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## **Biennials and Public Space**

Chair: Carol Lu

Panel: Fulya Erdemci, Sheika Hoor Al Qasimi, Yongwoo Lee, Katja Aßmann

Respond: Blair French, Christoph Schäfer

Revised transcript / Hannes Herold 2014 /

ANDREA BUDDENSIEG

Dear ladies and gentlemen, it's my pleasure to welcome you today to the morning session of our international conference about biennials. Peter Weibel introduced the conference yesterday and explained the purpose of the meeting that we have organized in cooperation with *IFA* and Elke aus dem Moore. Thank you very much for this wonderful cooperation. We are grateful that our invitations received such a broad response from all of you who have joined us from countries all over the world.

The conference happens in a moment where the number of biennials has reached a first climax. It's in fact an important time to reflect on experiences and questions concerning the importance of biennials as institutions which have spread worldwide. In order to offer a lively discussion, we have chosen the format of five different panels whose participants will address their respective topics with short statements before entering a discussion among them. The sessions will be introduced by Elke aus dem More and myself. We are especially grateful for the acceptance of five colleagues to moderate a particular session.

It may be useful to address a few words to the prehistory of this conference at the *ZKM, Center for Art and Media*. In the frame of our project *GAM. Global Art and the Museum*, we have organized several conferences about the present state of the arts in the global age. In 2007 we hosted the conference entitled *Where is Art Contemporary. The Global Challenge of Art Museums* with museum directors who are facing very different tasks in the context of such institutions. As a first result we launched the exhibition *The Global Contemporary. Artworlds after 1989*, in which we showed the works of 116 artists, including three groups of artists in residence who spent six weeks each in Karlsruhe and responded already to the exhibition. A particular part of this exhibition was a documentary show divided into seven sections including topics such as *Art Spaces* and *Branding*. One of the sections addressed the expansion of biennials under the title *Mapping*. We introduced it with the observation that globalization has created a new world map of art. The biennials that have proliferated across the globe serve as relay stations in a cartography unprecedented in modern Europe. The spread of the biennial system has given rise to a network of institutions and curators who seek cultural identity in regional art and its position in a global exchange of artists and art concepts. Finally we conceived filmmakers depicting the temporal and spatial development of the biennial system. In this project we began to record the intricate travels of artists from one biennial to another thus highlighting the transnational, national and regional dimensions of the events. This particular section served to facilitate the rules of traveling artists and traveling curators. I will

show a very brief sequence of the relevant sections. It may be added that this is still a work in progress, as we could not finish recording all the participating artists for more than a few examples so far. But we have started an archive of the relevant materials. This depends on the archives of the biennials themselves. So for example if you read dissertations on biennials, of course always *Venice Biennale* and *Documenta* will be mentioned, not only because of the importance but also because they have good archives. It's also the question of history writing depending on the archives.

This film was created in cooperation with the artists Stewart Smith and Bobby Pietrowski. It was developed at the Institute for Visual Media at **ZKM** with Bernd Lintermann. It was a special cooperation because also composers of the Institute for Music contributed to the soundtrack. We showed it on a large panoramic screen, so that visitors could immerse into the biennial world.

As already explained by Peter Weibel last night, our conference not only continues the documentation of past and present biennials, but also is connected to a **ZKM** project of next year where the Institution intends to start the experiment of a new exhibition format in which we will have 300 days of program, all the time changing parts of the main exhibition. The aim is to show the cultural effects of globalization and the reciprocal influence and scrutiny of various conceptions of culture. One topic will be *Renaissance 2.0* – the connection of art, science and technology, of digital revolution and democratic development.

The other main topic will be *Infosphere* in addition to *atmosphere*, which is indispensable to human beings on earth as biological beings. It becomes evident that for a successful cohabitation of 7 billion people as social beings an *infosphere* is necessary for guaranteeing global data exchange and the organization of goods by the means of data traffic.

The exhibition will not remain static but change over the course of months. The artworks will be grouped around several central exhibits so that visitors, when returning, will repeatedly discover something new. This exhibition *Globale* draws on all the exhibition services available at **ZKM** as well as those in the public domain around the city of Karlsruhe.

This may be enough for the moment to explain the context in which this conference takes place. Now let me welcome you once again. I wish us an inspiring day with good discussions.

ELKE AUS DEM MOORE

Good morning dear friends, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning Andrea Buddensieg and all the guests coming over from so many places in the world. Today I also would like to welcome the audience in front of the computers, because we offer an internet life-stream. And what I heard, greetings haven been sent already from Benin and Stuttgart. So everybody who watches us on screen: Welcome to this conference.

I'm delighted to welcome you at **ZKM** for the conference *Biennials. Prospect and Perspectives*, which takes place in the frame of *Globale* 2015, which Andrea mentioned, and the exhibition *World Art from Germany*, an exhibition on the *IFA*-collection which will be running until Sunday.

