

**20<sup>th</sup>  
Biennale  
of Sydney**  
18 MARCH —  
05 JUNE 2016

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**THE FUTURE IS  
ALREADY HERE  
— IT'S JUST  
NOT EVENLY  
DISTRIBUTED**

Media Release (Friday, 10 June 2016)

## 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney attracts an audience of more than 640,000

Sydney, Australia: The Biennale of Sydney today announced that overall visitation to the *20<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney: The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed*, was almost unprecedented, the second highest on record. Attendances were buoyed by interstate, international and local visitors flocking to explore seven 'embassies of thought' and 13 'in-between' spaces, including popular new venues such as Mortuary Station (Embassy of Transition) and spaces around Sydney's inner west and CBD.

Curated by Artistic Director Dr. Stephanie Rosenthal, the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale featured more than 200 works by 83 artists hailing from 35 countries, including 70% new commissions, from 18 March until 5 June 2016.

Artistic Director **Stephanie Rosenthal** said: "I conceived of the 'embassies of thought' for the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale as temporary settings without borders, representing transient homes for constellations of thought. The themes allocated to each of these 'embassies' were inspired by the individual histories of each venue, while the 'in-between' spaces speak to one of the key ideas in this Biennale; exploring the distinction between virtual and physical worlds. I'm very pleased audiences embraced the idea of the embassies and explored the 'in-between spaces'. It was a tremendous pleasure to work with so many outstanding artists and to show so many new and specially realised works".

Biennale of Sydney CEO **Ben Strout** added: "We are proud to have attracted so many visitors to experience and engage with the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney and we're thankful for the support of our Exhibition Partners in helping us achieve this. I am particularly proud that we could realise Stephanie Rosenthal's vision for the 'in-between' sites: for the past three months, for instance Archie Moore's brick reconstruction of Bennelong's hut *A Home Away From Home: Bennelong/Vera's Hut* (2016) stood on the grassy headland overlooking the Sydney Opera House like a beacon for the whole Biennale".

**Performance featured strongly in the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney**, enlivening the exhibition across the three-month period, with highlights including the Australian premiere of *manger* (2014) by Boris Charmatz following his keynote address at Carriageworks on 19 March 2016. Justene Williams collaborated with Sydney Chamber Opera to stage *Victory Over the Sun*, a sell-out three-night performance on Cockatoo Island also during opening week, representing a radical revisioning of the legendary Futurist (anti-)opera first performed in St Petersburg, Russia, in 1913.

During the opening days, Mette Edvardsen's *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* gathered a collection of living books at Newtown Library, while 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale Attaché Adrian Heathfield curated a special project titled *ghost telephone* for the Art Gallery of New South Wales, a month-long serial improvisation of interlinked works from Hahn Rowe, Chrysa Parkinson, Philipp Gehmacher and Benoît Lachambre.

Other highlights included performances and activated projects by Neha Choksi *In Memory of the Last Sunset*, (2016), in collaboration with Alice Cummins; Mella Jaarsma's *Dogwalk*, (2015-16); Adam Linder's *Some Proximity*, (2014) and Germaine Kruij's *A Square, Spoken* (2015/2016) which took place daily. The midway point of the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale was marked at Carriageworks with a simultaneous act of obliteration and transformation, as Lee Mingwei altered his monumental work *Guernica in Sand* (2006/16) in a one-off performance on 23 April.

For this edition of the Biennale, Agatha Gothe-Snape developed a series of performances with dancer and choreographer Brooke Stamp, taking place along a pathway extending from Speakers' Corner in the Domain to Wemyss Lane, Surry Hills. The project *Here, an Echo* (2015-16), described as a 'choreography for the city' – will inform large-scale texts to be installed in Wemyss Lane later this year as a permanent part of the City of Sydney's Public Art Collection.

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The 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney featured significant contributions from Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists including Nyapanyapa Yunupingu at the Art Gallery of NSW and Daniel Boyd, whose work, *What Remains* (2016), was a large-scale installation featuring thousands of mirrored disks arranged on a building in Redfern. Richard Bell's latest iteration of *Embassy*, (2013-ongoing), an 'in-between' project located on the MCA Australia forecourt was a restaging and homage to the original Aboriginal Tent Embassy first assembled by activists on the lawn of Parliament House, Canberra, in 1972.

Former convict settlement and shipyard **Cockatoo Island** hosted the Embassy of the Real, where artists explored how we perceive reality in our increasingly digitised era and the spaces between the virtual and physical. Major works were presented by Korakrit Arunanondchai, Lee Bul, Chiharu Shiota, William Forsythe, Cécile B Evans, Barti Kher, and Xu Zhen (Produced by MadIn Company).

The **Museum of Contemporary Art Australia** hosted the Embassy of Translation, bringing together a selection of works that contextualised historical positions, concepts and artefacts, alongside contemporary concerns and working methods. Artists presenting work at the MCA included Nina Beier, Noa Eshkol, Helen Marten, Shahryar Nashat and Dayanita Singh.

The Embassy of Spirits at the **Art Gallery of New South Wales** saw artists consider the intersection between the spiritual and the philosophical. Works concerning personal and religious rituals were presented by artists including Johanna Calle, Sheila Hicks, Erub Arts, Jumana Manna, Sudarshan Shetty, and Taro Shinoda.

The Embassy of Non-Participation was located at **Artspace** in Woolloomooloo, a former artists' squat now renowned as a site for experimentation. For the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale, artist duo Karen Mirza and Brad Butler took over Artspace, considering how the act of 'non-participation' may also be an active and critical position.

A first time venue for the Biennale of Sydney, **Mortuary Station** in Chippendale was reimagined as the Embassy of Transition. Works by two artists, Marco Chiandetti and Charwei Tsai were presented, and in different ways they each engage with cycles of life and death, as well as rites of passage.

The Embassy of Stanislaw Lem, conceived by Heman Chong, took the form of a roving book-stall which appeared at various locations throughout the exhibition.

At **Carriageworks**, the Embassy of Disappearance brought together works by artists exploring themes of absence and memory, including disappearing languages, histories, currencies and landscapes. Artists included Lauren Brincat, Yannick Dauby and Wan-Shuen Tsai, Minouk Lim, Yuta Nakamura, Otobong Nkanga, Mike Parr, Bernardo Ortiz, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale continues with the **Not Evenly Distributed blog**. Hosting texts, images and video, [medium.com/not-evenly-distributed](http://medium.com/not-evenly-distributed) extends the project beyond the exhibition and the catalogue. Continuing the idea of a process-led, artist-centric Biennale, which is developing over time, this project will conclude on 30 June 2016.

– Ends

**About the Biennale of Sydney** Since its inception in 1973, the Biennale of Sydney has provided a platform for art and ideas, showcasing the work of nearly 1,800 artists from more than 100 countries. Today it is considered one of the leading international art events, recognised for commissioning and presenting innovative, thought provoking art from Australia and around the world. With on average 40 per cent of visits made by people from outside of Sydney, the Biennale holds an important place on both the national and international stage.

**MEDIA CONTACTS:** For further information and to request interviews and imagery please contact Articulate: Kym Elphinstone [kym@articulatepr.com.au](mailto:kym@articulatepr.com.au) or 0421 106 139.

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