the everyday lives of the local community. In order to make sure we are connected, I would like to create as many touch points for dialog and exchange between the artists and the local residents as possible. Having said that, we haven't even achieved this yet, and we are struggling with our trials and errors. But as long as we keep ourselves open, we can connect to our community. The community members would find their way of welcoming the artists and make an effort in planning routes for the visitors to enjoy art. It is important that they create something that is beyond our control. That is essential. So as much as we need to be professional, we need to also be good collaborators of the community to share the vision of a daily life that is beyond our imagination. We need to continue having this desire for collaboration.

### **What if Biennials/Triennials/Festivals did not Exist in our World?**

**Osaka** | What do you think our life would be without the biennials, triennials and art festivals? I know it is a big question but could I ask you to comment?

**de Paula Souza** | My first contact with contemporary art was in a biennial, so in a way, I still believe in the power and potency of these institutions. I cannot properly say how the world would be like, but I would definitely believe that this platform should be as experimental as possible. Not probably creating a counter-institution, or a museum, but somehow it must be a place for knowledge production, especially counter-knowledge production.

**Örer** | I think we wouldn't have been here to meet each other, no? We wouldn't be here in Japan, talking about the art, the world, the present and the future, so thanks again to the existence of biennials. I think it's an ecology, you know, where art institutions, museums, biennials, galleries, non-profit spaces... we co-act together. And without the existence of one party, maybe we wouldn't be able to have this diversity of voices in the art scene. And I always believe that biennial format is a very flexible format, so you can really put your energy, your knowledge into it and create something new out of it for each and every edition. So the fact that biennials bring people together, create a space for producing new artworks, creating a space to unfold, maybe discussions and debates in the societies when it seems difficult to talk about things or also to give another perspective to the controversial issues. I think we need the biennials all around the world.

**Yamaide** | Well, I'm Japanese so I'd like to talk about the situation in

Japan. I remember in 1999, I was at the press conference for the first Yokohama Triennale at the Arsenale during the Venice Biennale and I was very happy sitting there. I still remember the great excitement thinking, "Wow, biennials and triennials will now be held in Japan." Thanks to the efforts of the people involved, now the event has spread across Japan.

However, somehow the intentions or the objectives of holding such events gets absorbed in economy, or populism, as someone mentioned before, which tend to be stronger in their intentions. It's not about whether we should have biennials or not, but rather about the attitude and the will you have in presenting an international project like biennials. It is important to have a strong will in support of diverse values. The world essentially consists of a range of different values in co-existence. It is extremely rare to discuss such things in our contemporary society today, but I believe, for us, biennials/triennials are meaningful and art has its reasons to exist because they support these ideas.

**Osaka** | Thank you very much, everyone. We face the world where extremely complex isolation and division pervades, but through art and through this kind of biennials and triennials, I believe we connect with each other to form solidarity and to join in force. I deeply thank you for your attention. Please give a big hand to The three panelists. Thank you.

**MC** | Thank you very much. This concludes the international seminar, "CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD? The Future of Biennales and Triennales."

## Panelist Profiles

[Keynote Speaker]

### **Soichiro FUKUTAKE**

Honorary Adviser, Benesse Holdings, Inc.; President, Benesse Art Site Naoshima; Chairman of the Board, Fukutake Foundation; General Producer, Setouchi Triennale. / Japan

An Okayama native, Fukutake graduated from the Faculty of Science and Engineering, Waseda University. He joined Fukutake Publishing (now Benesse Holdings, Inc.) in 1973, and was appointed Representative Director in 1986, then Chairman and CEO in 2007. He became the Executive Adviser to the company in 2014 and has served as Honorary Adviser since October 2016. He has spearheaded the Inland Sea renaissance around Naoshima, Teshima and Inujima focused on art, nature and architecture for the past 30 years through Benesse Art Site Naoshima projects. In 2004, he established the Naoshima Fukutake Art Museum Foundation (now Fukutake Foundation), and opened the Chichu Art Museum on Naoshima and was named honorary citizen of Naoshima. He is distinguished with many awards, including the Minister of Education Award for Fine Arts (2008), AJJ Appreciation Prize (2010), and Montblanc de la Culture Arts Patronage Award (2012).

[Panelist]

### **Thiago de PAULA SOUZA**

Member of 10th Berlin Biennale curatorial team / Curator / Educator / Brazil

Thiago de Paula Souza is a member of the 10th Berlin Biennale curatorial team. He lives and works in São Paulo, BR, where he worked as an educator at Museu Afro Brasil between 2014 and 2016. In 2016 he co-curated the exhibition “Living On – In Other Words on Living?” at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria. At the 32nd São Paulo Biennial, de Paula Souza joined the Accra Study Days team, organized by Gabi Ngcobo as part of the public program, and was also part of the Bienal’s Oficina de Imaginação Política (“political imagination workshop”). He collaborated with lanchonete.org, an artist-led cultural platform focused on daily life and progressive actions in contemporary cities with São Paulo as a reference point, and co-created “We Cannot Build What We Cannot First Imagine (WCB WCFI)”, a visionary platform that gathers works and perspectives from racialized artists and thinkers. De Paula Souza currently researches on the depiction of art from South America and the African diaspora in the German-speaking context. This research will soon extend to non-Western circumstances where he will investigate how the art communities engage in the deconstruction of hegemonic readings of histories.

### **Bigge ÖRER**

Director, Istanbul Biennial / Turkey

Born in Istanbul in 1977, Örer came aboard on the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts in 2003 and worked in the coordination of cultural and artistic projects until she was appointed director to the Istanbul Biennial in 2008. Since 2009, she has been the advisor of the Pavilion of Turkey at the International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia. She has acted as a consultant and a jury member for a number of international cultural and artistic projects and as an independent expert in the European Union’s department that evaluates cultural funds. Bigge Örer’s breadth of activity embraces both the artistic and the academic fields. She has also been teaching, between 2011 and 2013, courses on the subject of managing biennials and international exhibitions at the Istanbul Bilgi University. Since March 2013, she is the vice-president of the International Biennial Association.

### **YAMAIDE Jun'ya**

Executive Director of NPO BEPPU PROJECT / Artist / Japan

Born in 1970 in Oita, Japan. Yamaide participated in the International Studio Program at PS1 in New York (2000-2001), then took residency in Paris as an external scholar of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (2002-2004). As an artist, he has participated in many exhibitions including Taipei Biennial in Taiwan (2000-2001), among others. He founded BEPPU PROJECT in 2005 with an aim to hold international exhibitions in cooperation with different organizations. He was the general producer of “Mixed Bathing World” (2009, 2012, 2015) and general director of “Kunisaki Art Festival” (2014), general director of “Oita Toilennale” (2015), and general producer of “in BEPPU” (2016). He is advisor to the Kokumin Bunkasai 2018 (since 2016). He received the “New Face” Award from the Ministry of Education (Art Promotion section) (2008).

[Moderator]

### **OSAKA Eriko**

General Director, Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale / Director, Yokohama Museum of Art / Japan

Osaka has previously worked at the Japan Foundation, ICA Nagoya, and served as senior curator (1994-96) and artistic director (1997-2006) at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower Mito, artistic director at Mori Art Museum (2007-January 2009), before assuming her current position as director of Yokohama Museum of Art in April 2009. She has curated numerous contemporary art exhibitions including the Japan pavilion for the 49th Venice Biennale as commissioner and “Cai Guo-Qiang: There and Back Again” (2015). She was Director General for Yokohama Triennale 2011 and Chairman of the Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale 2014. She is also board member of the International Biennial Association.



## DISCUSSIONS

“Where are we now? What are our strategies?  
How are we to implement them?”





## List of Participants

### Discussion 1 “Why Biennales and Triennales? New challenges, models and strategies”

No. of Participants: 17

#### **Presentations** (in order of presentation)

Atteqa MALIK (Vice Chairperson, Karachi Biennale Trust / Pakistan)

Margarita GONZALEZ (Artistic Director, 12th Havana Biennial / Vice Director, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam / Cuba)

T. Melih GÖRGÜN (Founder and Artistic Director, Sinopale / Turkey)

L. Igo DIARRA (Director, La Médina / Mali)

#### **Participants** (in alphabetical order of family name)

Hour AL QASMI (President and Director, Sharjah Art Foundation / UAE)

Lewis BIGGS (Curator, Folkstone Triennial / UK)

Sylvie FORTIN (Independent Curator / former Executive and Artistic Director, La Biennale de Montréal / Canada)

Dolly KOLA=BALOGUN (Co-Founder, Retro African / Nigeria)

Gabriele HORN (Director, Berlin Biennale / Germany)

Isabella HUGHES (Director, Honolulu Biennial Foundation / USA)

Md. Jafar IQBAL (CEO, Shunno Art Space / Bangladesh )

LING Min (Vice President, AICA / Board Member, IAAC / China)

Elke AUS DEM MOORE (Head of the Visual Arts Department, ifa / Germany)

OSAKA Eriko (General Director, Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale / Director, Yokohama Museum of Art / Japan)

#### **Facilitator**

IIDA Shihoko (Associate Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts / Curator / Japan)

**No. of Observers: 2**

### Discussion 2 “How do we develop professional skills in biennales and triennales?”

No. of Participants: 14

#### **Presentations** (in order of presentation)

Bigge ÖRER (Director, Istanbul Biennial / Turkey)

Riyas KOMU (Co-Founder, Kochi Biennale Foundation/ Artist / Curator / India)

Thiago de PAULA SOUZA (Member of 10th Berlin Biennale curatorial team / Curator / Educator / Brazil)

#### **Participants** (in alphabetical order of family name)

Nevenka ŠIVAVEC (Director, Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts / Director, International Center of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana / Slovenia)

Sally TALLANT (Director, Liverpool Biennial / UK)

Christian OXENIUS (University of Liverpool / UK)

Fabio CAVALLUCCI (Director, Luigi Pecci Centre for Contemporary Art / Italy)

Judith GREER (Director of International Programmes, Sharjah Art Foundation / UAE)

#### **Facilitator**

HOASHI Aki (Project Manager, Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale / Japan)

**No. of Observers: 5**

## DISCUSSIONS

# “Where are we now? What are our strategies? How are we to implement them?”

### Introduction

**Hoashi Aki [Hoashi]** | Good morning. I'm Aki Hoashi, project manager of Yokohama Triennale. Myself and Iida Shihoko will be facilitating the two discussions that will take place this morning, one entitled “Why Biennales and Triennales? New challenges, models and strategies,” and the second entitled “How do we develop professional skills in biennales and triennales?” The reason I proposed to have discussions on these two topics is that I really wanted to know where we are now with biennials and triennials, what are our strategies, and how are we implementing them. All the members associated with the IBA are those who actually manage the organizations that run the biennials. So I thought this would be a nice opportunity for us to share knowledge and experiences.

I am going to first share with you the main discussion topics, then Shihoko will give a brief presentation on the background of where Japan is today, so that you understand why we are concerned with some of the topics we are bringing up in our discussion. The general aim is to share current issues and new strategies for professionals involved in the biennials/triennials and the festival

sector, and to build a shared understanding of what biennials/triennials could be, and what we need to work on in the future to make this sector better.

The first group of discussion will discuss, “Why Biennales and Triennales? New challenges, models and strategies.” We have asked four members to present new and existing biennials, particularly in Asia and African regions to understand why they are organizing biennials and triennials at all. Why are they not building museums? Why are they doing biennials in particular at this time in their localities? Furthermore, we would like to ask the new challenges and strategies they may be dealing with in launching and/or redefining their biennials and triennials. This first discussion group will be facilitated by Shihoko.

The second group will discuss the topic, “How do we develop professional skills in biennales and triennales?” What programs are necessary and/or appropriate for developing skills and careers? For example, after several editions of biennials you start feeling that you really need to sustain your organization and develop the skills of your staff members.

So through the two discussions, we will not only discuss about



initiating a biennial/triennial but also sustaining one.

In the first discussion group, we have asked Atteqa Malik from Karachi Biennale, Margarita Gonzalez from Havana Biennial, T. Melih Görgün from International Sinop Biennial, and then L. Igo Diarra from African Biennale of Photography in Bamako.

In the second discussion group, we will have Bige Örer from Istanbul Biennial and Riyas Komu from Kochi-Muziris Biennale to talk about the overall organization, how they recruit their team, and what are the urgent issues about building teams and organizations. The third speaker, Thiago de Paula Souza, is not a member of a biennial organization, but has worked/working as an educator and curator for biennials in São Paulo and Berlin. We would like to understand how he is developing his career through the biennial experiences.

