

biennale of sydney

international festival of contemporary art

EXHIBITION HISTORY 1973–2006

The inaugural Biennale of Sydney was staged in 1973 to provide an international showcase for contemporary art. Its aim was to develop and present a program that challenged traditional thinking and encouraged new levels of enthusiasm for innovative creative expression. The 2008 Biennale of Sydney marks the organisation's 35th anniversary and the sixteenth exhibition.

The Biennale of Sydney was the fourth longest-running recurring event to be established on the international calendar – after Venice (1895), São Paulo (1951) and Documenta (1955). The Biennale of Sydney quickly achieved international recognition and critical acclaim and from a small start, quadrupled in size in less than a decade. Today, it ranks as one of the leading international festivals of contemporary art in the world.

Our exhibitions, education and public programs, artists' residencies and publications act as a cultural catalyst by encouraging innovation, experimentation and the communication of ideas. Our charter is to provide fresh curatorial perspective and independent artistic vision, and to act as a counter balance to traditional institutionally driven programs, exhibitions and publications. We are committed to international cultural exchange and, as the largest event of its type in this region, offer the unique opportunity for Australian audiences to be in direct contact with artists and artworks from many parts of the world. These rich encounters with contemporary art would otherwise be unavailable in Australia.

As for previous Biennales, the 2008 exhibition will aim to invigorate and enrich Australian visual culture through a fertile cultural exchange program involving large numbers of artists, writers and curators.

The 15 Biennales between 1973 and 2006 have featured the work of more than 1250 artists from over 60 countries.

1973 – The Biennale of Sydney

November – December

37 artists from 15 countries

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam opened the exhibition

Anthony Wintherbotham, Coordinator

The newly opened Sydney Opera House was the location for the predominantly Asian and Pacific region exhibition of 37 artists, focussed on contemporary architecture and new dimensions in sculpture and painting.

Participating countries

Australia	Japan	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Bangladesh	Korea	Philippines	USA
Indonesia	Malaysia	Spain	West Germany
Italy	Mexico	Thailand	

1976 – Recent International Forms in Art

13 November – 19 December

80 artists from 10 countries

Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser opened the exhibition

Thomas G. McCullough, Artistic Director

The Biennale was exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, which has remained a major venue for all subsequent exhibitions. It included 80 artists from 10 countries and focussed on new forms in sculpture, including performance, mail art and video works, as well as more traditional forms.

Participating countries

Australia	Japan	New Zealand	West Germany
France	Korea	United Kingdom	
Italy	Netherlands	USA	

1979 – European Dialogue

12 April – 27 May

131 artists from 19 countries

Governor General Sir Zelman Cowan opened the exhibition

Nick Waterlow, Artistic Director

Featuring 131 artists from 19 countries, *European Dialogue* questioned the predominance of New York as the centre of the international contemporary art world. The exhibition explored the direct links between Europe and Australia and the influence of European art on Australian art.

Participating countries

Australia	France	Netherlands	United Kingdom
Austria	Greece	New Zealand	USA
Belgium	Hungary	Poland	West Germany
Czechoslovakia	Iceland	Spain	Yugoslavia
East Germany	Italy	Switzerland	

1982 – Vision in Disbelief

7 April – 23 May

209 artists from 17 countries

NSW Premier Neville Wran opened the exhibition

William Wright, Artistic Director

Celebrating the return to painting and more traditional forms of art, the exhibition also included separate performance, sound and video sections. The event was broad-based and included an extensive public program of lectures and conferences, as well as a dynamic satellite program of independent but related exhibitions.

Participating countries

Argentina	Finland	New Zealand	West Germany
Australia	France	Poland	Yugoslavia
Bangladesh	Italy	Spain	
Canada	Japan	United Kingdom	
Colombia	Netherlands	USA	

1984 – Private Symbol: Social Metaphor

11 April – 17 June

66 Artists from 20 countries

Prime Minister Bob Hawke opened the exhibition

Leon Paroissien, Artistic Director

The fifth Biennale focussed on the expression of private views and obsessions, as well as broader political statements in the work of a diverse group of artists, including Haake, Kruger, Cragg and Gilbert and George.

Participating countries

Australia	Colombia	Italy	Switzerland
Austria	Denmark	Japan	United Kingdom
Belgium	France	Netherlands	USA
Canada	Hong Kong	New Zealand	West Germany
Chile	Ireland	Poland	Yugoslavia

1986 – Origins, Originality + Beyond

16 May – 6 July

123 artists from 21 countries

Federal Treasurer Paul Keating opened the exhibition

Nick Waterlow, Artistic Director

The exhibition questioned the concept of what constituted originality in the work of artists as diverse as Malcolm McLaren, Eric Fischl and Carlo Maria Mariani. It explored the origins, death and resurrection of form and imagery, as well as the transition of modernism to post modernism.