Let me tell you a little bit about *IFA*. We already heard about it yesterday but maybe to remember: *IFA Institute for International Cultural Relations* is an independent organization

operating worldwide to promote artistic exchange and dialogue between civil societies. Since more than 60 years, *IFA* has been initiating and fostering the international art exchange through exhibitions, artistic workshops, conferences, funding programs and grants. Also the international exhibition program is framed with an exhibition program at the *IFA* galleries in Berlin and Stuttgart. In more than currently 35 touring exhibitions, *IFA* created platforms for cultural dialogue. *IFA* also offers online platforms such as *Contemporary And (C&)*, an online magazine on contemporary art from an African perspective, and since ten years now the *Nafas Magazine*, an online magazine on contemporary art in the Islamic world.

The exhibition *Travelling the World*, which you can see upstairs, gives an insight into the *IFA* collection, comprising works from the 1959 until today. The *IFA* collection includes more than 3000 artworks from both German countries. In the exhibition shown here, parallel art developments in both, the Federal Republic of Germany and the former GDR, are often linked beyond politics and meet one another. Curated with perspectives from both sides, Matthias Flügge and Matthias Winzen wrote art history anew with this exhibition based on parallel developments instead of isolation in the art of both Germanies.

I'm delighted that we can connect another link during the last days of this exhibition and the big exhibition *Global Activism*, which is organized by *ZKM*. It's a discourse on the role, art can play in international relations in times of political change. You have the opportunity to watch both exhibitions during the time of this conference as we offer a guided tour tonight right after the first panel at 12 o'clock.

Now let me come to our subjects. Biennials always have been seismographs of social and political developments. They are often instruments of the representation of nations and cultural identities of the region. But on the other hand, they can also serve as a refuge. In their ephemeral form they are counter-narratives to the museum structures and offer an alternative or visionary potential in urban settings, ruled by economic interests. Biennials can highlight complex social-political questions and offer the possibility to reach attendance locally and internationally. Biennials are able to confront the audience with questions, arise new ways of thinking and establish links in the international cultural field. Biennials have a high value of reflection and offer the potential of new forms of resistance.

The conference *Biennials. Prospect and Perspectives* is the fifth edition of the *IFA* conference series *Biennials in Dialogue* with the aim of generating discussions in the context of international biennial culture. The series does not only facilitate the exchange of experiences of directors, organizers and artists of biennials, but also grants access to discussions to an interested audience.

The first conference took place in the year 2000 in Kassel and was initiated by René Block and Ursula Zeller, both of them former heads of the Visual Arts Department at *IFA*, the position I hold today. In these days, 14 years ago, Yongwoo Lee as the founder of the oldest Asian Biennial, the *Gwangju Biennale*, was the keynote lecturer. Welcome Mr. Yongwoo Lee. Also Fulya Erdemci was part of it as well as several people attending this conference today. The discussion continued in 2002 in Frankfurt with the provoking question *Exchange or Global Incest?*, and in 2006 in Singapore and in 2008 in Shanghai, both took place as parts of the respective Biennials. The discussion was about the criteria of success or failure of a biennial and the politics behind it. Central topics were raised like *regionalism versus internationalism*. And of course the issue of

*cultural education* came up.

The *Biennials in Dialogue* conferences are just one expression of *IFA's* involvement in international biennials and network building. *IFA* provides support for the contributions from Germany at international biennials and generates academic discourse, for instance through a collaboration with the *Biennial Foundation* in person of Marieke van Hal. *IFA* sets up a biennial archive, a database, several publications – some of them can be seen outside. And since 1971, *IFA* has been responsible for the German Pavilion at the *Venice Biennale*.

In November 2012 in the frame of the *Gwangju Biennale* the first *World Biennial Forum* took place, initiated by the *Biennial Foundation* and organized by the *Gwangju Biennale* in cooperation with *IFA*. This *World Biennial Forum* was and still is an important platform to stimulate communication between the various biennials and to allow the institutional widening and discursive concentration on global dialogues in this field. I am happy to announce that the next *World Biennial Forum* will be held in São Paulo, Brazil in November this year.

But let me go back in history for a moment. And therefore I would like to quote René Block, introducing the first *Biennial in Dialogue* conference in Kassel 14 years ago:

„When we started this conference yesterday with an internal meeting, it was about getting to know each other, exchanging experiences, dealing with the general problems, for instance to express the slight uneasiness with biennials now emerging all over the world, and that there is apparently no way of control with regards to quality and circumstances, and especially articulating the uneasiness with the *Florence Biennale*, which works in a way that artists are invited, however they are not invited but invited to buy themselves in on the Biennial with a fee of \$1700. As we can see, we also have to deal with absurdities like this. And it is not without reason that the delegates decided to set up some kind of *Biennial Association*, an international biennial network, yesterday.“

An international biennial network – that was the pressing idea articulated in Kassel 14 years ago. Today I'm proud to announce that after long-lasting developments, this network will soon be established. Following a long time of preparations, the *IBA*, the *International Biennial Association*, a nonprofit art association composed of institutions, individuals and associates of the biennial community, was created to expand and share activities of curatorial and artistic creation and knowledge-production through cooperation and exchange among biennials and their institutions, contributing to the development of cultural and artistic production by providing strategies, methods and visions through a platform for collaboration and support among a network of professionals.