So before we split into two discussion groups, I would like to hand the microphone to Shihoko, who will give us an overview of what we share as issues or what are the context of the Japanese biennials and triennials.

## Biennials/Triennials/Festivals in Japan

**Iida Shihoko [iida]** | Good morning everyone. I'm going to briefly talk about the context or background of biennials/triennials/festivals in Japan. I know that many of you are familiar with the history of biennials around the world. I just wanted to give you an idea about some major biennials and triennials in Japan that have been founded after 2000. The exceptions are two important ones: one is Tokyo Biennale (1952-1990) and the other one is Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale organized by the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (1999-). So keeping this in your mind, the map of today's discussion is this. This is a map of Japan, which shows eight major biennials/triennials/festivals that are being held in 2017 alone. So among the eight, four are newly established biennials/triennials/festivals in Japan.<sup>[1]</sup>

For your reference, the size of Japan is almost equivalent to the size of the United Kingdom. So, it's obviously difficult to see all of these events in one year. If I extend this map and show the list that is not limited to this year, the map goes like this.<sup>[2]</sup> I have just picked up approximately 15 major biennials/triennials/festivals that primarily focus on contemporary art, or at least, those that include contemporary art as one of the primary elements in organizing the event. There are many more festival events in Japan than shown in this map.

According to a survey (conducted in 2014 by Nomura Research Institute, Ltd., commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs) which lists up cultural events and art festivals in Japan that literally have "biennial" or "festival" in their event titles, there were over 120 of such events. This is quite an insane number, but the scale as well as the context and history are different from event to event. So it's very difficult to generalize the current situation. Interestingly, the five events that I have underlined in my map are all directed by Kitagawa Fram.<sup>[2]</sup> In a way, it looks as if there's a franchise of biennials and triennials under Kitagawa Fram brand.

Let me further try to explain the details of this map. I'd like to emphasize again that each case is very different, but there are roughly two different types of such events. One is "regional



**Hoashi Aki** (Project Manager, Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale)

development type" (shown in ●), and the other one is the so-called "urban revitalization type" (shown in ○).<sup>[3]</sup> As you might see, those regional developmental types are mostly held in inland areas, in the northern part of Japan, or in the Setouchi inland sea area. The urban revitalization types are held in major capital cities such as Sapporo, Yokohama, Saitama, Nagoya, and Beppu (a smaller city), cities which are generally facing the Pacific Ocean.

So let me explain the meaning of the contextual differences between these two types of events. First, the regional development type is held in regions suffering from aging society and depopulation. Because of this, they could potentially seek financial support from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, which would enable them to construct buildings to organize events, build roads and repair bridges to improve access. This type involves physically building an infrastructure along with organizing their cultural events. It brings big money, much bigger than culture-related funding.

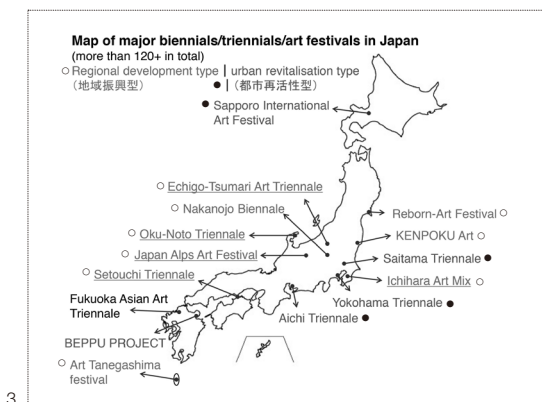
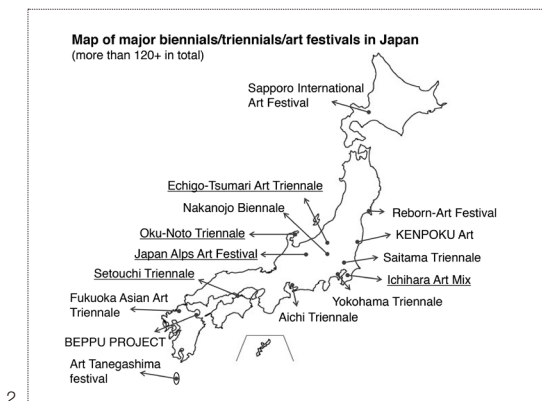
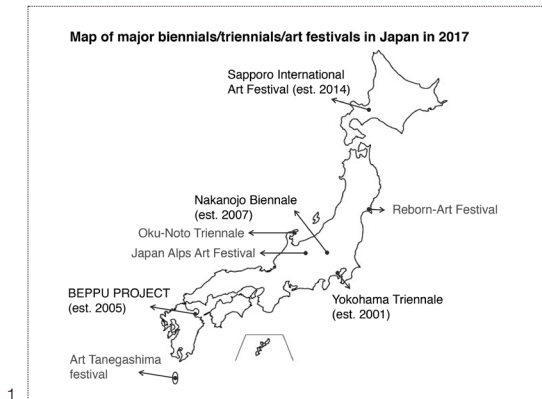
The "urban revitalization type" is held in urban cities that aim to revitalize their cities particularly through cultural tourism. Yokohama Triennale falls under this category. The primary aim of organizing a biennial in this category is for urban culture, and the funding could be potentially sourced from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (including Agency for Cultural Affairs).

The people who run these events are organizers and art professionals. In Japan, most of the biennials/triennials/festivals shown on the maps I showed you earlier are organized by local governments. A very small number of biennials that are initiated by artists are also supported by the local authorities. In many cases, the president and officers of the organization running these events are not necessarily art professionals. They are government officers or public servants. They outsource specific part of the project to the art professionals like us to curate the exhibition or to work on the programs and contents.

Since the main funding is public money, the organizers are fully responsible to the tax payers and, therefore, would like to achieve tangible goals that translate into prosperity and stability. Their main interest is not to change, which is the very crucial point. We, the art professionals and cultural workers, perhaps including artists, tend to emphasize the significance of practicing contemporary art. Because we, the art professionals, are not organizers, we can take



Iida Shihoko (Associate Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts / Curator)



artistic responsibility, but can't take full responsibility on the legal and financial aspects of the events. This may be quite a distinct way in how biennials/triennials/festivals in Japan are managed.

Each party brings in different expectations, too. From the organizer's perspective, the primary goal is to rediscover the region's attractiveness or charms through art and culture and attract young people and business, with expectations that they would eventually move to their local cities and revitalize the region. They also expect promoting inbound tourism through art events as well as raising the cultural literacy of the citizens. In contrast, we, art professionals and cultural workers, have a goal to broaden access to contemporary art for the public through means different from those used in conventional art museums. Furthermore, we aim to share critical as well as international perspectives on certain issues with the citizens and local artists, contribute to shaping art histories of both regional and international, and present visions for the future.

The actual situation is much more complex but I just wanted to give you a summary of the contextual backgrounds that leads to the current issues in Japan.

The organizers tend to put emphasis on the regional development, economic efficacy, and presenting Japanese culture to boost Japanese presence abroad. As a result, we face issues such as lack of critique and discussions on quality of works. At times, we also face censorship and self-censorship as a consequence of excessive control by organizers who don't want to have problems. There are also challenges in professional skill and career development and issues of exploiting freelance cultural workers. So, in many cases, sharing the same vision and aims between these two parties (organizers and art professionals) could be a challenge.

Now that I have given a very quick run through the contextual background of Japanese biennials/triennials/festivals, I'd like to raise three questions for our discussion in order to just stimulate ideas.

The first question is on sustainability. When the reason of organizing a biennial starts to divert from its original aims for reasons that are perhaps cultural, political, and economical, how could the biennials/triennials/festivals be sustained, justified, or organized? Or should it be terminated? The second is on curation. Because I am a curator, I'm very curious about the role of curators in the context of biennials. I've always struggled. How is curating a biennial different from curating museum shows? How does curation function in the context of biennials? This question is related to my other question, that is, whether an appointment of artistic director of non-art profession is a unique phenomenon in Japan or not? And my last question is, what is the most essential quality, strength and efficacy of biennials?

Hoashi | So now, we are going to split into two discussion groups to focus on two specific topics. We'll be back in this room again later to inform each other about what we have discussed in each of our groups.

## DISCUSSION 1

# “Why Biennales and Triennales? New challenges, models and strategies”

**lida** | Welcome to Discussion 1. In this discussion, I would like to first invite Atteqa Malik to speak about the Karachi Biennale, followed by Margarita Gonzalez on Havana Biennial, and then T. Melih Görgün on the International Sinop Biennial and L. Igo Diarra on Rencontres de Bamako – African Biennale of Photography.

### Karachi Biennale: Putting Karachi on the International Map and Showing Pakistani Artists to the Local Audience

**Atteqa Malik [Malik]** | Hello everyone. I'm Atteqa Malik and I'm from the Karachi Biennale. This is going to be our first biennial and it's ended up being the largest contemporary art exhibition that Pakistan will ever have, because our curator has gotten overambitious and he's got about 140 artists so. (laughter) It's quite an interesting experience being part of the team.

Karachi is a city of 22 million people and if we could touch 1 million out of that 22 million with our biennial, we would consider that that's good. Karachi is a hidden secret. It's the third largest art scene in South Asia, after Delhi and Mumbai. Pakistani artists are being shown all over the world except in Pakistan. So we felt that it is very important for them to show their works to their own audiences. We wanted to take art out of the museum and gallery context and put it in, more or less, the public sphere. People don't go to galleries because they think it's an elitist thing, and in order to eliminate that stigma, we decided to move out. So we've secured 12 venues, some of which are schools; for example, this one which is a free school run by the government and one of our major venues. We have other schools, cinema, and buildings which are taking part in this project.

So why a biennial in Pakistan? People in Pakistan can't even pronounce the word “biennale”. (laughter) How do we explain to them what a biennial is? Well, I think the reason why I'm here today, sharing my experience, is because it puts us into a network with other biennials, it helps us bring our standards to an international level, and we get to share a lot of things which we would not in usual situations. So those are the main reasons.

Also, why in Karachi? Why does Karachi need a biennial? Pakistan has suffered for the past 15 years due to the fact that our government was supporting the United States in its war on Afghanistan against the will of the Pakistani citizens. So Karachi especially saw a lot of retaliation in the form of bomb attacks and many, many innocent people died. Also in the international news Pakistan has been portrayed as a country of terrorists, so we had hardly any foreign visitors and our citizens almost never get visas approved to travel to other countries. Thus Pakistanis has had to deal with a sense of exclusion and misdirected hatred until very recently. Against this backdrop, a group of artists, curators and art critics got together



**Atteqa Malik** (Vice Chairperson, Karachi Biennale Trust)

in 2015 and said, “What can we do for our city? What can we do as an artist community?” We decided that we wanted to have this big event because there was an agenda for social change that we wanted to achieve.

For example, I do a lot of workshops and I'd ask the children, “Do you have art classes in your school?” They say they don't. There's no art curriculum officially because it's been removed by the government. I think the idea of an intervention is much more important than trying to bring art back into the curriculum. Having short workshops is one of the interventions which we have been doing in preparation for this biennial.

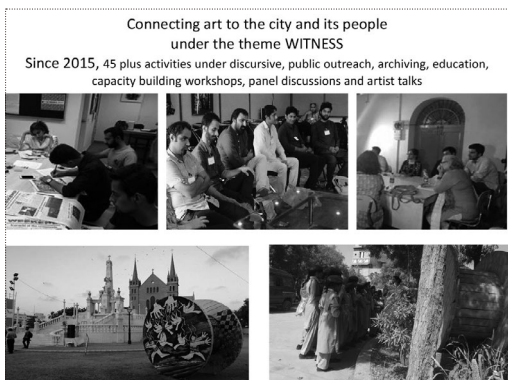
Karachi is a very resilient city; no matter what happens we just bounce back up and you see a lot of that in the artwork. How do you translate your pain into something that you know, that people will share? We have found a lot of support from everyone who lives in Karachi for this particular event because it's for Karachi.

We want to put Pakistan on the international art scene. Our artists are already being shown all over the world, and collected in international museums. But as I said before, our own public hasn't seen them yet.

