

The 14th Gwangju Biennale announces the 79 participating artists and further programming details



Chang Jia, *Beautiful Instruments III – 12 Collages (Convict)* (2023). Collaged cyanotypes. 9 pieces, 193 × 120 cm each.
Commissioned by the 14th Gwangju Biennale. Image courtesy of the artist.

The 14th Gwangju Biennale

soft and weak like water
柔弱於水

Dates: April 7, 2023–July 9, 2023
Press Preview Dates: April 5 & 6, 2023
Artistic Director: Sook-Kyung Lee
Website: <https://14gwangjubiennale.com/>

The 14th Gwangju Biennale, *soft and weak like water*, announces the final list of participating artists and additional details on its overall program. Curated by Artistic Director Sook-Kyung Lee, Associate Curator Kerry Greenberg, and Assistant Curators Sooyoung Leam and Harry C. H. Choi, the Biennale will unfold over five venues throughout the city of Gwangju, including the Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Hall, Gwangju National Museum, Horanggasy Artpolygon,

Mugaksa, and Artspace House. The Biennale will present works by 79 artists, more than 40 of which are new works and commissioned projects that have not been exhibited previously.

The final list of artists is: Larry Achiampong, Abbas Akhavan, Farah Al Qasimi, Mamma Andersson, Tarek Atoui, melanie bonajo, Bakhyt Bubikanova, Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, Edgar Calel, María Magdalena Campos-Pons, Chang Jia, Huong Dodinh, Latifa Echakhch, Cheol-woo Gu, Taloi Havini, James T. Hong, Hong Lee Hyun Sook, Sky Hopinka, IkkibawiKrrr, Arthur Jafa, Tess Jaray, Jeoung Jae Choul, Anne Duk Hee Jordan, Yeon-gyun Kang, Naiza Khan, Yuki Kihara, Christine Sun Kim, Kira Kim, Kim Kulim, Minjung Kim, Soun-Gui Kim, Kim Youngjae, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Meiro Koizumi, Abdoulaye Konaté, Chila Kumari Singh Burman, Lee Kun-Yong, Seung-ae Lee, Seung-taek Lee, Kim Lim, Candice Lin, Tanya Lukin Linklater, Liu Jianhua, Taus Makhacheva, Guadalupe Maravilla, Noé Martínez, Mataaho Collective, Mayunkiki, Alan Michelson, Malgorzata Mirga-Tas, Naeem Mohaiemen, Yuko Mohri, Betty Muffler, Aliza Nisenbaum, Lucia Nogueira, Oh Suk-kuhn, Oh Yoon, Oum Jeongsoon, Pan Daijing, Pangrok Sulap, Sopheap Pich, Abel Rodríguez, Taiki Sakpisit, Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi, Angélica Serech, Thasnai Sethaseree, Dayanita Singh, Buhlebezwe Siwani, Emilija Škarnulytė, Vivian Suter, Yuma Taru, Charwei Tsai, Judy Watson, Alberta Whittle, Santiago Yahuarcani, I-Lann Yee, Yu Jiwon, Robert Zhao Renhui, David Zink Yi.

The final selection of artists reveals that *soft and weak like water* takes its theme not only as a conceptual thread to connect various artistic practices, but also as an approach to artistic production that gives way to a new model for the making of an international biennial.

A Source of Fluid Imagination: New artistic projects inspired by *soft and weak like water*

Whether as a subject of exploration, inquiry, or metaphor, the Biennale's theme serves as a source for a significant number of new works and commissions.

Tarek Atoui, who has been making sound recordings in close proximity to, or under, the water to document the ecological, historical, and industrial realities of coastal cities for many years, has collaborated with local artisans and musicians in Korea to develop an ensemble of instruments and sound objects for the Biennale. The installation, which will be activated through a series of collective workshops, offers space and time for new encounters and immaterial connections.