As an outcome of the biennial representatives meeting at the *World Biennial Forum No. 1* in Gwangju, an interim board with numerous representatives from international biennials was established. This board in turn elected an interim managing board, consisting of Yongwoo Lee as interim president, Marieke van Hal and Bige Örer as interim vice presidents. This was followed by many preliminary meetings in Sharjah, Venice, Istanbul, and now in Karlsruhe in the frame of this conference. Today I'm very pleased to announce that the inaugural ceremony will take place at the first general assembly of the *International Biennial Association* in the frame of the *Berlin*

*Biennale* in July 2014. Thank you to all the members of the board and as well to the team in Gwangju, especially Sarah Yun, and of course Yongwoo Lee who is the major force behind this.

But let me now move to the conference today. As I mentioned before, biennials bear a highly symbolic power for social-political developments, as can be seen at recent events around Biennials or Triennials such as Marrakesh, Sydney, Bucharest. These Biennials often bear a delicate position for social changes. They resolve conflicts between politics and civil society, between institution and the art market with topics such as gentrification, participation or biennials as an educational model, political interference, marketing oriented management. How are the diverse actors behaving within this framework of different interests? Are biennials still places of imagination, places of free discourse, or places where surprisingly new alliances are built? Places, where local neighborhoods meet an international audience, and where connections are forged? Can biennials change the perspectives, the behavior, the social or even the political situation? Are biennials acting on behalf of or respectively for artist communities, an international audience or the society? Are they digested by residents or audiences in an *anthropophagic* cultural strategy – as proposed by Paulo Herkenhoff for his recently opened Museum in Rio de Janeiro, the *MAR* – the museum as an *anthropophagic* practice?

Biennials have the mobility. They offer the fluidity to act, to react, to muddle through and continuously develop new strategies in a cunning and resisting way, and while facing the respective location. I was very impressed by the way Fulya Erdemci responded to the situation in Istanbul, abandoning her curatorial concept on the spot – a concept to carry out the Biennial in public spaces that have been planned out beforehand over a considerable amount of time in favor of both, the Biennale and the people. You could argue – and I'm sure we will do that in this conference – whether an institutional resistance would have been more suitable here. Because with this wise decision she secured the Biennial being held after all, and thus she provided both, an open window and the debate to large parts of Istanbul's and the world's population to a vital and up-to-date question: Whom does the city belong to? Who owns public space? Which role is the economic situation playing? How can biennials be strengthened and also embedded into the marketing interests of the city or region? Are limitations created in this way? How does a biennial deal with that? Which strategies can be developed? Which options of resistance are chosen by artists or curators when facing limitations? Given the biennial as a model has gained popularity – is a biennial attractive or sexy? What is the promise of this label? For whom and why? Can these exhibition models grant free space reaching beyond the diverse interests? Can they offer new perspectives, think the unthinkable, forge unimagined coalitions? Do biennials guarantee a better life?

In the final panel we will introduce open systems, exhibition models geared towards the idea of an exhibition that runs every two years, looked at from completely different motivations and perspectives. I would really like to thank Ute Meta Bauer for her lecture yesterday evening, which was wonderful in its way of going back but also looking forward in the meanings, the potentials and the challenges of biennials.

Now I'd like to thank our chairs who will accompany the panels with regards to their contents: Carol Lu, Christine Eyene, Marieke van Hal, Sabine B. Vogel and Rafal Niemojewski. Thank you everybody for your big interest in this conference. My deep thanks goes to all the invited guest

artists, curators, organizers of biennials and the whole audience – they always act as analysts or respondents of the panels. I'm very delighted about the productive and generous cooperation with **ZKM**, a cooperation of respect, joy and the will to enable all that's possible and necessary to create a critical discourse on this subject. Thank you very much Peter Weibel, director of the **ZKM** in absence – congratulation to the *Oskar Kokoschka Prize* – and Andrea Buddensieg, curator and manager of the project *Global Art and the Museum*, who co-curated this conference with me. My deep thanks from the heart to you, it was a great pleasure working with you, Andrea. And also thank you to the whole team of **ZKM**, especially to Sabiha Keyif and to the team of *IFA*, Nina Hülsmeyer and Valérie Hammerbacher. And last but not least, making a conference means to provide space, time and atmosphere for encounter. Therefore we invited to DJs for the evenings. Yesterday we heard the sound of Sinethemba Twalo from Johannesburg and tonight we are expecting Konrad Kuhn from Stuttgart. Though I would like to thank you all for coming, and I'm looking forward to a very productive, nourishing and lively discussion. Thank you.