So, how do you get the public ready for a biennial? Since 2015, we've been holding more than 45 events including workshops and archiving projects. We started archiving Pakistani artists during the summer workshops. We hope that all these new things will eventually lead to a formal art institution, towards a museum of contemporary art. So the trustee members of the Karachi Biennale Trust have big plans.

How do you talk about art unless there's art to talk about? We held a public outreach program where we took abandoned cable reels that were used for electricity and asked about 40 plus artists to translate them into works of art. The resulting artworks are being used for the education program. This creates a context for be discussing art in education.<sup>[4]</sup>

If someone were hold a biennial in Karachi, it'd these two people, because they have the background and the experience. Niilofur Farrukh has done the ASNA Clay Triennale in Karachi, Pakistan as one of the curators, and she's a member of AICA. The chief curator, Amin Gulgee, has put together the most interesting list of artists. He's got them all to work for a minimal budget, he's got the international artists to bring their own funding, and he's managed to get 140



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artists. The rest the trustees mostly come from the art and education field. This has been a problem for us, because we have had to face legal problems and fund-raising problems that many of us did not initially foresee, and we didn't know how to handle such issues. That is something to think about: how do you bring a corporate management kind of model into our big event?

This last slide shows images hot off the press.<sup>[5]</sup> This is the first installation that's ready for our event in two, three weeks. It's an onsite installation called *Sounds of Silence* by Mahbub Jokhio. I hope that you can make it to the Karachi Biennale. That would be excellent. Thank you.

**Iida** | You only have three more weeks?

**Malik** | Yes, three weeks (laughter).

**Iida** | Thank you very much. All the best with the forthcoming event. The next speaker is Margarita Gonzalez on Havana Biennial.

### Havana Biennial: Biennial of the South Engages with the Cuban Community

**Margarita Gonzalez [Gonzalez]** | Good morning. The Wifredo Lam Contemporary Art Center from its creation in 1983 has held as its main objectives, to tell the story of contemporary art from the third world, and celebrate the Havana Biennial. The biennial has its single importance in the international scene, because it is a space for confronting ideas and generating reflections. Its main purpose is to contribute to the research and promotion of art in Latin America, Caribbean, Asia, and Africa. The first Havana Biennial was held in 1984. Through the 12 editions of this event, between the founding year and 2016, we have been privileged with the most innovative, experimental, and artistic production of contemporary art in our country. In 1984 the idea to create an event in Havana for artists, galleries, experts, and people interested in art in general, to share ideas, thoughts, and actions was conceived. At the third edition, a platform and a topic for reflection was established. The Havana Biennale exists as an alternative channel for the artists who don't have any strong presence in the mainstream of art at that moment.

The Havana Biennial is now open, not only to the developing

world or the countries of the south but, also to the creations of the main cultural center of the West. The purpose of the Biennale is to contribute to the understanding and promotion of the artistic production of contemporary art. These focuses have proven that there is not a homogenous and compact block in the third world, similar to the way that contemporary art is not a single voice, but multiple expressions of the big and complex world of representation.

I think the importance of the Havana Biennial has been to bring emerging artists from various countries with lack of visibility to the center among the international events. It was our capacity to take risks in introducing these artists with their proposals and to make them known for the first time.

The biennial has had effective connection with the locals through social insertion of art during our major projects carried out in the neighborhoods and artworks put on public display. Building relationships between the biennial and the citizens, and the spectators, and bringing the biennial to the neighborhoods are all important to us.

The biennial has enabled the citizens to directly enjoy the artistic proposals of the invited artists. It has also enabled Cuba to be researched on many occasions, too. The principal funder and supporter of our event is the Cultural Ministry of the Cuban government. Many friends, art galleries, museums, foundation and others, also help us for printing the catalog, paying the transportation paying for the travel of artists.



**Margarita Gonzalez** (Artistic Director, 12th Havana Biennial / Vice Director, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam)



Let me talk about the next edition of Havana Biennial. We had a terrible hurricane several weeks ago. We were initially planning to hold the next Havana Biennial between October to November this year, but we need to move this to 2019, perhaps between April and May. There are people without houses in Cuba. Many institutions, theatres, galleries, have been destroyed. We need to reconstruct the lives of the people. So the Havana Biennial will continue but it will be six months late. We are planning to hold events that encourage collaboration and cooperation between artists, curators, and experts, manifested in a variety of actions. We aim for the art to form a new path of collective understanding. We also hope to form a decentralized and spontaneous configuration to approach our public. We hope that the artists' creations will stimulate people to reflect on themselves and enable them to listen closer to the reality in which we live.

The biennials and triennials have an important task to show the most recent productions of contemporary art around the world. The future must be increasingly better, and we need to look at strategies and join in our efforts to find solutions in order of not to lose this vision. In one way or the other, each biennial should show their elements of interest and bring out the different phenomena of art in our region. There are, and will always be, a reference and actual point to contemporary art in our countries. Thank you.

**lida** | Thank you very much. So the next speaker is T. Melih Görgün.

### **Sinopale: An Independent and International Biennial in Sinop that is Event-Driven and Locally-Rooted**

**T. Melih Görgün [Görgün]** | Thank you very much. My name is T. Melih Görgün. Today, I'd like to present the methodology that we have been working with for more than ten years at Sinopale, or International Sinop Biennial.

You will see the images in my presentation that show our artistic and aesthetic visions as well as our methodology; in other words, how, what, and who is connecting and working together to create a better social living space, whether it's part of our culture and creativity. We are also a catalyzer for urban development. In the sponsor logo, you see the Informal Görgün Network, which is a kind of an "Alice in Wonderland" adventure in the real life. What I mean is that we live a similar story in the real life. During Sinopale, we encounter a lot of surreal challenges, happiness, and unexpected situations. Furthermore, Sinopale always has a tangible maturation or outcome, just like the novel. We share the achievements, and continue to follow the path from which we have learned and gained experience. They signify our thoughts and symbolize collaboration, participation, and *imece*. This is a Turkish word which I will talk about today, which means voluntarily collaboration and participation.

Twelve years ago, I took a group of my friends to Sinop for a work visit to brainstorm what we could do together. We stayed for 15 days long to talk with the citizens, like an archaeological excavation. It was in preparation for an international biennial in Sinop, which was to be entitled "Sinopale."

Sinopale is an international biennial that aims to draw the whole society together and develop dialogues through arts and culture, in order to trigger a process of changing the public space for a better living environment. In most cases, such big events are financed by their cities, but Sinopale is not financed by the Sinop municipality. Being a municipality with a lot of budgetary problems, the municipality has always been just an in-kind supporter, like many other supporters of Sinopale. The problem of not being able to find a main sponsor make the development and the management of the event always very difficult for us. Our event is full of risks and unforeseen situations, but also has a big advantage.

Last year, we had a coup attempt. It happened right before the opening of the Sinopale 6. It was a very dangerous and unexpected intervention for our country, so we had to postpone our biennial and present it this year instead. Now we have finished the event. The collaboration with so many individuals and organizations at local, national and international levels is what makes the event so special and effective.

As European Cultural Association, the organizer of Sinopale, we build relationship with colleagues on a long-term basis, sustaining it through the visions and efforts of and in cooperation with the international curators who are responsible for the selection of artists and program. The curators present pragmatic, functional and common approach to each exhibition, as well as thematic and specific directions in order to generate a form of cross-cultural exchange with the local context.

Sinopale is a contextual project that consists of interdisciplinary events of different formats. It is a process and context-oriented biennial including art production based on research, workshop formats and modes of sharing with the local communities and crafts industry. It is important for us to emphasize its experimental character which encourages art practices to bring forth new modes of productions, experiences, and circulations between the field of art and daily lives inspired by the locality and the place.

Sinopale consists of a multitude of events presented in different formats. The works are urban-based as well as national- and international-based. They are presented so that citizens of all ages



**T. Melih Görgün** (Founder and Artistic Director, Sinopale)

could perceive a new idea on living spaces with a vision for the future, reflecting on urban problems and sharing the historical background of collective memory.

Sinopale is an international project that is organized in the context of local development. We hold programs including open air film screenings, educational programs in the Sinopale summer academy programs, forums, Sinopale Kids, and workshops that are open to the public and communities. We not only emphasize the aesthetic values of art in the exhibitions, but also aim at building a horizontal structure through our aesthetic events, in order to articulate the potentials in our present sphere, as well as the challenges of the city of Sinop.

Sinopale blooms during biennial summers when we share commonalities, differences and knowledge in our space through aesthetic, social, and political practices. Knowledge could point to opposite directions to the same process and can be acquired through specific place.

Such values are common to art and history, both being spatial and non-linearly organized. Sinopale is in the periphery. It is a young biennial for contemporary art compared to the many other international biennials. It is also alternative to the so-called biennial phenomenon, not being in the center and not having the political, economic, and aesthetic dominance. Indeed, it mobilizes personal and collective efforts to collaborate on the creative edge, by crossing the local and global perspectives, as well those of the North/South, East/West.

It analyzes and re-signifies the biennial discourses dominated by the logic of globalization, global-trotting art-lovers, and expensive artworks shipped from overseas.

Sinopale is interested in other forms of resistance, and adaption of local movements and civil society initiatives, ecological activism, and non-governmental politics, which can be re-translated as an environmental engagement with art and culture within the ethical aesthetic ecologies.

Sinopale is present in the daily lives of Sinop. Children are a very important part of Sinopale. In the first two editions of the Sinopale, we organized workshops on innovative teaching method for the art teachers who then applied and used it workshops for children. We have already started to see the impacts of these workshops. Some of the children who were workshop participants of Sinopale 1, worked as artist assistants of Sinopale 3, 4, and 5. Now, they are leading Sinopale. And working in the Sinopale team.

During Sinopale, we publish at least two issues of fanzine, *Sinopsis*. A young team of volunteer journalists, editors and graphic designers compile and design news and articles collected from the stakeholders of Sinopale. *Sinopsis* functions as a communication platform between artists, curators, and the citizens of Sinop.

I would like to introduce to you “Helesa,” which is one of the rituals carried out by the citizens of Sinop. It’s a cultural event that is very prominent and valuable, but not religious.

The legend goes like this... Once upon a time the sailors were on the shore of Sinop at the Black Sea, where Diogenes was born, and needed to eat. They were carrying their boats on their own shoulders. They needed to take in food for their own survival, once they reached

the narrowest strip of Sinop. Since then, we have continued to hold this ritual. It happens once a year, approximately in the middle of the Ramadan days. This ritual is important because it signifies the culturally common value the people in Sinop share and is key to broaden the context of Sinopale.

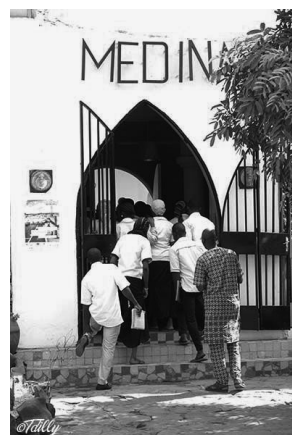
When the artists participate in Sinopale to produce the artworks with the participation of the local citizens of Sinop, the citizens become artisans by helping the artists. This is a participation and a form of “learning by doing.” In addition, Sinopale is a very important platform to bring the people together to think about their own culture and their own future, and also, of course, about their own cities and its values. Thank you very much.

**lida** | Thank you very much. So now we got L. Igo Diarra to speak about the African Biennale of Photography in Bamako.

### **African Biennale of Photography (Rencontres de Bamako): The Gateway to the World for African Photographers**

**L. Igo Diarra [Diarra]** | The name of the biennial I run is Rencontres de Bamako, or the African Biennale of Photography in Mali. I have a space called La Médina, which has a gallery and multimedia library.<sup>[6]</sup> We are based in West Africa, in the Francophone area. In our region, there are three great events: FESPACO (biennial Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou), a pan-African biennial of cinema in Burkina Faso, which is an old biennial founded in 1969; Biennale of Dak’Art, which was set up in 1992; and our African Biennale of Photography in Bamako, which started two years later, in 1994.

After more than 23 years of dictatorship in Mali, as new Alpha Oumar Konaré came into power as president in 1991. His government was open to arts and culture and that enabled the founding of Rencontres de Bamako. The first edition was set up by two French photographers, Françoise Huguier and Bernard Descamps, and it is now the most important African photo festival. It’s like the rites of passage; every artist who need to make a career come to this festival. For example, the most popular photographer in the country now is Malick Sidibé. I don’t know if you know him — Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keïta — both are from Mali, and Samuel Fosso is from Cameroon. They have all participated in our biennial.



