



For Immediate Release ^{3 AUGUST 2010}

Over Half a Million Visit 17th Biennale of Sydney Highest Ever Attendance Fuelled by Record-Breaking Visitation to Cockatoo Island

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA: The 17th Biennale of Sydney closed on Sunday with record-breaking visitation of over half a million attending the event.

More than 517,000 visited the Biennale venues, with an estimated 408,000 additional visitors enjoying the Biennale's outdoor works in the Royal Botanic Gardens and an innumerable audience experiencing Roxy Paine's large-scale work, *Neuron*, on the front lawn of the Museum of Contemporary Art at Circular Quay.

The Biennale's record figures were fuelled by a phenomenal boost in the number of people who visited the Cockatoo Island venue with final attendances eclipsing its inaugural use in 2008 by a tremendous 82%. More than 157,000 visited the former convict prison and shipyard, where 120 artworks by 56 artists were presented. 80% of visitors to the island took advantage of the free ferries made possible by the generous support of The Balnaves Foundation and Etihad Airways.

Marah Braye, Chief Executive Officer, said: 'The 17th Biennale of Sydney has been the most successful exhibition ever presented by the organisation and has received an overwhelmingly positive critical response – both nationally and internationally. We are also very excited to have attracted such a broad audience to experience a very ambitious program. The feedback from the public has been amazing, with people loving every aspect – in particular the extraordinary artworks that premiered in Australia.'

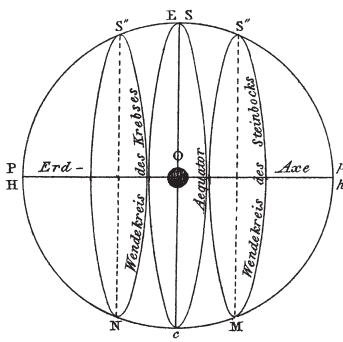
The 17th Biennale of Sydney was presented from 12 May to 1 August at seven venues across Sydney, taking in high-profile museum and gallery spaces, as well as non-museum environments, including Cockatoo Island, Pier 2/3, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney Opera House, Royal Botanic Gardens, Artspace and the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Based on the curatorial theme **THE BEAUTY OF DISTANCE: Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age**, Artistic Director **David Elliott** selected 444 works by 167 artists and collaborators from 36 countries, making it the largest exhibition staged in the organisation's 37-year history. Sixty-eight (68) artists premiered new works made specifically for the exhibition, with many of these being created by Australian artists. Notably, the exhibition featured the largest representation of Australian artists in the history of the event, with 65 Australian artists presenting works alongside their international peers.

The Museum of Contemporary Art achieved record attendance for a Biennale of Sydney with more than 173,000 visits. Four floors of gallery space were devoted to the exhibition, presenting 285 works by 94 artists.

Artspace doubled visitation as home to the popular **SuperDeluxe@Artspace** – an experimental performance space in Woolloomooloo enjoyed by visitors every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening for the duration of

PAGE |



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the Biennale. SuperDeluxe@Artspace is the first time that Tokyo’s thriving hub – a combined gallery, bar and performance venue – has been presented in Australia. Forty-one (41) performances by international and local artists took place and more than 80 Australians presented at the popular PechaKucha Nights.

David Elliott said: ‘This exhibition showed contemporary art that highlights, and at times criticises, how so many of our present ideas have been moulded by the past. The modern iconic city of Sydney was a perfect platform for this. Its breathtaking waterfront was also the site where British explorers first encountered the local inhabitants. The impact of this meeting is still very much with us in the present.’

Elliott continued: ‘Through the multiple perspectives it has thrown on contemporary art and culture over the past 37 years, the Biennale of Sydney has become one of the most important events on the international visual arts calendar. I have been delighted to see people of all ages and backgrounds – from Sydney and much further afield – making their way through the Biennale’s seven venues and having a great time in the process.’

Marah Braye said: ‘The Biennale of Sydney continues to play a central role in developing visual arts culture in Australia and connecting artists from around the world. Drawing international and interstate visitors to Sydney, the Biennale also generates substantial economic and tourism outcomes for Australia, NSW and Sydney, and continues to make a significant impact upon the nation’s cultural capital. The total economic contribution of the 16th Biennale of Sydney in 2008 has been estimated at \$53 million (Access Economics report, March 2010), and the 19% increase in visitation from 2008 to 2010 will markedly augment these very positive results.’

The 18th Biennale of Sydney will take place in 2012.

ABOUT THE BIENNALE OF SYDNEY

Every two years, the Biennale of Sydney is presented free to the public over a twelve-week period. As Australia’s largest and most exciting contemporary visual arts event – with more than 517,000 visits in 2010 – the 17th Biennale of Sydney celebrated the organisation’s 37th anniversary.

The Biennale of Sydney is the third longest running biennale in the world after Venice and São Paulo, and was the first biennale to be established in the Asia Pacific region. Since its inception in 1973, the Biennale of Sydney has provided an international platform for innovative and challenging contemporary art, showcasing more than 1500 artists from over 82 countries.

The Biennale of Sydney gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the many organisations and individuals that make the exhibition and its programs possible.

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