ELKE AUS DEM MOORE

The first panel is on *Biennials and Public Space*, maybe also discussing new definitions of public space. It's hosted by Carol Lu. Carol Lu lives and works in Beijing, she's a contributing editor for the *Frieze Magazine*, executive editor in chief for *Yishu*, the Chinese edition, and was appointed researcher for the *Asia Art Archive* from 2005-2007. She also writes frequently for international art journals and magazines. Carol Lu was jury member of the *Golden Lion* at the *Venice Biennale* in 2011. In 2013 she presented together with Liu Ding the exhibition project *Little Movements II: Self-practice in Contemporary Art* at Museion Bolzano. Since July 2012 Carol Lu is artistic director of *OCAT* at Shenzhen. A warm welcome to Carol Lu. She will introduce all the panelists and respondents later.

CAROL LU

Good morning. Can I please invite my panelists and respondents to come on stage and joined with me now.

Thank you Elke and Andrea for the introduction. A very warm welcome to everyone to the first panel today on *Biennales and the Public Space*. I am proud to be joined by our distinguished panelists and respondents of the first panel who are all makers, shakers, participants, or servants of biennials from all over the world. In October 2012 a conference was organized in Gwangju, as mentioned previously, dedicated to the discussion of the biennial as a platform for artistic and curatorial experimentation and social imagination. I'm very sad to have missed that one but very proud to be part of the exciting debates and discussions unfolding over the three-day conference here at **ZKM** right now.

Having been involved in the curating, making and discussion of several biennials as well as currently directing the *Shenzhen Biennale* in South China, I've become fully aware over the last few years of the importance and urgency of reflecting on biennials not only as a form of exhibition but particularly as a platform for social imagination and experimentation of artistic practice. And I realized that we have an urgent need to develop a more diverse discussion and literature about the biennial format itself.

Our panelists today have been asked by the organizers to reflect on the notion of art as a public domain and the notion of a new publicness in the context of biennials. I'll invite each of the panelists to give a presentation of about 10 or 15 minutes before inviting the colleagues to respond. I'll not read out their biographies from the very beginning. Instead I'll introduce each of them before they make their presentation. So you'll not forget who they are during the course of the panel.

Unfortunately we are missing one of the panelists today, Sheika Hoor Al Qasimi. Due to certain travel arrangements she'll not be able to join us this morning. But having a few more minutes for the other panelists and respondents won't hurt – as is the case with biennial-making: Having more time won't hurt.

Without further ado I'd like to introduce our first panelist, Fulya Erdemci. She is a curator and writer based in Istanbul. She was the curator of the 2011 Pavilion of Turkey at the 54th International Art Exhibition at the *Venice Biennale*. She was the director of *SKOR, Foundation for Art and Public Space* in Amsterdam between 2008 and 2012. Erdemci is a veteran when it comes to biennial directing or making. She was director of the *International Istanbul Biennale* between 1994 and 2000, director of the *Museum of Contemporary Art*, Istanbul from 2003 to 2004 and Temporary Exhibition Curator at Istanbul from 2004 to 2005. Erdemci was a member of the curatorial team for the 2nd *Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art* in 2007. She co-curated the 5th *Scope Biennial of Art in Public Space* in Christchurch, 2008 together with Danae Mossman and *Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibitions*, a series of public art exhibitions realized in two editions in Istanbul, 2002 and 2005. In 2013 she curated the 13th *Istanbul Biennale*, which I believe will be the focus of her presentation this morning. Fulya, please.

FULYA ERDEMCI

Hello and welcome. Today I'm very happy to be here. As Elke mentioned, I was one of the speakers 10 years ago at the *Biennial Conference* which I found extremely important, because the research is still continuing and getting deeper while the biennials and their reception are in the process of change under the changing skies of political protests all over the world.

The title of the last *Istanbul Biennial* was *Mom, am I Barbarian?*. The main focus of the Biennale was the question of multiple publics and the notion of the public domain as a political public forum. And it overlapped with one of the most significant and unique civic awakenings, the Gezi Resistance which we experienced last summer in Istanbul. It was not only coinciding in time, but the questions posed by Gezi and the questions posed by the Biennale also overlapped. This is why I'd like to give to you very shortly the story of the *Istanbul Biennale*.

I believe that biennials have the capacity to create public debates. In one of the interviews, Hou Hanru mentioned the biennial as public domain. I think so, too, but last year I wanted to focus the *Istanbul Biennale* specifically on this concept. Actually *Mom, am I Barbarian?* is a quotation from the Turkish poet Lale Müldür. Under this title we constructed the Biennale in three axes or lines. The theoretical line was directly focused on the question of multiple publics and creating a public forum. Today we all know that we cannot talk about a homogenized single public unified

under a general will. Departing from this point of view the theoretical line was asking the question of how these multiple publics, maybe diverse worlds, even the contrasting ones can come together, can act together and can live together. Certainly, all of us know that the concept of the public sphere of Jürgen Habermas has been under revision since the 1990s. Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt bring out proletarian public space, Nancy Fraser asks the question of multiple publics, Okwui Enwezor coins the new term of the *Civic Space*, and Simon Sheikh the *Post-Publics*. So the theoretical line of the Biennale was focusing on this question of public domain while the biggest public protests happening last year in Turkey.