6 La Médina

What is interesting is that most of the photographers who attend the biennial in Bamako moves on to set up their own festivals. Sammy Baloji from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was the first. He participated in our biennial in 2007, and he set up his own festival, Rencontres Picha, the biennial of Lubumbashi in 2008. He became more known after he came to Bamako. It's the same case with Calvin Dondo from Zimbabwe. After the biennial in Bamako, he set up his own Gwanza Month of Photography in Harare. The same could be said for Aida Muluneh, who founded the Addis Foto Fest (AFF), the first international photography festival in East Africa based in Addis Ababa. It seems that after Bamako, people are inspired to set up their own biennials in their own countries.

Last year, we set up "Photo Kalo," a small and new event, because we felt that there was a gap between the biennials. Every two years, a lot of people come from worldwide, and in between the biennials, what do people do? They do nothing. So this is an occasion for us to try to work with and train Malian photographers. Photo Kalo every two years.

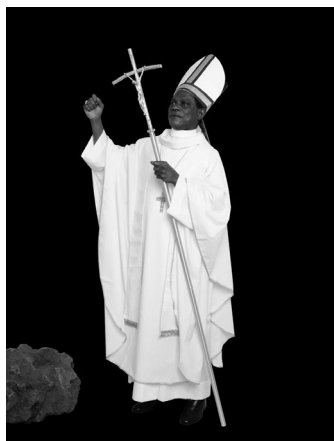
For the coming biennial, which opens on December 2nd, we will hold the press conference in Paris. We work with the Institut français du Mali, but this could be a problem. Since its founding, half of the biennial's cost is paid by the government of Mali and the other half by the government of France. So some people say our biennial is a French event and we are very ashamed of that.

I will show you now a short video for the 10th edition held in 2015, which was curated by Bisi Silva, so that you get a feel of Bamako. I'm also showing you the image of a show in our space by the famous Cameroonian photographer, Samuel Fosso.<sup>7</sup> He takes a lot of self-portraits of very well-known figures, black heroes.

So I would like to put this question on the table: What is the role of an infrastructure in the biennial? I ask this question because in a country like Mali, we do not enough space. This is very important for us because we have to provide space.

Final words on our biennial in Bamako. For the photographers, it's the most important event. If you are an African photographer and you want to become known, you have to pass through this event. Thank you.

**lida** | Thank you very much. So just to start discussion, I'd like to remind you of the questions that I have raised earlier, while inviting



<sup>7</sup> Samuel Fosso, *Black Pope*, 2017  
Photography courtesy of the artist and  
Galerie Jean Marc Patras



**L. Igo Diarra** (Director, La Médina)

you to bring up topics that are relevant after listening to all the presentations. One thing that I found particularly interesting was that I saw some commonalities among Havana and also Bamako and perhaps, Karachi, although Karachi has not started yet. The commonalities are based on the sense of isolation and the necessity to bring something for your local communities. I found that one of the roles of biennial is to open up yourself — your country or your community — to those outside, who are abroad and working at international level, in order to break this sense of isolation. That's what I saw in your brief presentations. The context and history of each biennial is very different, so it's kind of difficult (as to) where to start our discussions right here and now.

## Sustaining Biennials During the In-Between Years

**Isabella Hughes [Hughes]** | I have a question. One of the things that I noticed in the presentations is something that I've been thinking a lot about since we just finished our first Honolulu Biennial. How do you serve your community, and stay relevant in the off-years? It was interesting what was said about Karachi. For three years we presented pre-biennials, workshops, exhibitions, but there was a little confusion because a lot of what we do locally is focused more on the local artists and it seemed like an ongoing thing, whereas the biennial is not. The biennials are all these amazing magic for just a few months or a few weeks. After that, there's a void. With all these different models from various start-ups to much more established ones, I'd be curious to hear more, from all of you, about your initiatives and efforts. It's something we think a lot about right now as we've just finished our first edition.

**lida** | Would anyone like to respond?

**Malik** | It's a very important question. I think there are a number of

factors that are driving us into sustaining this energy, but it's quite exhausting actually. One of the problems is the funding. For example, some of our funders give us a certain amount and ask us to do a certain number of workshops; for example, six workshops in a year. So we know that we have to do six workshops, we plan it, and this continues even after the biennial, right? We work with local artists because it's easier in such a case. Such workshops are like introducing new worlds to both the public and the artists. Bringing both worlds together, in fact, is one of our aims. But we can't do this, in a city of 22 million, because then, we would spread ourselves too thin, visiting one school just once, and then never going back.

By the way, 60% of Pakistan's population is under 18 years. So we are actually looking at a very young population who responds in very different ways: they all have mobile phones; they all have Facebook; they all have Instagram. And there's this constant bombardment of advertisement. But when we do something it has to be very immediate and it can't be boring because, otherwise, they'd never be interested. But when we engage with them, they always ask us, "Are you going to come back?"

So I think one thing we've done is to focus on one school or one area for that particular two years of the biennial in Karachi. The city is big; you can drive for two hours and not reach the end of the city. So we focus on one or two areas and then throughout the two years, the teachers are trained, the students experience a whole lot of different things, and then maybe, in the next biennial, we move to another area. So, slowly, slowly, we keep up with the engagement. We see ourselves in a long-term; it's not going to happen overnight — that's what I'm saying.

**Sylvie Fortin [Fortin]** | I think many biennials ask themselves this question. It may be productive to recast this question as a contest of temporalities. If we understand the biennial as an institution, temporality is durational, long-term. By contrast, if we understand the biennial as a recurring exhibition, it is a serial, short-term, finite

event. Yet, this exhibition also punctuates, makes visible, and sustains the biennial as institution. These agonistic temporalities can lead to contradictory, competing or converging events.

This constitutive aporia connects to my other question: how does crisis or emergency factor in the history of biennials? Today, it may be useful to understand that crisis or emergency are part of the untold story of biennials, of their history. Political events have played a central role in the foundation of some biennials; political crisis continues to inform several biennials every year. A number of biennials—such as Prospect New Orleans in the United States, the Ghetto Biennale in Port-au-Prince in Haiti and the Havana Biennial—were founded in the aftermath of an environmental catastrophe or significantly impacted by it. Taking various forms—political, environmental, financial, institutional, media and more—these crises are also increasingly frequent. So how do we conceptualize crisis or emergency as a constitutive condition of biennials without normalizing it?

## Opening up to the Public

**Görgün** | Sinopale is the "other" biennial; it is a kind of platform and initiatives that we do every two years. That is why, technically, the name of our event is "biennial". Of course, in between the two years, we do a lot of projects, including training projects for the children and also for the women. We are also working with the civil initiatives and associations of Sinop to help them expand their visions.

Sinop is a very small city facing the Black Sea. There are approximately 40,000 residents in the city center. Sinop was a very important region during the Hellenistic Period and later, during the Ottoman Empire, too. Sinop had a prison which housed philosophers, writers, and also the opposition leaders. During the Cold War, Sinop had the biggest NATO base in Europe due to its proximity to the Soviet Union. As you see, Sinop was a very important place geopolitically. Now the situation has changed, and we face



[left] **Isabella Hughes**  
(Director, Honolulu Biennial  
Foundation)

[right] **Sylvie Fortin**  
(Independent Curator / former  
Executive and Artistic Director,  
Biennale de Montréal)

financial difficulties. We don't have any industries in Sinop, so tourism has the biggest economic value now. We are using all cultural assets for tourism.

Sinopale has been a promotor of tourism, but we are not calling ourselves a tool for the tourism. It is, rather, a kind of a lifelong learning system. When we invite the artists, they come voluntarily to work in Sinop, like in an artist-in-residence program. For approximately seven or ten days, they come and work with the Sinop citizens to produce artworks. This is the system of learning by "doing," thus the artists learn from the citizens and then the citizens learn from the artists.

The childrens come for the training sessions and the children workshops, and also women come every day as volunteers to help us. It is kind of a cultural development platform. It's a meeting center to make art and do something in the cultural sector.

Sinop has a lot of space. We are opening doors and letting the owners know how they can use their spaces, and then they give the keys to us, so we use them for the biennial. Even if it's one room, on the ground floor, or one big house, they are all important spaces for us.

Four years ago, we turned the old market place into a cultural center, like a creative hub. Inside, there are tailors, some butchers, and some vegetable vendors, a kind that you would see in the old movies. It's looking very nice and romantic. Now we're helping our municipality to change the area, not for gentrification, of course. We are painting the place and we're helping to them to stay there and we're finding some customers. When the artists need something from the local people, the tailors, women, children, vendors, etc., come to help. It means Sinopale's working. We sustain ourselves through this movement. If we want funding from the other people — municipality, government, etc. — we can wait (laughter). Thank you very much.

**Gonzalez** | We also use different spaces in Havana since the first edition. I remember I was young student at the Havana University, and there was a workshop by a very important artist in the park. Such relationship with the public is very important. Daniel Buren, a very important artist from France, was in Casablanca, a small town by the Havana Bay, to work in a train station. The residents of the very, very small town were happy to have helped the artist paint their local train station. Michelangelo Pistoletto did a performance in the cathedral square, working with the art students and musicians. Havana Biennale's relationship with the art school is also very important. They also support us during the project of the artists and I think that this is the most important principle — collaboration. This was our theme for the 12th edition in 2015, "Between the Idea and Experience".

**Diarra** | We also have programs with schools at the biennial in Bamako. The school program for 100 schools comes in two parts. One is a program where schools could benefit from an introduction to photography by photographers. The other is visits to the exhibitions by the school children. The aim is to raise young people's awareness of the art so that we could increase our audience in quantity and quality in the future.

**Lewis Biggs**  
(Curator, Folkstone Triennial)

## Sustaining while Responding to Change

**lida** | Thank you for the interesting questions and responses. I particularly found it interesting that there are different directions in our interests. One is how can we sustain the biennial, maintaining that important characteristic of your own; the other is how we can respond to and contextualize the emergency, because biennials, which are organized every two or three years, need to be timely and meet those public moments. The crises or the situations may change by the time you organize the next edition.

How has Havana, since you have a longer history than the other three biennials presented today, maintained the importance of your biennial in the changing climate?

**Gonzalez** | The Havana Biennial, when it opened in 1984, had probably not foreseen undergoing so much change through every edition. The first Havana Biennale was only for Latin American artists, but from the second edition, the curatorial team understood that it was very important to open to countries from Africa and Asian countries. After then, the many important artists that we have worked with have strengthened their relationships with other new biennials, other projects, other curators around the world. This is very important because we face new challenges in the way we think.

We have also looked to other directions, looking at new perspectives of the art in the communities. In the last edition of the Biennial, we presented many works related to the music of the theater by artists working in that field. It was very interesting because it's not only installations, photos, paintings, and sculptures — it was mixed. Contemporary art is very complex. So for every edition, we try to present new ideas, projects, and proposals to reach the lives of the people. And we do this step-by-step because each biennial is different. And we try to change the model, or the structure. We use, in some cases, the same buildings, but use another building or work with another institution in other editions. Thoughts and ideas are always shifting and the audience in Havana is always waiting for our event. We are building a platform for the public. And through our editions, it's possible for the art students to see Michaelangelo



Pistoletto, Daniel Buren, Marina Abramović, Ilya Kabakov and many other important artists. The artists stay for 10 days, 15 days, and they meet students as well as Cuban artists. It's important that Havana Biennial put on this stage for sharing ideas.

**Diarra** | So getting back to the question on sustainability, or stability — in our case, it could depend on the political situation. For example, our African Biennale of Photography was set up in 1994, but we could not hold the 10th edition in 2013, due to the Mali Crisis that occurred in 2012. The biennial made a comeback with its 10th edition in 2015. But even for this year's edition, whenever I travel, people would ask me, "Will you open your biennial this year?" I'd say, "Why you ask me that? It's open! This year it will open!" I am always asked if we will make it. That is because one part of the funds come from France — this is also very problematic — because the government of Mali just assumes that they would burden only half of the budget. They don't realize that it's one of the most important events in Mali, it's an opportunity to showcase the country, because press, curators, and museum related professionals come from worldwide. But the politicians don't understand the value.

For example, our Minister of Art and Culture, a well-educated person, didn't realize the importance of the catalog. Once she understood the importance, she took the catalogs and gave them to people. The government thinks our biennial is just for a few people or for foreign interest. So we try to educate them. We make programs for concerned people, because most biennials, sometimes it's for some people and not for locals. That's also the challenge for the curator; how to make the biennial on an international level, and also to talk to the local audience.

