

8–BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

Burning Down the House explores the process of

conflagration and transformation, a cycle of obliteration and renewal evident in aesthetics, historical events, and an increasingly rapid exchange of redundancy and renewal in commercial culture. The 10th Gwangju Biennale reflects on this spiral of violent or symbolic events of destruction or self-destruction – setting fire to the home one occupies – followed by the promise of the new and the hope for change.

The theme highlights the capacity of art to critique the establishment through an exploration that includes the visual, sound, movement, and dramatic performance. At the same time, it recognizes the possibilities and impossibilities within art to deal directly and concretely with politics. The energy, the materiality and processes of burning – the manner in which material is changed by flames into new forms, the residue left by dramatic interventions – have long informed artistic practice. The transformative powers of fire are central to the way in which this exhibition has been imagined. Ideas of physical movement and political engagement are fused in order to animate the concept of the Biennale.

Rather than simply being a reference to a left-field pop song from the early 1980s by US group Talking Heads, the title reflects the double significance of the Biennale concept. The inspiration behind Talking Heads' song was their memory of being at a Funkadelic-concert where George Clinton and the audience swapped calls to "burn down the house." The hedonism of the P-Funk crowd on the dance floor was then turned into an anthem of bourgeois anxieties by the New York band. This dual meaning of pleasure and engagement captures the defining spirit of the 10th Gwangju Biennale.

Unlike exhibitions staged by museums, with their often hegemonic cultural policies and interest in denoting legacies and traditions, the biennale is a mobile and flexible event that offers a spectrum of creative expressions that are immediate, contemporary, and topical, making the debate of art as movement fitting for the space of Gwangju – both geopolitically and as an institutional alternative. *Burning Down the House* examines this potential of art as movement by exploring the efforts made by contemporary artists to address personal and public issues through individual and collective engagement, as well as demonstrating how challenging these efforts and their impacts have become.

The exhibition begins in the **Biennale Square**. Engaging with the unfinished history of the Korean War, Minouk Lim explores the largely unrecognized loss of many citizens from this time, bringing this unspoken tragedy into the context of the well-documented trauma of Gwangju. Also occupying the Biennale square and announcing the exhibition to the arriving public is a major new banner painting by Jeremy Deller, alongside the specially produced burning stoves of Sterling Ruby.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, both inside the exhibition halls and within specially customized spaces, are new theatrical, dance, and performative commissions by the collaborators Ei Arakawa and Inza Lim,

9

dance duo Cecilia Bengolea and François Chaignaud, Heman Chong, Young in Hong, dancer/choreographer Geumhyung Jeong, and the agit-prop Okin Collective.

Located primarily in the **Biennale Halls**, the exhibition treats each of the five large-scale spaces as connected but independently atmospheric zones, their entrances and exits defined by new commissions and existing works. Throughout the entire Biennale Halls the graphic contribution of El Último Grito presents a smoke-motif wallpaper that draws the exhibition architecture, designed by Delvendahl Martin, together.

Gallery 1 presents works that explore the relation of the body and the individual subject to situations of duress and struggle, including Lee Bul's early performance work, Young Soo Kim's theatrical reenactments of torture, and the fictional, bodily violence of Birgit Jürgenssen, James Richards, and Ken Unsworth. The manner in which material is changed or destroyed by flames, manifested as residue of interventions or the remnants of celebrations, is evident in the work of Eduardo Basualdo, Huma Mulji, Liu Chuang, Cornelia Parker, Otto Piene, Anwar Shemza, Yves Klein, Mircea Suciuc, and Sehee Sarah Bark. Jane Alexander presents a new large-scale installation, bringing together her concerns about state control and individual freedoms, while Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin Kienholz question figures of military and state authority, subjects also explored by Anand Patwardhan, Hamed Abdalla, Yamashita Kikuji, Brenda Fajardo, and Gülsün Karamustafa. On leaving Gallery 1, one encounters the trembling wall of Jeong-A Koo and the wretched departure of migrants represented in Vlassis Caniaris work.

On the **Ramps** of the Biennale Halls are three works that satirically explore the public realm, including Okin Collective's parody of the voice of authority, as well as Hu Xiangqian's mimicry of the industry of individual success and Cezary Bodzianowski's sombre exploration of the loss of power or will.

Gallery 2 reflects on the rapidly increasing consumer culture of Asia (and indeed the wider world) and the resulting dislocation from material production. The large-scale installation of Jenyi Geng, *Useless* (2004), marks the shift to an expendable consumer society in China and recalls the work of Song Dong, *Waste Not* (2005), shown in the Gwangju Biennale in 2006, which eulogized a previous generation's precious relation to materiality. The relationship between people and things becomes ever more remote as the human body is subsumed by technology. Drawing attention to this process of loss are works by Sheela Gowda, Jonathas de Andrade, Tetsuya Ishida, Lee Wan, and Hidemi Nishida. Folk and craft traditions are re-examined from a contemporary perspective by Piotr Uklański, Seulgi Lee, Lubaina Himid, Rodel Tapaya, Eko Nugroho, and Banu Cennetoğlu. The human form is central to works by Xooang Choi, Neungkyung Sung, Yang Sungchul, Suknam Yun, Celia Hempton, and Xiaodong Liu, which reflect variously the loss and recuperation of the individual. Approaching the confines of gender and position, works by Renate Bertlmann, Jai-Hyoung Hwang, Woon Hyoung Choi, Celia Hempton, Liu, and Artist Group Dung-ji question the static understanding of societal roles.