The praxis site of the theoretical line was the urban public spaces as the spatial component of the Democratic apparatus. I tried to look at the ongoing assaults and the urban transformations in Istanbul (as well as in other geographies) as the praxis site and took the spatial manifestations of the concept of freedom and the acts of disobedience together with the concept of *agoraphobia*.

The third line is more related to the sphere of imagination. As I told before, I borrowed *Mom, am I Barbarian?* from a Turkish poet, Lale Muldur. I found this very strong in the current context because it reintroduced the concept of the barbarian. Maybe some of you already know where it comes from. It originated in ancient Greek and is related directly to language and citizenship. In ancient Greek people who couldn't speak the Greek language properly were called barbarians thus considered non-citizens. So, barbarians were not citizens but outsiders, they were not allowed to speak in the Agora. Here the public domain gets its reference. The public domain in ancient Greek actually always had exclusions. For instance women were not included in the debates in the Agora as well as slaves and children. As I mentioned before, for instance Nancy Fraser tried to think about other exclusions of the public domain. In the Biennale we tried to ask: who are the barbarians in the city? Who are the most excluded ones? Who are the ones that don't take part in decision-making? The extent I began to think about is that the barbarians are people who try to depart the seams of the system to show the otherwise, to change the system. They are like revolutionaries, anarchists or poets or artists. So it combines both: the most excluded ones and at the same time the ones that try to change the system. I also take it as an unorthodox language. Today through the demonstrations and protests we all know that we are looking for another world to come. If we want to call a new world, a different world, we need new languages to define it. So it also refers to the new languages that we don't know yet or yet need to invent.

With the *Istanbul Biennale* – very generally speaking – I tried to establish the exhibition according to these three lines. Part of my concept was to ask: What is public domain? I didn't use *public sphere* or *public space* but *public domain* in order to include social media or any place or medium that can create social engagement and public debates. It can be around an artwork, it can be social media or it can be physical urban public spaces. In Istanbul I feel obliged to look at the urban transformation as it was/is a violent act from top-down in terms of gentrification. Many neighborhoods have been lost, many families, including Roma families, were displaced in the city. And as you may know, Gezi Resistance started with the questions about the park in the middle of the city at Taksim square. It was the only green area in the neighborhood, and the authorities wanted to transform it into a shopping center in the shape of Ottoman military barracks. So



people came together, and the questions I was asking as a possibility in my conceptual framework were transformed into the realm of the reality.

Even the contrasting worlds formed new coalitions: anti-capitalist Muslims, feminist movement, animal rights movement, also football fans – this is really very interesting: When football is being politicized, things are changing faster, I guess. When I wrote the conceptual framework, I didn't expect such a big, unique civic awakening in Turkey. But they overlapped. And the Biennale happened passing through the eye of the storm. In June, we (I and the whole team) couldn't really deal with the Biennale because the world was changing. All of us were at Gezi. For 15 days, Taksim Square and Gezi Park were occupied by people, and the police couldn't enter. Of course afterward, very violently, the voice of the people were suppressed by the police forces. And even today, instead of listening to what is going on in the streets, the government still continues to suppress the reactions. Maybe you know that thousands of people got injured, seven people already died in these protests.

So originally my idea was to discuss the issue of the multiple publics and the public domain in different media: in social media, in the exhibition but also directly in the urban public spaces in Istanbul. Certainly, I was to use Gezi Park, Taksim Square, Tarlabası Boulevard, Karaköy Square and some of the most contested areas in the city to be able to open up the conflict and make it visible and debatable. Yesterday Ute also mentioned, based on Chantal Mouffe's ideas, we can claim that the *raison d'être* of any project realized in the urban public spaces is to open up the conflict to make it more debatable. However, when Gezi happened, the conflict split open. We saw the suppression. We saw the pressure. Besides, the streets were and are still today under police surveillance.

When you realize art projects in urban public spaces, you need to collaborate with city authorities. During the protests the city authorities cut down the public transport, even the electricity in Gezi Park and Taksim Square, while the police attacked the people. So the conflict was split open and visible. So, we began to question: What does it mean to create art projects in urban public spaces in collaboration with the same authorities that suppress the voices of its own people? After Gezi, the authorities were ready to collaborate with us. Before that they were very critical about our concept. Someone from the municipality even asked me: Why do you want to use Gezi Park? You can use any other park. But after Gezi they needed to gain back publicity, prestige and legitimacy, which they lost. Creating our projects in urban public spaces would have given them the opportunity to clean their hands, to get rid of the real blood off their hands through art. That's why we discussed it a lot. We established two forums in the parks (After Gezi, the gatherings continued in neighboring parks). We invited artists, activists, many people to join these two forums and brought up the subject. Consequently, I, Bige Örer, the Biennale team and artists I've talked to thought that it was not a good idea to collaborate with the authorities at this time. If we would, we'd cover up the conflict again. So we decided to withdraw from the urban public spaces in Istanbul at the end of July – just almost one month before the exhibition opened. This of course brought many complications: conceptual, practical and also space-wise. After we decided to withdraw, we had a huge problem concerning venues. But fortunately we solved it through collaborations with three art institutions in Istanbul: *Arter*, *Salt* and *5533* (the last one is an artist's initiation). We were able to adapt some of the projects to the exhibition sites, but 14 projects had been lost. For instance Tadashi Kawamata's project is exhibited as a project proposal. Or Rietveld Landscape wanted to make a light project about Atatürk Cultural Center,