## The Purpose of the Biennial as a Recurring Event

**Lewis Biggs [Biggs]** | I wanted to say thank you for your helpful analysis on the Japanese situation at the beginning. It was fascinating. I think we all know about the tension between the objective of the citizen and the objective of the artists. Because the artists want to use the biennial for professional development, sales, and fame, whereas

the official sponsors want to make this the opportunity to celebrate tourism or the economy or revitalization. We all know this tension happens everywhere in biennials but actually, neither is the purpose of the biennial. In my view, the purpose of the biennial is in the name: biennial, triennial, documenta; actually, it doesn't matter how often you have it. The point is that it is a repetition. It is recurrent. And the purpose of the biennials, festivals, whatever you call it, is to look at change. This is why it is recurrent. The purpose is to look again at what the situation is and measure the change. So the purpose is to measure the change. And this breaks the opposition between the local and global. Our relationship between the local and global is changing all the time. We measure this through a biennial or a triennial. The relationship between the artists and their audience is changing all the time. So we measure this by making a biennial or a triennial.

**Ling Min** | I just want to follow up and make a case through an example of Shanghai Biennale. The curators for the first edition of the Shanghai Biennale were all Chinese. Then in 2006, they started to work with foreign curators. Then they stopped working with Chinese curators. The last two editions are curated by international curators only. That's the history and the changes they have been making. There are a lot of stories behind this.

Also, there are many biennials and triennials in Japan. But who do you want to attract? Do you just want to attract the local people, or do you want to attract the international people? Depending on the answer, the focus would be different.

Yesterday, I posted information on Yokohama on social media and many people responded. This year, all Chinese cares about is documenta and Münster Sculpture Project. Together with Venice, many Chinese go to these events. What do you want the people to look at when they see your biennial?

**Dolly Kola=Balogun [Kola]** | I really liked what was said about the purpose of the biennial being about repetition, recurrence, looking at change and measuring change. The upcoming Lagos Biennial is in its first edition and we are going to open in three weeks, just like the Karachi Biennale. The Lagos Biennale is taking place on the backdrop of historical Lagos that we've achieved through a series of experimental installations but the main center of where the biennial's going to take place is in an old railway station. So the theme of this biennial is "Living on the Edge." It's about re-thinking and re-imagining: the former which is a logical mental exercise, and the latter being, an attempt to reach the fringes of fantasy.

Lagos is historically a slave town. It was a trade route, and it was kind of seen as a gate-keeping center for tax and trade, between the New World and Africa. But this biennial is about reimagining Lagos in its contemporary context, for example, its environmental degradation and economic situation. It's a city of 20 million people — very similar to Karachi actually — very multi-ethnic, very multi-religious, and diverse. The question now is: how do we reimagine Lagos as the most populous city in Africa, in its contemporary context? How do we reach the fringe of society in this urban domain? Right now, the art and culture is very elitist in Nigeria. It's just for a few, the very few, middle-class and the upper-class. So this biennial

is different from the other festivals that we've had in Lagos in the sense that it's taking place in the heart of the city, taking place in the poorest areas. So the question now is: how is this biennial going to shape itself? How does it impact the average citizen? What does it mean to have a biennial within the city? How does it affect the average life of a Nigerian citizen, of an African, of a citizen of the world? So I think this question of differentiating biennials in terms of how it is experienced by the citizens and how it's experienced by the artists and the curators, what the objectives are. I think these are very important and I'd like to hear more about that.

## Who Owns the Biennial?

**Malik** | I have a question that doesn't need to be answered now. Who can own a biennial? There was a recent incident that triggers this question. It was interesting to see that there are so many biennials and triennials in Japan. Yet you mentioned that many were run by a single figure or a brand. Can biennials become a brand?

**lida** | What I meant to say is that it's centralized.

**Malik** | Okay. So if somebody wants to have another biennial in Karachi tomorrow, is that okay? I mean, what happens? We just went through a legal battle because somebody had registered Karachi Biennial in 2014; the owner never used it but she sued all our sponsors. So we had to purchase the name from her and use most of our funding for that. So what gives you the right to own a biennial?

**Görgün** | So what I did is that I paid money to a patent institute in Turkey to get registered. It's one way to solve the problem, maybe. The biennial is very important in Turkey and everybody wants to make a biennial for each city. But they don't know how to do biennials. Because I was born and raised in Sinop, I know the place and I can do a biennial in Sinop, but it would not be possible for other people to do the same.

We have a system, thus we have many curators for each biennial, more than two or three, sometimes even six. But one team member from Sinopale is always there as a curator to explain the situation in Turkey. Because the social and political situations changes every day. Those events is helping to bring the cultures together. And the biennials or triennials is a platform also for the mutual understanding between the different cultures.

**lida** | I think it's time to wrap up although it's almost impossible to wrap up because we discussed so many things. But let us review some points we have discussed so far. How do you serve for your community? We talked about the tension between sustainability and the temporality of making the event timely, and also the tension between the biennial organizers and the artists. We were also reminded that biennials are a recurrent event, so you have the time to look back your achievements or history and, perhaps, your hopes to keep engaging with the community for the better future. Also, structure of funding could influence the programming. Shanghai Biennale's case was introduced, in which the structure of the

curatorial team reflects the sense of time.

Before we close this session, I would like to ask about the difference between the recurrent exhibitions organized by the art museum and that of biennials? Because both can organize recurrent cultural events and keeping engaging with the community. But biennials probably have a different function by the way of engaging with the community. Anybody have a brief comment?

## Biennials and Museums / Biennials vs Museums

**Diarra** | About your question on museums, the director of the national museum was appointed as the director of the biennial in Bamako. Initially, people reacted and said, "Oh, the director of the museum is the director of the biennial?" But in our case, we have been lucky to have a vibrant person and the museum functions like a gateway into the biennial. The museum is youthful and contemporary. The museum is the biennial's main venue. So I think the relationship between the museum and the biennials depend on who's in charge and the orientation of the museum. If the person is open to the contemporary art, it could work very well. That's the case for Mali.

**Kola** | In Nigeria, we do have a museum in Lagos, but like in Pakistan, they're mostly historical art and not contemporary art. We have a lot of galleries and the galleries are mainly based in the city center and as I mentioned earlier, they only reach a very small segment of the population.

The significance of this biennial in Lagos, in contrast to the regular exhibitions by galleries, is that it's bringing the art directly to the people. We are going to have the exhibitions and film screenings in areas that your average middle-class or elite Nigerians might not think of going to. Our format forces the individual to go out into the city, seek those places, and engage in the local community. I also think that the biennial will embody the spirit of the city in a very different way than the museums or the galleries.

The Lagos Biennial is organized by a foundation called the Àkété Foundation, whose members are mainly artists, so that also takes the power away from certain institutions that maybe control the narrative of contemporary art. Our biennial directly connects to the artists or art lovers and people who just want to experience art for the first time. So I think biennials are unique in the sense that they are freer, as you said, and I think they are more authentic in my opinion.

**Biggs** | Having been both a museum director and a biennial founder, I would agree that you could do both, but it depends entirely on the situation. I founded Liverpool Biennial when I was the director of Tate Liverpool, so it was possible to bring the reputation of Tate in order to start the biennial going. And then I resigned from Tate because (after 10 years as director there) it was more interesting for me to become chief executive and the artistic director of the Biennial than to continue to work at the Tate.

Also, very importantly — I have to say this at some point today — with my budget at the Tate, we were able to spend about 10% of the total turnover on art and education. Everything to do with art or

education was managed within just 10% of our total turnover. 90% of the funding had to go on supporting the building, supporting the staff — everybody knows this problem. Biennials are freer, much more free. So this is a very good reason why biennials should exist alongside museums, or even instead of museums, because actually, they are much better value for the city purely in terms of art-for-money.

**lida** | Thank you for your responses. A lot of biennials use public sphere as their base or platform, because that could be a better place to interact with the community and the people than a white cube. And the point made by Lewis on the financial structure of museums are very common among many institutions.

I think Berlin Biennale puts a strong emphasis on the biennial being free space for practitioners. We often face constraints, but Berlin's position is that biennials should be a free platform for the practitioners to work seriously. That resonates with what was just said about biennials being a much freer sphere and a good value.

**Gabriele Horn** | Yes, the Berlin Biennale will always keep the Biennale free from all other interests (political, touristic, economically, art market oriented).

I would say the founding procedure of a biennial is also always based on a special context and this special context will sometimes influence the direction of a biennial in general. For example, if there are no museums in the city, the founding procedures or the initiatives to do biennials are often set up based and related to the fact, that the (artists) community needs a platform to be active in the field of contemporary art. It could be a biennial first and then a collection and/or a Museum of Contemporary Art, let's say 10, 20, or 30 years later.

Often in Asia, it seems that the reason for organizing biennials are to promote tourism for the city or some public agenda of that city, and the biennials are founded by the authorities, either by the state or by the city. Berlin started as a private initiative, so it was initially based on private funding from those who loved art. It was in

the 1990s after the Berlin Wall came down and there was no space, no contemporary art museums, no galleries or even no non-profit spaces for presentations by the younger, emerging international or Berlin-based artists. So this is why we founded the Berlin Biennale. There was an initiative that came out from the KW Institute of Contemporary Art, and we continue to have a strong relationship with this institution. But we are not related to a museum, which keeps us more free — in the meantime, we are funded by the Cultural Foundation of the Federal State, which means we are public.

But when asked the difference between a biennial curator and a museum curator, I would say that being a biennial curator is totally different from being a curator in a museum which is based on a long-term vision, in terms of keeping and collecting knowledge and collecting art. Biennials can always react to social changes much faster than museums; biennials can be more experimental, more risky. This is why it is so important to have the format of a biennial.

If a biennial is one division or department of a museum, the museum will probably have their own interests — for example, their collection. In that case, biennial curators may be asked to curate a biennial in that direction, in which the collection of the museum could benefit from the newly produced and commissioned works in the frame of the biennial.

But I'd say keep all biennials free, or at least try to keep them free from those interests because otherwise you get more regulated by interests coming from outside as you want. This is why I'm happy to have the Berlin Biennale free from other interests. Of course, on the other hand, I am interested in finding ways to make commissioned works by the Berlin Biennial, which are produced with public money, become part of a public collection in the future. But in general, I would say, keeping biennials free from all other interests guarantees the most artistic freedom for the participants.

**lida** | Thank you very much for all the contributions.



**Gabriele Horn**  
(Director, Berlin Biennale)





**Bige Örer** (Director, Istanbul Biennale / IBA Vice-Presidents)

## DISCUSSION 2

### “How do we develop professional skills in biennales and triennales?”

**Hoashi Aki [Hoashi]** | I am now inviting you to this discussion, “How do we develop professional skills in biennales and triennales?” Here, I would like to focus on developing professional skills in biennials and triennials.

Today, we have Bige Örer from Istanbul, Turkey, Riyas Komu from Kochi, India, and Thiago de Paula Souza from São Paulo, Brazil now working for the Berlin Biennale. Bige has experience exchanging her staff with the Liverpool Biennial. Kochi has now completed three editions and Riyas and his team is thinking about developing his organization with a longer-term vision. When I went to Kochi I found a lot of young professionals working there. Thiago is part of the curatorial team of Berlin Biennale. I am curious to see how he sees himself working in Germany, in a different cultural context from his own. Many Japanese biennials/triennials teams are hardly international, so such experiences are very interesting for us.

#### **Istanbul Biennial: Managing Crisis and Developing of Young Professionals**

**Bige Örer [Örer]** | Good morning. As the director of the Istanbul Biennial, I have worked for the Biennial for 15 years, developing it into a biennial that is more international in scale. I would like to talk based on the four questions I have been asked prior to making this presentation: an overview of our biennial; how our organization works; how we build up our teams; and what do we do in order to improve their skills?

The Istanbul Biennial was established in 1987 by the Istanbul

Foundation for Culture and Arts, which is a non-profit and non-governmental organization that also organizes other activities throughout the year, such as the film festival, theater festival, music festival and jazz festival, as well as the Design Biennial. We are also responsible for organizing the Pavilion of Turkey at the Venice Biennale. We also run a residency program in Paris Cité des Arts. So among the many events we do throughout the year, I am mainly responsible for the Istanbul Biennial and I work as the advisor to the Pavilion of Turkey, and the Cité des Arts program.