Participating countries

Argentina	Czechoslovakia	New Zealand	USA
Australia	France	Papua New Guinea	West Germany
Austria	India	Poland	Yugoslavia
Canada	Italy	Spain	
Chile	Japan	Switzerland	
Cuba	Netherlands	United Kingdom	

1988 – From the Southern Cross: A View of World Art c. 1940–1988

18 May – 3 July, Sydney

4 August – 18 September, Melbourne

127 artists from 15 countries

Governor General Sir Ninian Stephen opened the exhibition

Nick Waterlow, Artistic Director

The exhibition featured key early works of artists such as Leger, Klein, Balthus and Beckmann. Produced in association with the national Bicentennial Authority, the exhibition was shown in both Sydney and Melbourne. For the second time Pier 2/3 (a heritage finger wharf at Walsh Bay) became a central venue for the exhibition and the site for a spectacular Aboriginal piece involving 200 traditional burial posts. A special section on Japanese contemporary and performing art was presented.

Participating countries

Australia	France	New Zealand	USA
Austria	Italy	Poland	West Germany
Canada	Japan	Switzerland	Yugoslavia
East Germany	Netherlands	United Kingdom	

1990 – The Readymade Boomerang: Certain Relations in 20th Century Art

11 April – 3 June

148 artists from 28 countries

NSW Minister for Health & the Arts, Peter Collins opened the exhibition

René Block, Artistic Director

The 8th Biennale examined the distinctive historical connections of the 'readymade' from the early 1900s to the 1980s, based on the work of Duchamp, Man Ray and Picabia. A comprehensive satellite program of music, performance, lectures, symposia and workshops at various Sydney venues, complemented the exhibition.

Participating countries

Australia	East Germany	Japan	Spain
Belgium	Finland	Korea	Sweden
Brazil	France	Netherlands	Switzerland
Canada	Hungary	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Chile	Iceland	Norway	USA
Czechoslovakia	Israel	Poland	West Germany
Denmark	Italy	Russia	Yugoslavia

1992/3 – The Boundary Rider

15 December – 14 March

126 artists from 33 countries

NSW Minister for the Arts, Peter Collins opened the exhibition

Tony Bond, Artistic Director

The 9th Biennale reflected a shift away from Europe and the USA and over 90 per cent of the artists had not been seen in Australia before. Work of controversial artists such as Orlan, examined transgressions of conceptual and cultural boundaries. An extensive program of film, lectures and symposia explored the issues raised in this exhibition.

Participating countries

Australia	Czechoslovakia	Japan	Spain
Austria	Denmark	Mexico	Sweden
Belgium	France	Netherlands	Switzerland
Brazil	Germany	New Zealand	Thailand
Cameroon	Ghana	Norway	United Kingdom
Canada	Haiti	Philippines	USA
Colombia	Hungary	Poland	
Croatia	Israel	Russia	
Cuba	Italy	South Africa	

1996 – Jurassic Technologies Revenant

27 July – 22 September

48 artists from 24 countries

Senator Helen Coonan opened the exhibition

Dr Lynne Cooke, Artistic Director

Preceded by the Biennale of Ideas in 1995, the 10th Biennale of Sydney presented a re-appraisal of older reproductive technologies, including photography, film and print media. The politics of identity, memory versus history, the fantastic and Gothic were key themes.

Participating countries

Australia	France	Ivory Coast	Sweden
Austria	Germany	Japan	Switzerland
Belgium	Indonesia	Mexico	Thailand
Canada	Iran	New Zealand	Ukraine
Cuba	Ireland	South Africa	United Kingdom
Finland	Italy	Spain	USA

1998 – Every Day

18 September – 8 November

101 artists from 28 countries

NSW Premier Bob Carr and Lord Mayor Frank Sartor opened the exhibition

Jonathan Watkins, Artistic Director

This city-wide event encompassed 10 venues, including heritage finger wharf Pier 2/3 and Goat Island. Numerous site-specific works were created in Sydney in response to new locations and public sites. The exhibition examined notions of the temporal and spatial 'every day' and artists' works came from inspiration closer to home, using simpler expressions and materials.