which was the main cultural hub at Taksim Square. They changed their plan and realize a light installation in the exhibition venue that would have given a taste of what it will be which couldn't be done anymore. We also had to reconsider our public programs that I co-curated with Andrea Phillips. And in a very short time we changed the focus from theoretical presentations to more bottom-up practical workshops, talks, gatherings. I asked artists to contribute, and many of them created performances, workshops, talks and other things. The Biennale had billboards all over the city traditionally as part of the agreement with the municipality. But this time we didn't even have one billboard in the city – of course when we refused to cooperate they refused to cooperate, too. But it didn't do much difference, because thanks to Bige Örer, Biennale team and their supporters we were able to make the Biennale free of charge, and together with that we had to shorten the time. In effect, during five weeks more than 337.000 people visited the Biennale. In this sense the Biennale itself became a public space where people gathered and began to discuss.

Thank you very much.

CAROL LU

Thank you, Fulya. Despite our sitting order I'd like to invite Yongwoo Lee to be the second panelist of today. Yongwoo Lee is a writer, curator and art historian based in Seoul. He is currently the president of *Gwangju Biennale Foundation*, a position he's holding since 2008. Yongwoo Lee was a professor of History and Critical Theory at *Korea University* and has lectured at many different colleges across the United States and in Europe. He obtained his PhD in Art History at *Oxford University*. He is founding editor of the critical art journal *NOON* since 2009. In 1995, Yongwoo Lee was the founding director of *Gwangju Biennale* and attracted a record-breaking audience of 1.63 million people. The *Gwangju Biennale* is the first and longest running international biennial in Asia. Yongwoo Lee was invited to return as the *Gwangju Biennale's* Artistic Director of 2004 for the Biennale's 10th anniversary and has been directing the Biennale since then. The infrastructure and the politics behind the infrastructure are making the biennial. In particular the *Gwangju Biennale* will be the focus of his presentation this morning.

I'm aware that one of the team members of *ZKM* is making gestures and signs in terms of keeping track of the time, so I would appreciate if the panelists would be looking towards his direction during the course of their presentation. Thank you.

YONGWOO LEE

Good morning. I'd like to see the images that I'm going to give you. Unfortunately I was not able to see the beautiful images Fulya prepared. It came to me as a huge fresco wall and was very much repressive to me.

First of all on behalf of the *International Biennial Association* and also as interim presidents I would like to express my sincere gratitude to *IFA* and *ZKM* for their sincere support and participation in the standing of the biennial context and discourses.

To begin with I'd like to introduce to you this sentence which might be very familiar to all of you: „The most noble manifestation of the modern spirit without distinction of country.“ We seem to hear this kind of wording today everywhere. But especially the last part of the sentence, „without

distinction of country", might represent a familiarity of globalism or globality in the biennial context. As we understand, globalism or globality has lost the political dogma in it, and if you like you could reintroduce it as cosmopolitanism, internationalism, whatever. Anyway this is part of the welcoming address that the Mayor of Venice spoke in 1895, about 120 years ago. It is also the rhetoric of the biennials today in relation to global understanding.

I'd like to give you some exclamations and images on the *Venice Biennale* which has the longest history, almost 120 years. And I'd also like to share with you today the strategies of international art exhibitions in relation to an every two or three years format. The biennials and triennials have responded to a radical change that took place during the past 20 years in the field of visual arts. This is the long queue at the opening at the *Art Basel* art fair. Biennials and art fairs today are two of the phenomena that have become a dominant trend on the art market and in public space as well. Though the global capitalism has been playing a very important role today with its stimulation and instigation for cultural nomadism and globalism, we understand that there are about 200 biennials. When it comes to numbers of the biennials we always say between 150 and 200, but there are no clear statistics conducted by an institution. So we presume that there are lots of biennials. Until the 1980s they were approximately 10 biennales in the cities of *Venice* (1895), *São Paulo* (1951), there was Kassel *Documenta* (1955), *Ljubljana Print* (1955), *Whitney* (1973), *Sydney* (1973), *Havana* (1984), *Istanbul* (1987) and *Tokyo defunct* (1951). Since the 1990s, biennials have been recognized to be alternative artistic platforms for experimental art and a strategic window for the hosting city.

So what are the biennial aesthetics, what are the biennial politics today? The biennial exhibitions are a reflection of the desire to move art outside of its white cube context first of all. Biennial exhibitions address the issues of globalization, migration and displacement in relation to the social-political environments. Biennials are supposed to bring an art of action, interfacing with reality. They aim to repair social bonds that are disappearing. They are a critique of artistic spectacles according to Jacques Rancière. He says, the alpha and omega of the politics of art is a critique of the spectacle. Also biennials are supposed to create an overall experience, including art, tourism, global meeting point, information bazaar. And also biennials deal with the absurdity of time and reality. This kind of biennial politics and aesthetics have become a real phenomenon today because of their relevance within the global attitude.