I just wanted to start with this visual material which presents the current edition of the Istanbul Biennial, which is titled “a good neighbour.” We try to come up with different and experimental exhibition-making strategies for each and every edition of the biennial, and for the first time in the history of the biennial, we have invited artists (Elmgreen & Dragset) to work with us as curators.

I’m giving this example to also talk about the flexibility of the institution. Carlos Basuardo said that the reason biennials are important is because they can be very flexible; that’s what is different from, maybe, more stable institutions, such as museums which may find it hard to make decisions that change things. In the format of the biennial, we are able to transform things depending on the current conditions and context.

As the Istanbul Biennial, we have a small but multitasking and enthusiastic team. We have four full-time members dedicated to working only for the biennial, but under the foundation which is our umbrella organization we also have corporate departments like media relations, marketing, sponsorship, financial relations, and human

resources, which provide services to the biennial as well as other artistic departments of the foundation. We are a non-governmental organization and we hardly have any public funding. For each and every edition of the biennial, we need to make a grant application to the Ministry of Culture and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to get the promotion fund. But these funding make up only 3 to 4% of the total budget. So we need to really fundraise a lot and get support from the private companies. We also collaborate with many international institutions. We have also developed the Council of Biennial Friends and Patrons, from which we gather support from individuals to mostly support the production of new works and development of learning programs and public programs.

There was a question about how we recruit your team and what we find as important in people whom we hire. For us, it's really important to have young people working for the biennial because you need endless energy and you need the desire to work for the biennial. You are asking people to stop having their own lives for maybe for 2 to 3 months during the time of installation and production of the exhibition. During that time, you cry together, you laugh together, and you kind of create your own family.

Crisis management is also very important, because there are so many small and big crises in biennials. I think being calm, trying to find solutions, and not forgetting to smile is something important to start with...and, of course, passion in contemporary art. I'm not saying experience and knowledge because I think the team builds up their professional skills and careers by working for the biennial. Many of my colleagues say that after working for the biennial, they feel that they can do everything. Whenever they move to other jobs, they tell me that they don't get to do a lot of things. So I think the experience creates this kind of base for feeling confident and that you can do anything in the world.

Now, I will talk about this great exchange program that I developed with Sally Tallant, the Director of the Liverpool Biennial. We were earlier discussing how we could learn from each other's experiences and how we can support our team. So we decided to do this exchange program and from Istanbul, we sent Ozkan Cangüven to stay in Liverpool during the installation period of the last Liverpool Biennial and work with the artists directly. From Liverpool, we have a great education curator, Polly Brannan, who is now working with our educational team and building up a program for young people. She is also working on a sound art project that involves young people. This will be relayed to Liverpool and she will follow up to work with the youngsters in Liverpool. This exchange is not only about, let's say, practical support, but it's also about how we develop curatorial skills in our teams, which is important.

Lastly, I have been thinking about what we would do in order to develop the young people in our team. I think it's very important that they are involved in the curatorial process of the exhibition-making along with allowing all the exhibition coordinators to be involved in this.

So here you see the artist Volkan Arslan from Istanbul during our first two visits.<sup>[1]</sup> His work is one of the highlights of the biennial: a video installation, talking about two neighbors traveling on the Bosphorus together. It is really a poetic piece. As in this case, we do



1 Visiting Volkan Arslan's studio, 2016

artists' portfolio reviews, we do research visits, we do artist talks and we do some satellite exhibitions, not only in Istanbul but also in different cities in Turkey and also out of Turkey.

This year, we collaborated with the Lesvos municipality, and we did an exhibition of Volkan Arslan in Lesvos, which is one of the closest Greek islands to Turkey. We thought it was important to do something also in Greece because we were talking about the good neighbor.

Publications are also very important because publications would stay after the exhibition. This year we did one exhibition book and one story book, from which you can find 69 stories from all around the world about who's the good neighbor.

We're also creating platforms for young curators. For example, for this edition, we have invited a very young collective to do an exhibition at the ground floor of the foundation and also to do reading sessions every two weeks. They do reading sessions here and there, and also invite artists, curators and professionals to be with them.

My last slide shows how the visual images of the biennial in the last 30 years. We have worked with curators from all around the world. The 7th Istanbul Biennial was curated by the Japanese curator, Hasegawa Yuko. You can see how the visual identity of the biennial changed throughout the years. Thank you.

**Hoashi** | Thank you. Let me hand over the microphone to Riyas Komu.

## **Kochi-Muziris Biennale: Making an Artistic Intervention and Building an Infrastructure for Art**

**Riyas Komu [Komu]** | Good morning, everyone. When I heard the title of the Istanbul Biennial, "a good neighbour," I thought that it is something we should be doing in India, because I always feel that's the role of the biennial in today's context. In India, our effort is to make the biennial something that is very exciting and something that will become helpful for the people who live around us.

We started the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in 2010 after having a very interesting conversation with the Culture Minister and also the Education Minister of Kerala. At that time, we had a communist government, which has a legacy of leading many cultural projects, including one of the best film festivals, one of the best literature festivals and theatre festivals in India. But visual art was something that was lacking in Kerala, so it was in that conversation we proposed

to do a biennial, not just to contribute to the visual culture but, also at the same time, to look at the larger India which was shifting towards a very different kind of a political framework.<sup>[2]</sup>

Four years since then, in 2014, the right-wing government came into power. Our effort to create a biennial as an artistic intervention was happening. The biennial, as a project to celebrate the diversity and also the multicultural aspect of India, would be one of the most important artistic or political or social interventions one could do at a time like this. So maybe I would anchor the reason for holding the biennial in Kochi to these factors.

3,000 years of Muziris' history, and the larger cosmopolitan legacy of Kochi became vital in executing the project. Kochi is a place where more than 30 communities are living together and 16 languages are spoken. We do the biennial in an area of 4 square-kilometers, so the biennial is like a plot where the idea of India's diversity is being celebrated.

It is a biennial initiated by artists and we continue with this legacy. We always invite a curator who is an artist. The first edition was curated by the founders, myself and Bose Krishnamachari; the second was curated by Jitish Kallat, a celebrated Indian artist; and the last edition was curated by Sudarshan Shetty, another prominent artist of the country. The next edition is going to be curated by a female artist for the first time. I'll speak about her later.

So as I explained earlier, the Kerala government's involvement in the biennial was very crucial, as an agency which supports liberty and plurality in society. One of their missions is to become a catalyst in unifying society which is suffering from the effect of polarization. So working on that mission became one of our prominent activities.

What we've been able to do in Kochi was to get the community to work along with us to make the biennial. It is a kind of exercise of building infrastructure and talking about some of the most important current issues. So, in fact, the biennial, as it progressed with our exhibitions, has been empowering our society through cultural projects. Those working with us are actually getting trained to be part of a cultural project that hosts international cultural initiatives which has enjoyed a huge attendance.

Kerala is 100% literate. It set up the first communist government

in our country's history; the first synagogue in the region is here; the first church in the region is here; and the first mosque is here. So it is an open city which has received many cultures and discourses, and the biennial has become an ongoing exercise that feeds into that context.

What would an organization like Kochi Biennale Foundation do? Since we are an artist-initiated project, we focus on production of art. Whatever money we make, we would invest in producing art. It is this particular focus that has made the system, administration, or even the government, aware how it is important to build an infrastructure for the arts and, at the same time, protect the heritage with which we all live.

How do we develop our programs to do that? This is just to share our system. But as Bige was saying it's all about capacity to take risk, capacity to love each other and to sacrifice your time. I think biennials have become generally that kind of an organization. I meet people across the world, and they always tell a similar story. It's also about the passion, sleepless nights and coming together to manage risk.

We used to have one officer in our biennial who was the youngest one in our team. She came from a software background but she became passionate in working for art. She's now in Dubai. We used to call her CM in the first edition of the biennial; CM for "crisis manager." I think such transformation of an individual is one of the most important aspects. Why am I emphasizing this? The organizational structure like ours is not unique. It's a structure that many organizations have, but because India is not a country where you have great art infrastructure, and doesn't have institutions which produce many art administrators, Kochi has become a production house of administrators. We have become a platform for people, too.

In fact, when we started, we had only one expert who had some kind of experience. She had worked for the Liverpool Biennial. So we hired her as curatorial coordinator to work for me and Bose. Other than that, we never had any experts being invited to work in our organization. So we were giving opportunities to people who have inclination to art and they learn through work. They are literally taking a lot of risks and learning and working overtime. Those who have been trained in Kochi are now spread across India and working in different organizations. We are becoming an interesting platform



**Riyas Komu**  
(Co-Founder, Kochi Biennale  
Foundation / Artist / Curator)

for training. Our team for the last edition had more than 120 people at the time of biennial. Now we have only 18 people working in our office.

The biennial director is also the president of the foundation.<sup>[3]</sup> I am the director of programs but I am also the secretary of the foundation. So I've got a lot of administrative job to do. We have a very good advisory board which includes political figures, writers, and social entrepreneurs. We also have a working committee. We are actually multi-tasking at many levels to save the cost while using our expertise to train people.

As for the curator, we have always tried to facilitate the curator with people whom she or he is familiar. So the curator might be having an experience of working with somebody who's a good writer. We always give that fresh chance to the curators. This year, we have injected two new people who are very familiar with our new curator. So that part of the organization works with a very different kind of chemistry. The rest remains the same.

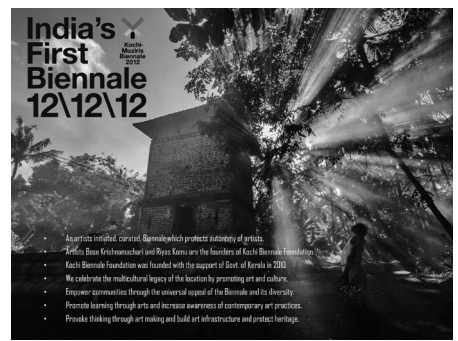
This year we have taken a very strong decision to build a team for the future. For the last three editions, we changed the team every time, and we learned a lot. And now we are training a team which will take care of the next edition of the biennial, as well as the coming editions. This is immediately giving us a lot of interesting results. They are responding very passionately because they are going to be permanent staff. Last year, in between the edition of the biennial, we appointed a CEO to strengthen the administrative side.

I would like to introduce the Students' Biennale, an important area for which Kochi is now known.<sup>[4]</sup> Through this program, the foundation is slowly building a different kind of art administrative structure and empowering the youngsters to become artists. Last year we had 500 students' work exhibited in Kochi. 56 art institutions from all across the country participated. This year, we are changing the model. We are changing the format of the administration and turning it into a forum where neighboring countries can be part we are selecting students who are from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bhutan for this platform. From the last six years of experience, we learned that Kochi should become platform for many youngsters who want to learn how to make art, how to become confident, and how to remain as an artist.

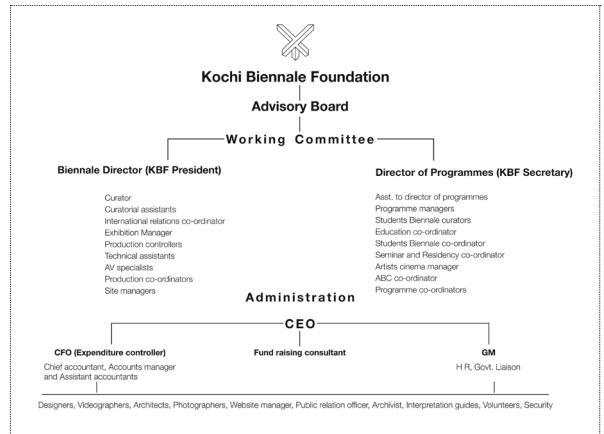
"History Now" is seminars and talks programs. "ABC" is "Art by Children," in which we carried out in 100 schools last year and will continue. All these things translate into number, which becomes a message to the government which doesn't take art seriously in schools. So we are having a conversation with the government. This year we are changing the ABC model, from the biennial being a catalyst that goes into school classrooms, to working with 150 schools around the biennial location and starting art classes. We are going to fund schools so that it becomes another structural development.

We have an art cinema and also "Pepper House residency programs" where we have international artists coming and staying in Kochi. We have started an exchange program, and this year, we exchange with the UAE. "Arts & Medicine" is another program. For "video lab", we have around eight people who are working in our office doing only video recording and archiving, and telecasting.