Yokohama-based artist Meiro Koizumi's new five-channel projection installation *Theater of Life* (2023) attends to marginalized communities that make up Gwangju. In particular, the artist traces the diasporic history of Koryo-in: a group of ethnic Koreans who were forcibly relocated from Russia's Far East to Central Asia by Joseph Stalin in the 1930s. Taking the archival documents of the Koryo Theater founded in 1932 as the starting point, Koizumi explores the "theatrical instinct" to transform one's environment and identity through role-playing workshops with a group of teenagers from Gwangju's Koryo-in community.

Bangkok-based filmmaker Taiki Sakpisit's *The Spirit Level* (2023) documents the lives, dreams, and memories of the communities along the Mekong River to examine the politics of water. The film explores how communities of farmers and fishermen cope with, and survive in, ecological and social crises through practices of animism and shamanism, among others.

Seoul-based artist Seung-ae Lee will present an ambitious mural and animation project that takes its cues from purification rituals found in Korean folk religions, which aim to wash away the grief and sorrow of the deceased. Hers will be one of the commissioned projects that will

activate the transitory spaces of the Biennale Hall, which encapsulate the flows of artistic inspiration that ripple through the building.

A Site of Continued Growth and Development: New works developed from existing practices

Conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic and the manifold structural failures across the world that it brought to the fore, the Biennale seeks to highlight processes of artistic inquiry and community building as a way of re-imagining existing systems. To shift the focus away from relentless modes of production, the Biennale's curatorial team prompted its participating artists to think of the exhibition as an opportunity to renew and redirect their practices by expanding and enriching ongoing research interests and projects.

Hong Lee Hyun Sook continues her exploration of the symbiosis between humans, the natural world, and inanimate objects in her new single-channel video. Conceived as a sequel to her previous work in which the artist narrates the experience of touching a granite sculpture at the Buddhist temple Seunggasa on Bukhan Mountain, *What You Are Touching Now – Wolchulsan Sirubong* (2023) similarly maps the artist's journey climbing through the rocks of Wolchulsan Mountain, located in South Jeolla province in South Korea.

Berlin-based artist Anne Duk Hee Jordan will also debut a suite of interactive robots at the Biennale. In *So long, and thank you for all the fish* (2023), the newly designed robotic entities will be merged with immersive installations that develop out of Jordan's continued fascination with marine life, technology, sexuality, nutrition, and ecology.

In her cyanotype series conceived for the Biennale, Chang Jia builds on her previous projects like *Beautiful Instruments III (Breaking Wheel)* (2014), which critically explore implicitly accepted conventions and socially prohibited customs in relation to the female body, to begin a conceptual journey that advances her practice to a new phase.

San Juan Comalapa-based artist Edgar Calel will present a new work on paper that draws on childhood memories of a house that he used to live in with his grandmother. Complementing an ongoing installation series of fruits and stones that pays homage to the rituals of the Kaqchikel people from which he hails, the drawing expands Calel's practice, which explores indigenous Mayan culture, by bringing it into the realm of the personal memory.

A Confluence of Creative Undertakings: External Biennale locations and public programs

The Biennale will unfold across the city of Gwangju and feature works that respond to the selected venues' unique architectural, historical, and cultural contexts. Acting as "pivots" to the Biennale Hall, these freely accessible venues will offer diverse points of confluence to the creative undertakings and energies activated by *soft and weak like water*.

Commissioned by the 14th Gwangju Biennale and Canal Projects, Candice Lin's new installation consists of ceramic sculptures inspired by Korea's traditional *buncheong* technique, factory workstations, and animated videos. It will be presented in close conversation with the Gwangju National Museum's ceramic collection, weaving together contemporary globalism in lithium battery production and the history of ceramic jars as containers for fermentation and trade. In the museum's garden, Sopheap Pich will showcase *La Danse* (2022), a series of five sculptures in which the artist reimagines recycled aluminum products into the shape of crape myrtle trees.