Gallery 3 takes the architecture of the house and the fragmented urban landscape as a subject to explore and undermine. New films by Akram Zaatari and Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla reflect their local, changing environments, while Renata Lucas draws attention to the uniform apartment building of Korea, and in particular those immediately opposite the Biennale Halls, by inserting into the architecture of the building a new window that mimics that of its neighbor opposite. Animating the experience of the house, Urs Fischer's large-scale installation featuring his hyper-realistic wallpaper duplicates the artist's former apartment in New York. Fischer's reconstructed apartment houses new commissions by artists Heman Chong, George Condo, Apostolos Georgiou, Prem Sahib, and Stewart Uoo, as well as works by Pierre Huyghe, the fashion designer Carol Christian Poell and Japanese photographer Tomoko Yoneda, all of which have a connection to interior space and yet are apparently uncomfortable in their placement here.

Gallery 4 celebrates and explores the many ways in which artists have questioned the status quo, from their approach to gender, sexuality, and radical subjectivity – witnessed in the works of Sharon Hayes, Andrea Bowers, Carlos Motta, Jürgenssen, Ulrike Ottinger, Nil Yalter, Lionel Wendt, Arakawa and Lim, and Güneş Terkol – to the disruptive effects of the sensorial and spatial – including new works by Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou Rahme, Allora & Calzadilla, Carsten Höller and Olafur Eliasson. New commissions by Roman Ondák and Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa continue the exhibition theme's engagement with the idea of the home or enclosure through sculptural and interactive environments, and in the center of the space an iconoclastic approach to art-historical works defines the blow-up sculptures of Anthea Hamilton and Nicholas Byrne, a pop irreverence that like Cornel Brudascu's portraits uses a stylistic distortion to subvert the norm.

In **Gallery 5** Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's ghostly presence takes on the character of the notorious Fitzcarraldo, the subject of Werner Herzog's 1982 film of the same name. Harnessing the passion and operatics of both the character and the crisis behind the making of the film, Gonzalez-Foerster marks the dramatic end point of the Biennale Halls.

Extending into Jungoui Park, AA Bronson occupies the **Spiral Pavilion**, his contribution involving the participation of collaborative artists from Korea and elsewhere. Exploring the ritualistic and popular, Bronson's collective project draws on the artist's deep interest in spirit life. In the **Gwangju Folk Museum**, Lubaina Himid has responded to the rich folkloric displays by inserting new imagery that deliberately questions the origins of material culture.

Thus, through a variety of media, the works in *Burning Down the House* explore every nuance implied by the title of the exhibition to address historical and contemporary concerns of particular relevance for the occasion of the Biennale's twentieth anniversary.

*Jessica Morgan,
Artistic Director, Gwangju Biennale 2014*

124 – EI ARAKAWA & INZA LIM

Ei Arakawa born in 1977 in Fukushima, Japan. Lives and

works in New York, USA. Inza Lim born in 1976 in Gwangju. Lives and works in Seoul & Gwangju, South Korea. *The Unheroed Theatre (Character Studies with Gwangdae, Shinmyoung, Tobaki, the Fictitious Aseupalteu)* (2014) is a collaboration between Ei Arakawa, a Japanese artist based in New York, and Inza Lim, a Korean independent producer and artistic director of the Seoul Marginal Theatre Festival. The work focuses on the history of theatre in Gwangju in the 1980s, when artistic activities were suppressed by the grand sweep of socio-political history. In Gwangju, theatre companies such as the early Gwangdae, and later Shinmyoung and Tobaki were founded at the time of the Gwangju Democratic Uprising and played a significant role in resisting the military dictatorship. They promoted a sense of community through different forms of performance including Madang theater, Talchum (mask dance), and more modern theatre techniques. For the Gwangju Biennial, Arakawa and Lim have created an imaginary third theatre company whose origins date to 1980. Inspired by both the stories and female protagonists created by Shinmyoung and Tobaki, they imagine an alternative narrative. Arakawa begins his journey with Lim by asking "To what extent are social and political situations involved in theatrical representation?"

Arakawa has staged many performances and collaborated with contemporary artists, curators and historians, using artworks as props with which to improvise with the audience. His collaborative practice often establishes a dialogue with the postwar avant-gardes of Japan, Europe and

North America. Lim became the youngest artistic director in the Korean performing arts community in 2010. She explores contemporary issues by pushing the limits of the performing arts.



Tobaki's Moran
(*Peony Blossom*), 1993
Performance view

125 – SHARON HAYES

Born in 1970 in Baltimore, USA. Lives and works in New York, USA. *We cannot leave this world to others*

(2014) by US artist Sharon Hayes is a 4 channel video installation that explores the role of the student in challenging the status quo, the place of women in recent political history, and the relationship between successive generations in Korea's rapidly changing society. Shot in the US and Seoul, but based on research carried out in Korea, *We cannot leave this world to others* is structured around the interaction between younger and older female characters who ultimately engage in a physical struggle. A camera held at a variety of angles follows the scenes, which are shot in public places, the traditional site of political demonstrations. This is also the preferred context for Hayes' multimedia work, which focuses on the language of twentieth-century protest groups, examining the intersection between history, politics, personal lives, and speech.

By appropriating the tools of public demonstrations, Hayes reconfigures images of the protestor in a manner that undermines the viewer's expectations and engages with the possibilities and challenges of reviving past models within a pessimistic present. Staging protests, delivering speeches, and performing demonstrations, she creates interventions that highlight the friction between collective and personal actions. In *I March In The Parade Of Liberty But As Long As I Love You I'm Not Free*, performed from December 2007 to January 2008 in New York, Hayes addressed an anonymous absent lover through a bullhorn, combining this personal appeal with a reflection on the Iraq war in an unexpected commingling of current events, politics, and love.



In the Near Future,
New York (detail), 2005
Slide projection