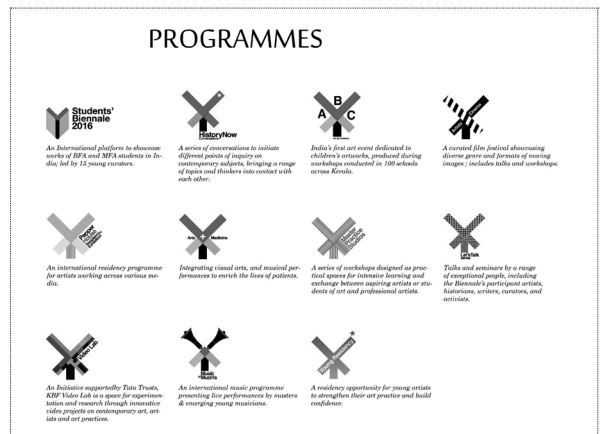
This is all about showing a model to the government and also



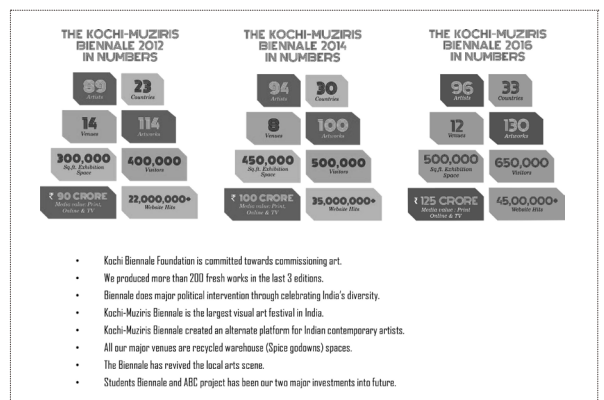
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making a cultural organization work in today's context. You can't just bring in a biennial every two years like a parachute and sustain it. You need to fill in the gap by becoming an organization which works 365 days. We are now negotiating with the government to give us more time and space and money. We are now working on getting a permanent venue for the biennial and the government is taking it quite seriously.

Just to give you some numbers.<sup>[5]</sup> The first edition had 80 artists from 23 countries. We are trying to grow slowly, Kochi has historically had exchanges and relationships with the larger world, and we are trying to trace such lineage through our project. We had more than 200 new works produced in the last three editions, and this fact has become one of the key contributions of our biennial. It is also an exercise to see how the biennial can become very important as a political intervention. So we give the artists a lot of importance in our context.

We are trying to become a driving force to change our existing infrastructure. Kochi was a sleepy town but, in the last ten years, it has completely revived. Recently, KPMG, an international corporation, did a study to show how a biennial could slowly change an entire social infrastructure. Now the government has announced the Smart City Programme, which is again going to touch on the infrastructure.

So the last point I'm going to note is that we are not just looking at each edition and telling a story, but we are trying to invest into the future. "ABC" and student biennale projects are the two investments that we have made. Anita Dube is the first female curator who's going to curate the next edition, and I would very much relate the future prospect of the biennial with the next edition because Anita is one of the most promising political artists of the country and she's done many important projects. If you really look at what's happening in India today, for example, compared to the situation in Japan that was presented earlier, Kochi is the opposite, as it is the only major cultural intervention responding to the political change. Anita expressed that it will be our huge responsibility in accommodating her because she's going to think very politically, she's going to accommodate alternate voices and talk about that and she's going to think about the marginalized society. She's also going to talk about the third gender big in the coming-up edition. As an artist, I have a feeling that it would work to mix the concept of that particular edition with the progress of the structure of biennial organization. Next year we will have to deal with a lot of important social issues, so maybe we will inject them into the organization and deal with the contents.

I give a lot of credit to the curators who are coming in for each of our edition. They actually change and nurture the organization's credibility and recommend the way to move forward. I'm sure with the comment Anita's already made in public, in newspapers and in magazine reviews, it is actually giving a signal to the India's young generation that the next edition will be a provocation to the system which is ruling us. I would look at the next edition of the biennial as a lot of work and a lot of careful intervention. But I would give a lot of importance in junctions like this, because then people with essential understanding about history and knowledge and writing about art could play a bigger role than just an administrator. I would like to think about Kochi's intervention next year around what Anita thinks.

Thank you.

**Hoashi** | Bige and Riyas have shared with us two very different contexts of biennials. Riyas is moving on to the next phase of developing his organization. Bige's presentation on the exchange program was interesting. In Japan, we find language and the legal aspects difficult to exchange staff, but an exchange would be good for both the staff and the organization.

I'd like to now hand over the microphone to Thiago de Paula Souza. He will present a very different perspective. I'd like him to talk not about organizations, but about career development as a young educator and curator.

## **São Paulo Biennial / Berlin Biennale: Working as Educator and Curator**

**Thiago de Paula Souza** | Good morning. I'm Thiago de Paula Souza from São Paulo. I'm not directly connected to any biennial. Currently, I'm a member of the curatorial team of the Berlin Biennale. By the way, living in São Paulo gave me my first contact with the idea of biennials through the São Paulo Biennial. São Paulo Biennial is one of the major mainstream biennials in the world, but it has very interesting and experimental elements, while leaving possibilities of non-expert audience to visit the exhibition.

The São Paulo Biennial is based in the pavilion based in the Ibirapuera Park, a very big urban park. On the other side, we have the Museu Afro Brasil, which is a public museum where I spent part of my career working as an educator. Museu Afro Brasil is Afro-Brazilian Museum in Portuguese. There are several other artistic institutions in the park, such as the modern art museum and the contemporary art museum. So it's a public park where everyone can go and gather. Although it's in a very wealthy neighborhood, working-class and low-income families visit this park and the artistic spaces, such as the Museu Afro Brasil, the biennial exhibition, and the contemporary art museum, because their admissions are free. That makes a lot of difference.

I'm going to talk a little bit about my work in Museu Afro Brasil. Museu Afro Brasil is a very new institution that was founded in 2004. It is a bit late, considering the African heritage and all the African presence in Brazil. It was founded with the aim to reorganize the Brazilian art history or our perspectives on Brazilian history. Maybe some of you are familiar, but Brazil was one of the countries that received one of the highest number of enslaved men and women from the African continent. It was the last country to abolish the slave trade in the late in the 19th century. Brazil may be known for its myth of the racial democracy, but it's really a myth. It is very difficult to make a comparison, but it's a country with several racial issues that are yet to be solved.

I think our society could never really deal with, or organize an open discussion about the slave trade history. We still have the colonial ghosts haunting us. Most of the Brazilian population would never say that we are a post-colonial society. The colonial past is basically ignored or taken for granted.

The Museu Afro Brasil is visited by a high number of school



Thiago de Paula Souza (Member of 10th Berlin Biennale curatorial team / Curator / Educator)

children coming from low-income districts; some of the children would be visiting our museum for the first time. That made our work very complicated because, although we had a lot to tell and share when the children arrived at the museum, most of them would treat the museum as kind of a church or a cathedral. The way they deal with the building designed by the Brazilian modernist Oscar Niemeyer would be very problematic. They would not be feeling comfortable inside. So our work starts right at that moment, trying to figure out how they could feel more comfortable in this space and decolonize their bodies, because they should not feel uncomfortable. We would devise something simple, like having the children lie down on the floor to get closer to the artwork to make them feel comfortable and create some kind of idea of belonging.

It took a lot of energy to discuss stereotypes and concern for the idea of beauty, too. For example, although half of the Brazilian population is black, if you watch the Brazilian television, you would think that you are somewhere in Sweden or elsewhere. You would never realize that you are in Brazil. So it's important to somehow bring other references and pictures of non-Western persons and non-Western idea of beauty. We also have a section that is related to the South American heritage and the native communities. It's very complicated to use the terms "indigenous" or "natives" because they are just people. We are still trying to find the right Portuguese word or an expression that would refer to this group of people. One of the aims of the museum is to bring some kind of discussions on not only about the African American presence, but also on the presence of the native community, to break the idea that South American native tradition was somehow less important or less complex than the Western traditions.

Back then, I was working as an educator in the museum, while working as a curator in some independent spaces. "Independent"

is never the right word because we always depend on someone. I would say "autonomous" space. The museum is quite big and although it offers an interesting platform to reorganize our thinking, it's a public institution and public institutions in Brazil change very slowly. I would say that the educational department, or the mediation department, can bring more changes because educators are the ones that connect to the public programs and bring fresh ideas. Probably it is the same with the public institutions in your countries. They change very slowly and their movement is very small.

I was never trained as a curator. I was trained as a social scientist and anthropologist but I have always been connected to education. With my interest in anthropology, I started to research on South American tradition and ended up being connected to contemporary art. I got very interested in contemporary art and started to organize small exhibitions and small workshops with artists in São Paulo. That was the moment when Gabi Ngcobo, the head curator of the 10th Berlin Biennale got to know my work. She saw some of my exhibitions and workshops in São Paulo and she joined my tour in the Museu Afro Brasil. So she got familiar with my work and we went together to Accra in Ghana. Jochen Volz, who was the head curator of the 32nd São Paulo Biennial, also joined us with some of the artists from the exhibition. This trip to Accra was part of the research for the public program of the São Paulo Biennial in which we were to research the black presence in Brazil. The colonial ghost still haunts us. After working together with Gabi Ngcobo for a couple of months, I collaborated with her on her publication that was released after the opening of the biennial and joined some of their workshops. After then, she invited me to join the curatorial team in Berlin. Right now, I cannot say much about Berlin, but all of us are trying to look into the collective madness that the contemporary world is facing today.

## Biennial Organizations

**Hoashi** | Thank you. We first had the presentation about Istanbul followed by Kochi, which touched on their organizational development. Thiago, with some experiences as educator, has brought in his voice as a researcher and curator.

The curatorial team at Yokohama consists of museum-affiliated curators and freelance curators and coordinators, which means that we combine the conservative museum culture and frenzy biennial culture in one organization. It was interesting to hear both Riyas and Bige mention the terms, “crisis management” and “taking risks”. They seem to be a common vocabulary among our biennial colleagues.

Could I first ask Sally Tallant about some of your ideas on team-building or organizational sustainability?

**Sally Tallant [Tallant]** | I think biennials are inherently unstable but need certain structure in order to create the stability that allows you to take the risks. We also have a small team to organize the Liverpool Biennial. I think education is the playground of the museums; it’s the future of the museum. I think that perhaps biennials can bring a provocation into the context of the museum. It’s actually challenging for curators who work in museum contexts to work at our scale, at our pace and to embrace maybe 40 or 50 commissions at the same time. They would usually have, for example, four years to work on an exhibition with two artists. It’s good for them to embrace the unknowns and knowns in the way we have to in our biennials.

Biennials are not buildings and they are not collections. They are people. We invest a lot of time and energy in creating opportunities for our staff to travel. For example, we collaborate with Istanbul and also with Kochi, in order for our staff to have the capacity to grow, both within the organization but within others.

Because we are people-based, and not building-based, we change a lot and we embrace the changing nature of our teams.

**Judith Greer [Greer]** | I represent the Sharjah Art Foundation that organizes the Sharjah Biennial. I’d like to refer to Kochi’s case about starting out as a biennial and finding a need to have some kind of sustainability. The biennial as a format became problematic in a number of ways; one being that with each edition you would need to build a new team, train each person and at the end they would go off to another challenge. The next time, you have to start over again.

The Sharjah Art Foundation was founded in 2009, but the biennial had been in existence since 1993. Another of the motivations for shifting to a year-round institutional model was that the Sharjah Biennial had been trying to fill many of the “gaps” in a region that had few museums and few institutions, and very little art infrastructure. At the time, the Biennial was trying to do residencies, trying to help artists’ production, trying to do conferences, etc. Trying to do all these “necessary” activities became something of a burden, and in many ways impinged upon the biennial’s freedom to become the arena of experimentation that really needs to inform its direction.

So, then we initiated what looks like the type structure Kochi’s heading towards: a year-round institution where we can continue to

do the biennial as a biennial, but also have a solid infrastructure that we can rely upon, so we don’t have to recreate the team each time. And I think that’s probably the same with Istanbul — you’ve got the foundation that has all those infrastructural aspects — so then the creative side can be brought in and flourish without being burdened by those needs.