At Horanggasy Artpolygon, a community art space located on the foothill of Yangnim Mountain that bears the histories of Japanese colonization, anticolonial resistance, and Christian evangelization in Korea, Vivian Suter will present a series of painterly interpretations of Amazon landscapes. The venue will also feature *I/O* (2011-2023), a site-specific sound installation by Tokyo-based artist Yuko Mohri inspired by novelist Han Kang's *The White Book* (2016). Additionally, it will house Kim Youngjae's video documentation of pioneering performances by Korean artists in nature from the early 1990s, as well as works by Jeoung Jae Choul which explores the relationship between humankind and nature through tracing disposed objects floating in the ocean.

Buddhist temple Mugaksa will feature meditative works that reflect on the cyclical nature of life by artists such as Dayanita Singh, Liu Jinhua, and Huong Dodinh. Singh's film *Mona and Myself* (2013) documents the artist's lifelong companionship with her friend Mona Ahmed, whom she encountered by happenstance during her stint as a photojournalist. Liu's *Realm of Reflection* (2022), which reinterprets the Chinese ceramic tradition, prompts a reconsideration of the self and the world by evoking the anecdote of "awakening" in Zen Buddhism. Dodinh, who left Vietnam and settled in France due to the Vietnam War, creates abstract paintings that trace one's inner creative motivation through delicate, almost imperceptible painterly expressions such as minute movements of the brush and slight variations of color.

Artspace House, which has been hosting artist-run workshops and projects over the past decade, will serve as the screening venue for Naeem Mohaiemen's *Jole Dobe Na (Those Who Do Not Drown)* (2020), a dreamlike rumination on love and loss told through the perspective of a man who recently lost his wife.

The Biennale also complements the main exhibition with a rich series of public programs that are offered throughout its duration. During the opening weekend (April 7-8), the Gwangju Biennale Foundation and Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational will co-host a symposium, which will bring together artists, scholars, and curators to speak on artistic practices and discourses as they relate to the planetary vision offered by the Biennale. Further details on the press and professional previews, including the performance program, will be published in due course on www.14gwangjubiennale.com, where a series of audiovisual resources on the participating artists will also be available.

Notes to Editors

National press contact: Elisa Lee, elisa.lee@gwangjubiennale.org

International press contacts: Milly Carter Hepplewhite, milly@pelhamcommunications.com, and Yaz Ozkan, yaz@pelhamcommunications.com

Related press releases:

The 14th Gwangju Biennale announces the first participating artists and further details

The title of the 14th Gwangju Biennale is soft and weak like water

Artistic Director of the 14th Gwangju Biennale 2023 is Sook-Kyung Lee

Curatorial Team

Sook-Kyung Lee, Artistic Director

Lee is Senior Curator, International Art and the head of Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational at Tate Modern. She curated numerous exhibitions at Tate, most recently *Nam June Paik* (2019-20) and *A Year In Art: Australia 1992* (2021-23). Lee was also the Commissioner and Curator of the Korean Pavilion at the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Kerryn Greenberg, Associate Curator

Greenberg is a Co-Director of New Curators, a paid one-year curatorial training programme in London for individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Previously she was Head of International Collection Exhibitions at Tate, where amongst other things she was responsible for founding Tate's Africa Acquisitions Committee in 2011.

Sooyoung Leam, Assistant Curator

Leam is an independent curator and art historian based in Seoul, Korea. Recently a co-curator of *MaytoDay*, part of Gwangju Biennale Foundation's May 18 special exhibition project, she was also assistant curator at Shanghai Project and curated exhibitions at such venues as ASEAN Culture House.

Harry C. H. Choi, Assistant Curator

Choi is an independent curator and critic based in San Francisco, USA and Seoul, Korea. He held curatorial fellowships at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and writes regularly for such publications as *Artforum* and *Texte zur Kunst*.

[Website](#) / [Instagram](#) / [Facebook](#) / [YouTube](#)