Participating countries

Australia	China	Israel	Russia
Belgium	Cuba	Italy	Spain
Benin	Denmark	Ivory Coast	Sweden
Brazil	Finland	Japan	Switzerland
Cameroon	France	Korea	Thailand
Canada	Germany	Mexico	United Kingdom
Chile	Iceland	New Zealand	USA

2000

26 May – 30 July

48 artists from 23 countries

NSW Premier Bob Carr opened the exhibition

Nick Waterlow, Chair of International Selection Committee

Selection Committee: Fumio Nanjo, Louise Neri, Hetti Perkins, Sir Nicholas Serota, Robert Storr, Harald Szeemann

This city-wide event encompassed six venues and also included a number of affiliated exhibitions and satellite events throughout the greater Sydney area. Unlike previous Biennales, an International Selection Committee, comprised of internationally distinguished directors and curators and chaired by Nick Waterlow, selected works for the 2000 exhibition. Fumio Nanjo, ISC member, said of the final selection: 'The participants of the *Biennale of Sydney 2000* are artists who express and question their vision of reality in works which embrace changes and the possibility of change.' This was one of the most popular of all Biennale exhibitions, attracting over 200,000 visitors.

Participating countries

Australia	China	Italy	Russia
Austria	Congo	Japan	Spain
Belgium	France	Mali	Switzerland
Brazil	Korea	Netherlands	Ukraine
Britain	Germany	New Zealand	USA
Canada	Iran	Philippines	

2002 – (The World May Be) Fantastic

15 May – 14 July (extended dates until 28 July at MCA and Customs House venues)

56 artists from 22 countries

Lord Mayor Frank Sartor, Andrew Refshaugie, Luca Belgiorno-Nettis made preview speeches

Richard Grayson, Curator

(Advisory Panel: Susan Hiller, Ralph Rugoff and Janos Sugar)

This city-wide event encompassed eight venues, including a vacant commercial building in Orwell Street, Potts Point. The exhibition focused on artists who use fictions, fakes, invented methodologies and experiments as a basis for their work. The projects celebrated the potential of the creative act to generate alternative worlds, suggesting that our everyday belief systems may be constructed, hallucinatory and changeable. Over 245,000 people visited the exhibition, exceeding all previous attendance records.

Participating countries

Australia	France	Mexico	Slovenia
Belgium	Korea	Netherlands	Sweden
Britain	Germany	New Zealand	USA
Canada	Hong Kong	Norway	Vietnam
China	Ireland	Portugal	
Finland	Japan	Poland	

2004 – On Reason and Emotion

4 June – 15 August

51 artists from 32 countries

Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, Paula Latos-Valier, Isabel Carlos made preview speeches

Tony Bond and Elizabeth Ann Macgregor welcomed guests

Isabel Carlos, Curator

On Reason and Emotion, inspired by neurologist Antonio Damasio, featured 51 artists from 32 countries and brought together sophisticated concepts and artworks that demanded that the viewer use all their senses, and be challenged to think and feel. The close proximity of venues allowed the Biennale of Sydney exhibition to lead the viewer through the city of Sydney, creating a walkable circuit between venues. Much of the exhibition was sited within Sydney's major art museums and galleries, however, a number of new projects were created for specific sites at outdoor locations within the city, such as the Royal Botanic Gardens and the forecourt of the Sydney Opera House.

Participating countries

Angola	Denmark	Japan	Scotland
Australia	Finland	Korea	Singapore
Austria	France	Mexico	South Africa
Belgium	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Brazil	Great Britain	New Zealand	Sweden
Bulgaria	Greece	Norway	Switzerland
Canada	Ireland	Portugal	USA
China	Italy	Russia	Venezuela

2006 – Zones of Contact

8 June – 27 August

85 artists from 44 countries

Senator Helen Coonan opened the exhibition

Dr Charles Merewether, Artistic Director & Curator

The 15th Biennale of Sydney, *Zones of Contact*, featured the work of 85 artists and collaborations from 44 countries in 16 venues. Visitors saw a wide range of work, including painting, photography, fabric, sound and voice, light and projected works, drawing, video, film, performance, sculpture and installation. Site-specific works were exhibited in various locations in and around Sydney, including the spectacular heritage-listed Pier 2/3, Walsh Bay.

Zones of Contact dealt with events, ideas and concerns that shape our lives today, as well as our sense of both past and future. It explored the zones people live in and move between, and the merging and separation of public areas and private territories, places where people make contact with one another.

More than 316,000 people visited the exhibition, exceeding all previous attendance records.

Participating countries

Albania	France	Lebanon	Spain
Argentina	Germany	Malaysia	Sweden
Australia	India	Mexico	Switzerland
Bahrain	Indonesia	Netherlands	Taiwan
Benin	Iran	New Zealand	Thailand
Brazil	Israel	Palestine	Turkey
Canada	Italy	Philippines	Uganda
China	Japan	Poland	United Kingdom
Cuba	Kazakhstan	Romania	USA
Egypt	Kuwait	Russia	
Ethiopia	Laos	Saudi Arabia	
Finland	Latvia	Serbia & Montenegro	