

MEDIA RELEASE

16TH BIENNALE OF SYDNEY: REVOLUTIONS – FORMS THAT TURN

The Biennale of Sydney has today announced its program for 2008. *Revolutions – Forms That Turn*, which runs from 18 June – 7 September, is an experimental curatorial project aiming to create a constellation of historical and contemporary artworks. These explore the impulse to revolt, the etymology of ‘Revolutions’ (*re-volvere*), as well as the gap between associations with the first part of the exhibition title (‘revolutions’) and the second (‘forms that turn’).

Under the artistic direction of international curator, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the artists, thinkers, filmmakers and writers who will participate in the 16th edition of the Biennale of Sydney celebrate, investigate and re-think the concept of ‘revolution’. The project explores the relationship and gap between ‘revolutionary art’ and ‘art for the revolution’; the space between formal experimentation and artistic intent – the impulse to revolt in both art and life.

Since its inception in 1973, the Biennale of Sydney has provided an international platform for contemporary art and 2008 marks the organisation’s 35th anniversary.

In 2008, approximately fifty new works will be realised – including installations, large-scale sculptures, film and video, sound works, performances and online projects.

Artists whose practice emerged in the 1960s and 1970s will prepare new works for exhibition alongside seminal artworks by early twentieth century revolutionary artists such as **Aleksandr Rodchenko** and **Kasimir Malevich**. The exhibition will also feature major new projects by **William Kentridge** and **Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller**, as well as new works by younger artists such as **Qiu Anxiong**, **Gerard Byrne**, **Pierre Huyghe**, **Renata Lucas**, **Susan Philipsz** and **Michael Rakowitz**. This edition of the Biennale of Sydney will also include more works by Australian artists than any previous one, including **Vernon Ah Kee**, **Destiny Deacon**, **Simryn Gill**, **Shaun Gladwell**, **Rosemary Laing**, **Tracey Moffatt**, **TV Moore**, **Mike Parr**, **Stuart Ringholt**, **Julie Rrap** and **theweathergroup_U**.

Presenting larger as well as smaller artworks by approximately 180 artists from 1913 to today – ranging from **Luigi Russolo**’s futurist sound machines of the early twentieth century to a contemporary circular journey ‘around’ Australia by **Ayreen Anastas** and **Rene Gabri** – the exhibition will navigate the possibilities of rotating, turning upside down, revolving, mirroring, repeating and reversing as formal devices, as well as charting their broader aesthetic, psychological and indirectly radical and political perspectives.

‘In 1913,’ says Christov-Bakargiev, ‘**Marcel Duchamp** turned a bicycle wheel *upside down* to create a metaphor for a possible suspension within the flow of goods in an emerging consumer society, while at the same time referring to a wheel that was an alternative to the wheels of the factory and the industrial revolution. **Rodchenko** made his suspended *Spatial Constructions turn* in an effort to dematerialise the art object. Later, in the post-war period, **Jean Tinguely** spun his constructions to the point of self-destruction. While in the 1950s in Asia, **Atsuko Tanaka** created the first sound installation. In the late 1960s, a 360-degree expanded and *circular vision* was explored by artists such as **Bruce Nauman** and **Joan Jonas**. In the 1980s and 1990s, the collapse of modernist paradigms and revolutionary movements was often translated through artworks that explored the *loop* – turning yet dramatically remaining in the same place, as in **Adrian Piper**’s *Black Box/White Box* (1992). In 2008, by looking at how today’s

younger artists engage with the formal potential of “re-revolutions” in all media, this exhibition becomes a laboratory within which to explore aesthetic and social concerns of our time.’

A new video and sound installation by **Anawana Haloba** explores the personal experience of circularity, change and flux in the world today. In her video, *Lamentations*, the sense of shifting and disquiet, of unresolved assertions and social pacification, are reflected by the artist’s physical act of licking. Tossing, turning and repeating, this seemingly submissive and also sexualised action, is **Haloba’s** exploration of the political and is framed by these looping actions, formal turns and obsessive repetitions. In her new work for Sydney, filmed in the Australian desert, **Haloba** engages with the experiences of women from different cultures and different perspectives.

A number of other projects by contemporary artists also use repetition and *inversion* of chronological time as aesthetic and philosophical acts to imagine new revolutionary models. A new work by **Sam Durant** explores the space of protest and placards in the public realm, while **Jeremy Deller** presents re-enactments of past events as ways of looking forward through looking backwards. One strange delve into the past will be **Dora García’s** ‘enactment’ – the staging at the Sydney Opera House of a performance by stand-up comedian Lenny Bruce in 1962. The original performance was censored and never took place in Sydney.

Stuart Ringholt delves into personal issues such as mental illness, fear and embarrassment in his work, often chronicling these through absurd situations or curiously amateurish self-help environments. Incorporating performance, sculpture, painting, artist’s books, advertisements in newspapers, collaborative workshops and other post-conceptual practice, **Ringholt** creates a vertiginous portrait of the madness and confusion of personal experience and identity in the contemporary world. For the 2008 Biennale of Sydney, **Ringholt** will offer a series of free ‘anger workshops’ for participants within the gallery space of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

The 2008 Biennale of Sydney features an online venue – www.bos2008.com/revolutionsonline – a first for any Biennale worldwide. This is an experimental space that encourages discovery while browsing the constellation of artist projects and reader texts. It is an upside-down, expanding universe for ideas – written, aural and visual. Artists’ projects in the online venue include video, interactive, live streaming performances and links to existing projects online. Inspired by the Situationist *dérive*, artworks sit in a randomly generated visual environment, questioning the Internet’s promise to be a space of absolute ‘accessibility’.

The 2008 event will take the viewer to some of the city’s most beautiful locations and renowned museums. The Art Gallery of New South Wales has been a venue for the Biennale for more than three decades and will again host a major component of the 2008 exhibition. Equally, Sydney’s art museum exclusively devoted to the work of living artists, the MCA – Museum of Contemporary Art – will also be a major venue. The Biennale of Sydney has a history of using unconventional, non-museum locations for site-specific works. In 2008, locations include the Sydney Opera House and the Royal Botanic Gardens, as well as the vast 140-metre-long historical Pier 2/3 on the harbour. The Biennale will also show at Artspace; a leading contemporary art centre. Of particular significance, the Biennale will be held for the first time in the convict-built prison and old industrial site of Cockatoo Island.

CURATORIAL 'COMRADES'

To create this project, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev is corresponding with a number of curators, including Iara Boubnova, Natasha Conland, Liam Gillick, Massimiliano Gioni, Raimundas Malašauskas, Jessica Morgan, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Hetti Perkins, Kathryn Smith, Russell Storer and Jane Taylor.

ABOUT THE BIENNALE OF SYDNEY

Founded in 1973, the Biennale of Sydney is ranked today as one of the world's leading international festivals of contemporary art. Presented free to the public every two years over a twelve-week period to international critical acclaim, the exhibitions have showcased more than 1250 artists from over 60 countries. As Australia's largest and best attended contemporary visual arts event (316,000 visits in 2006), the event is renowned for hosting dynamic Opening and Closing Weeks programs. The festival reaches beyond Sydney with a national program of residencies and artistic outreach.

2008 BIENNALE OF SYDNEY DATES

Opens to the public on Wednesday, 18 June and continues to Sunday, 7 September.
Media Preview and Vernissage: Tuesday, 17 June.