**Tallant** | Most biennials work year-round, but you don’t do exhibitions all year round. I think most biennials now have started to produce works year-round and follow a model that has engagement and education components. We do year-round programs and commission work year-round.

**Nevenka Šivavec** | We have a similar situation as Yokohama. We have a museum and a biennial, but the biennial came first. The biennial was established in 1955. At that time, it was part of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, Moderna galerija. In 1986, MGLC (International Centre of Graphic Arts) took over and became the main producer of the biennial. One of the problems was that the biennial was printmaking-based; so it was media-based. After 2000, with all the curatorial turns, it became necessary to gradually change the format. So now we have a situation where the biennial is curated and we try to find a new format for every new edition.

But we are facing some problems with our staff because our main staff working in the museum with the collection is the same staff working for the new productions for the biennial. We always recruit a group of new people for the biennial, but it’s always extremely difficult to start with a new group for the new biennial. We are also somehow “exploiting” young working force as we are not able to employ them for two biennials in a row. So now we are working intensively to solve this problem with the help of the state and the city. We are mainly financed by the city and by the state, following the model of our socialist past, when culture was 100% state-funded and financed.



**Sally Tallant** (Director, Liverpool Biennial)

## Professional Training and Biennial Skills

**Hoashi** | I think we are also concerned with exploiting young professionals. We have a lot of motivated young people coming in, but after one or two biennials they do get exhausted. We want them to move onto the next stage, but it's very difficult to follow up. Is the next step to become a permanent staff? How are you trying to solve this problem with your organization?

**Komu** | I think it's one of the major issues in the art world in general. An art institution in India may be producing, from our rough calculation, more than 2,000 artists from all across the country, but maybe 0.5% survives as an artist.

Forget about the biennial administration or running an event or even management or those particular aspects in relation to art, especially with contemporary art. The entire system is not able to accommodate or facilitate or provide survival means or patronize the artists you have produced every year. Some of them move away from art anyways. Someone who's a painter would become a set designer or animation artist. So if you take the art as a kind of a large umbrella, the state or the social structure would not be able to accommodate them all. India is a good example. That's something we have studied through the student's biennial exercise and the national survey that we do with the curators who travel to the art institutions to understand the syllabus problem: how old the syllabus is; what kind of infrastructure they have; how technology is used; and what kind of old medium is used.

So we, as an organization run by artists, are actually in between these big complexities. The biennial volunteers come for maybe 4 to 6 months to work in our organization but they have another six months left. Where do they find job? So far, in our experience, they know how to tackle this problem. So their job is a temporary thing or a learning exercise. Many of them have gone into further studies and organizations which deal with art in some way. We, as an organization,

will not be able to provide them a permanent solution because there are bigger problems around art.

**Hoashi** | In biennial organizations, we need curatorial skills, technical and production skills, education skills, and so on. We first had one-off education programs, but since 2014, we have a more full scale education with professional staff, which is very important in terms of audience and volunteer development. How have you developed your technical team? How long are they hired for? Are they quite permanent?

**Komu** | I think that most of the organizations have a permanent team.

**Greer** | We've had technicians who've worked with the biennial and the foundation since the beginning, so they have a great deal of experience. We even share our technical teams with other organizations. For example, we have done some training for other biennials and projects because our team members are such experts. We also send our teams to look at exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale, documenta and Münster Sculpture Project. They travel every year to look at what technologies are being developed and at what other people are implementing for their installation designs. We do a lot of staff training actually across all departments. The foundation has about 200 staff now. I'm not sure how many in the technical team alone, but there are at least 10 or 15 members. We also have an architectural team. It's important to train people to share resources and to send them to see what other people are doing because that's one of the best ways for people to learn, not only for the young staff, but also for the experienced staff, because things change.

**Komu** | We spoke with one of the staff of Sharjah who does the lighting for the biennial. He came down to Kochi in 2012. He helped us for 4-5 days while he was there. I still remember the good thing



**Nevenka Šivavec** (Director, Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts / Director, International Centre of Graphic Arts)



**Judith Greer** (Director of International Programmes, Sharjah Art Foundation)



he said about the organization; he said that the Sharjah team goes and seeks the best advanced technical resources which are available in the market at that time. It helps the artists to work better. When it comes to technical training, I think with countries like Japan, and even Middle East, because it always goes for the best approaches. It'll be good to share the technical resources.

**Hoashi** | Here in Japan, we often hire technical tasks to production companies. Some work with us as if they are part of our team.

**Komu** | We also hire out. We have an agency based in Kochi that sets audiovisuals up. But we hired one person last year who used to work for the Venice Film Festival and is an expert on Dolby. So we hired him because the curator suggested that he's the best person available. He's based in Bombay. He's becoming a permanent feature, so he's coming back next year.

**Tallant** | There may be one thing that distinguishes biennials. We have had a production in international projects but we are in all of our curatorial meetings as well as our education meetings. We don't make any distinctions among educators, curators, and producers because the conversation is about facilitating the work. I think what happens in museums is departmentalization of that work.

So actually when an artist says "I want to make this," whether that's possible is actually dependent on our head of production, who probably know better than anyone else what's possible. Actually in some cases, though that would be seen as the curatorial work. So we have a collective brain that can draw on all of those skills. I think museums struggle to understand what educators and producers bring to the curatorial conversation. Biennials don't have the departmentalization and the hierarchies you have in museum institutions. It's a joint endeavor.

**Hoashi** | I wonder if there are any more questions.

**Observer 1** | Thank you for your presentation and discussion. I work for the Yokohama Paratriennale. In Kochi, you mentioned that you were able to re-develop the social infrastructure through your biennial. Can you elaborate on that?

**Komu** | One of the main points in that particular aspect is that you have to juxtapose what's happening in the country right now, and then the role of art; not just the role of the biennial, but the role of art. So regarding the true production of art, Kochi as an organization, has been able to emphasize the values of being diverse and supporting multi-culturalism. Slowly these values turn into a platform to educate people about the importance of living happily, of having a very good neighbor, and having a good argument to move forward. In that context, the biennial, in the last six years of organizing three editions, have empowered the society in understanding their own legacy, their own history and, moreover, the power of living together. Within the 4 square-kilometer area where the biennial takes place, there are 30 communities speaking 16 languages living together. When there's a strong idea of polarizing societies, the biennial becomes a catalyst in

re-ascertaining the way of living together. So in that context, I said it has contributed socially in empowering society.

**Observer 2** | I work as a staff at Saitama Triennale and also a researcher in a university. In Japan, there are many art festivals, but typically they form a team for one edition and the team is dissolved after the edition closes. Those staff can find work in other biennials and festivals, but it is difficult to develop and advance in their careers.

**Örer** | I think we are facing the same problem everywhere. What we are trying to do is to also collaborate with other institutions. We try to give recommendations and also some of them would like to go abroad either for training or for educational purposes. So we try to also support and facilitate the process as much as possible. If they're available for the next edition of the biennial, we give the priority to the members who have worked in the previous biennials. We may not be able to have them as full-time staff but we try to keep working with them in other events of the foundation.

**Greer** | At the Sharjah Art Foundation, the biennial becomes a way for us to train people and find those who actually fit in our organization. Because we are a growing organization, we often recruit from biennials, but also from other places. For example, we now have a former head of marketing from iSKV in Istanbul since she has moved to the UAE for personal reasons. We share a lot of resources because in the UAE, in general, there's a growing cultural infrastructure. A lot of people who we train go on to, work at new institutions, or at commercial galleries or go off to do PhDs or Masters degrees because they've become excited about the potential of careers in this field.

**Tallant** | One last thing. One thing we do is secondments. We take people out of museums and who work in galleries. So we are part of an ecology, not just in the UK, but internationally, and those people coming to us may acquire more international experience than they might have in their organizations. So they can scale up and expand on what they know. It means that we can take them out for a temporary period and then send them back transformed.

**Hoashi** | Thank you everybody for your contributions.

## Discussion Summary

### Discussion 1 “Why Biennales and Triennales? New challenges, models and strategies”

In this discussion, we had the opportunity to reconfirm the diversity of biennials, reexamine how they are different from museum activities, and why they exist in the way they do. While biennials are significant in the way they are able to seize the moment and respond to a range of situations in a timely manner, including crises and emergencies caused by natural disasters and political events, they become, as a recurring exhibition, institutions with the duration of time. These two contesting temporalities, temporary and durational, epitomize biennials as a format. As for why we make biennials, it was made clear that biennials are not organized for the competing objectives sought after by the citizens, the art practitioners, and the official sponsors, nor for demonstrating the opposing rationales between the local and the global. Biennials are recurrent they and, therefore, are able “to measure the change” through their repetitions. In other words, biennials are held in order to measure the change that surrounds our public and society.

Biennials, from an economic standpoint, could be better value for money than museums, which often need to spend most of their turnover for maintenance of the facility and supporting the staff, rather than for art and education. Biennials are exempt from such financial burden and are much freer. Also, while biennials are required to respond to social change quicker and take risks in experimenting with new forms, their inherent quality of immediate responsiveness is something that distinguishes them from museum activities. Furthermore, a strong point was made on keeping biennials free from all other interests, or at least making efforts to do so, as independence would guarantee freedom of expression in biennials.

Through the discussions with my colleagues, I was able to realize how we need to hold a strong vision and belief in keeping the biennials as a free and independent space for the public and society, while understanding the different objectives and backgrounds that support each biennial. I was reassured that our future will be constructed through such convictions of the biennial organizers.

Iida Shihoko

### Discussion 2 “How do we develop professional skills in biennales and triennales?”

It has been a while since professional development in biennials/triennials/festivals has become a pending issue in Japan, but I have yet to have found any solutions or prospects in this regard. But gathering with my colleagues for this discussion, I found out that while they also share the same issues, they have a better grasp of the unique capacities necessary in working in biennials and understood where to direct our frustration.

So, what are the unique capacities necessary in working in biennials? For example, a museum curator could take years to research on artists and artworks before organizing an exhibition, but a biennial curator would be required to negotiate with a number of artists in much shorter period, while also commissioning new works to be installed in time for the opening. The negotiations with not only the artists but also with different stakeholders could continue until the last minute, requiring the curator to take risks.

Under such conditions, any professionals joining the biennial team would not only require certain professional skills, but more so the capabilities to be flexible and the capacity to manage crises. Many biennial organizations are based on small and agile teams, where the staff are multitasking and overlapping with their responsibilities in curation, education, production, public relations, and so on, unlike museums which are departmentalized. The museum organizations could be described as building-based culture and biennial organizations as people-based culture.

There were many voices which validated that biennials are training grounds for arts administrators to build their capacities on the ground. In the meanwhile, there were a few voices that raised concerns for exploiting young professionals.

As much as the need for flexibility in organizations was stressed in our discussion, the need for building an organization with permanent staff for long term sustainability of biennials was also understood.

Finally, as I listened to the experience of the young Brazilian curator working for the Berlin Biennale and episode of the biennial staff exchange between Liverpool and Istanbul, I was struck by how biennial professionals in other countries are crossing borders and building capacities as a matter of fact. I imagined that it is only when we have our Japanese professionals joining the loop that we can claim to be truly international in our outlook as organizers of international exhibitions and festivals.

Hoashi Aki

Yokohama Triennale 2017

International Seminar

# “CONNECTIVITY AS A METHOD?”

## The Future of Biennales and Triennales” Report

ヨコハマトリエンナーレ2017 国際セミナー

「接続する国際展・芸術祭」  
記録集

IBA(国際ビエンナーレ協会)について

IBAは、45以上の国と120名以上の会員から構成されるビエンナーレのための国際ネットワークで、二つの目的を掲げて活動しています。一つ目は、世界各国のビエンナーレ関係者が協力し、キュレトリアル、芸術創造、知識の蓄積に関わる各種活動を発展させ、広く共有すること。二つ目は、文化芸術の創出強化のためにビエンナーレ関係者を水平型ネットワークでつなぎ、また、戦略、方法論、ヴィジョンを提示し、コミュニケーション、協力、情報交換の場を提供することを目的としています。

About the IBA (International Biennial Association)

IBA is an international network of biennials consisting of more than 120 members of biennials from more than 45 countries. Its main objectives are twofold: first, to expand and share activities of curatorial, artistic creation and knowledge through cooperation and exchange among biennials around the world; Second, to create a horizontal network within the broader biennial world to develop further the cultural and artistic production and to create a space for communication, cooperation and information exchange by providing strategies, methodologies and vision.

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