In this image you can see the opening area of the *Venice Biennale* last year. I'm showing you lots of images from the *Venice Biennale* because we don't have any speakers from Venice this time. What you can see here is the French opening at the German Pavilion, and here you can see the German opening at the French Pavilion. As you know they switched their pavilions. I understand that there've been lots of controversies and puzzling points.

This is one of the works by Choi Jeong Hwa from the *Setouchi Triennale* that took place last year in the Setouchi area in Japan. Have you heard about the *Setouchi Triennale*? Some of you have. This is a very important and interesting Triennale. There are six Triennales in Japan, so I call them a Triennale Kingdom. Anyway, Setouchi was founded last year by the organizer of the *Echigo-Tsumari Triennale*, Fram Kitagawa. The concept is very interesting. It invites 12 inland islands to be part of the Triennale. They open seasonally, there's a spring opening, a summer opening and

an autumn opening in which they had an audience of about 300.000 people. So the numbers of the 1st version of the *Setouchi Triennale* were really remarkable.

This is the *Yokohama Triennale* in Japan.

This is the *Gwangju Biennale* in 2010, directed by Massimiliano Gioni who was the director of the *Venice Biennale* last year.

This here is the Kassel documenta as you'll all know.

Ute and Elke talked about the formation of the *International Biennale Association*. This is an image of the first edition of the *World Biennial Forum*, organized by the *Gwangju Biennale Foundation*, *Biennial Foundation* and *IFA*, where over 400 biennial professionals and related institutions gathered in the same point. We dealt a lot with today's biennial discourses, the positive and negative sides of biennial's activities.

This is a biennial's representatives meeting in Gwangju where 68 representatives and biennial organizers gathered.

And finally we've been able to formulate a public entity through which the organizers of the biennials can communicate and participate, they can share information.

Let's take a look at art fairs. Until the end of the 1990s there were just a handful of art fairs worldwide, including Basel and Chicago. It was a situation comparable to the biennials during the 1990s. But in 2008 there already were 100 art fairs. According to the statistics conducted by *Art Newspaper*, in 2010 there were 180 art fairs. By the end of last year there were 300 art fairs. This means, an art market revolution took place. Art fairs are sucking up the local traditional art market. They are becoming kind of a black hole. Globalization and nomadization are becoming another dominant trend in the art market.

This is the opening of the *Art Basel* in Hong Kong.

According to art economics, 30% of sales by internationally leading galleries take place at home, 70% on the road. Globalization and nomadization are two of the dominant trends in the art market, as I said. Leading art fairs and galleries are aggressively being franchised all over the world. So we started to define art fairs as a black hole in the art market. Today's trend of the art market has been remapped into two top systems: on the one hand art fairs, on the other hand expansion of auction houses.

This is *Frieze*, New York. As you know, *Art Basel* is also in Miami and Hong Kong. *Frieze* franchised to *Frieze New York* and *Frieze Masters*.

Finally I talk about the *Gwangju Biennale*. 34 years ago a civil uprising happened. If you take a look at the map, the location of Gwangju is far down West South of the Korean Peninsula. In this map unfortunately we don't see the indication of the cities in North Korea as the country is still divided by ideology. Gwangju city is traditionally known for gourmet and art. The Biennale was found in memory of the Gwangju Democratic Uprising in 1980. So one of the backbones of the spirit of the *Gwangju Biennale* is in relation to this civil uprising. *Gwangju Biennale* was founded in 1994, this year marks the 20 years anniversary of its founding.

We do a lot of projects together at the same time: *Gwangju Biennale* (1995), *Gwangju Design Biennale* (2004), *Gwangju Folly* (Architecture, 2011), *GBICC* (Gwangju Biennale International Curators, 2008) and *NOON* (critical magazine on the visual culture, 2008).

This is the *Gwangju Biennial* Hall at the Design Biennale last year.

Here you can see a work by the Japanese Artist Kengo Kuma.

This is the Art Biennale from 2012, curated by six co-artistic directors, including Carol Lu and Alia Swastika, who are here today.

In the first edition of *Gwangju Biennale* that happened in 1995, the number of visitors was about 1.63 million people, which is still the highest record in the history of biennials. So I was asked a lot of questions: What is the secret? What is the attractive point for the audience in the name of contemporary art and visual culture? 1.63 million people is really remarkable and until today unbroken. After this success a lot of biennials came out especially in Far Eastern countries. In Korea we have about 10 biennials and triennials, also in China and Japan. So in three Far Eastern countries there are 30 biennials and triennials – which is a lot, maybe too much.

I would like to briefly introduce you to the *Gwangju Folly*, which is an architectural project. It was founded in the spirit of rejection towards the urban colonization by the rapid industrial growth. In this picture you can see a work by Rem Koolhaas from last year's edition, curated by Nikolaus Hirsch, co-curated by Philipp Misselwitz. It's a very simple architectural structure where the people of Gwangju are supposed to pass by. On the floor you can read the question: „Do you support democracy?“ And then *yes* is a green field, *maybe* is a gray field and *no* is a red field. If you pass through, you have to choose. It's like a voting place designed by Rem Koolhaas in cooperation with Ingo Niermann, the German writer and artist. We installed this piece in a slum area of Gwangju. The second question written on the floor was: „Do you support same gender marriage?“ Here the majority was *maybe*, *no* was second and *yes*, well, actually very little. The topics were changing every month. In February it was: „Is Korea a Democratic Republic?“ It's a very fundamental question in relation to North Korea, because we all consider North Korea as part of the Korean Peninsula, so the question applies to North Korea as well.

This is a small house where people could meet and play music. It's a work by the French architect Dominique Parrault from the 1st edition of the *Folly*. It used to be a very chaotic area for elite parties here and there. Now it's been rearranged as an artistic and architectural place.

This is a piece by Ai Weiwei, again from the 2nd edition. As you can see, this is a very simple cooking cart. It's an illegal food-cart for the streets. Do you have such a thing in Germany? No? It's not illegal? Anyway, Ai Weiwei's concept was interesting. He wanted to use public money, which is governmental money, creating illegal objects on the streets to be controlled, repressed and discarded by the authorities in the end. But, you know, everybody now wants to keep them as they are. We had a talk with the authorities, and they didn't want to repress them. So they will remain there forever – as what? Architectural object or artifacts? Whatever.

This is a mobile hotel from the 2nd edition by Do-Ho Suh, the Korean artist based in London. This hotel is moving around every day. It moves to every corner of the city, and people can apply for a reservation. When they get the right to stay one night or two nights, we don't charge them. We rather wish to give them the experience to stay in this mobile hotel, entirely designed by an artist. He describes it as a 5-star-hotel.

This is the work *Field* by Ai Weiwei during the 2011 *Gwangju Design Biennale*. Here you can see Massimiliano Gioni. This is Ai Weiwei. Okwui Enwezor was the director of the 2007 *Gwangju Biennale*. Here he's offering a shaman's ritual. René Block was a curator of the 3rd *Gwangju Biennale*, here you can also see Kim Hong-hee. This picture shows Ute Meta Bauer and Hou Hanru that directed the first international *World Biennial Forum* in 2012. Harald Szeemann was the curator of the 2nd *Gwangju Biennale*.

Thank you very much.

CAROL LU

Thank you, Yongwoo, for giving us a historical perspective on biennials in relation to the mechanisms in the art system. Now I'd like to invite the third panelist today, Katja Aßmann. She's the artistic director of *Urbane Künste Ruhr* (*Urban Arts Ruhr*). In 1999, Aßmann directed the art and culture department of the International Architecture Exhibition *Emscher Park*. From 2002 to 2007 she worked as freelance curator for several exhibition projects. In 2007 Aßmann was assigned to manage the divisions Architecture, Urban Planning, and Visual Arts of the *European Capital of Culture Ruhr.2010*. Since 2012, Katja Aßmann is artistic director of *Urbane Künste Ruhr*, a cultural institution to secure the effects of *Ruhr.2010*. Aßmann developed the artistic conception for *Urbane Künste Ruhr* and curates own productions with various national and international artists and co-productions with artistic and scientific partner institutions from the Ruhr region and abroad.

KATJA ASSMANN

Thank you very much for inviting me. I think I'm one of the few curators here who were never involved in a biennial or triennial in the classical sense. But I am involved in public art projects and like to give you an idea of my work in the Ruhr area and how we develop public art.

*Urbane Künste Ruhr* was, as you said, Carol Lu, developed after the Capital of Culture year. You could compare a Capital of Culture year with a biennial because this title goes to different cities in Europe, and there's always an artistic program that's very special and contemporary. In 2010 Istanbul was Capital of Culture.

The Ruhr area is situated in Germany close to the Dutch border and consists of 53 cities that are connected through their industrial history: The coal mining and the steel plants were the main drivers for the development of the area. I'm mentioning this because the Ruhr area went through a deep transformation when the coal and steel mining left.

In these pictures you can see how industrial sites were transformed for example in Duisburg or Essen, where the Zeche Zollverein even is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the 1990s, artists responded to this change. I'm only showing this one work by Richard Serra, because I think it stands for a whole generation of artists who transformed the Ruhr area and the landscape and gave new landmarks and signs to this region.

With all that experience in the Ruhr area there was actually a Triennale founded in 2011: the *Ruhr Triennale*. The motivation was to give new life to the Ruhr area by bringing art to former industrial sites. The first director of the *Ruhr Triennale* was Gerard Mortier who started it with the focus on music and theater. But he also invited visual artists. At the moment, Heiner Goebbels is the art director. I don't think you can put his productions into one corner, but artists collaborate from many different disciplines.

*Urbane Künste Ruhr* is run by the same mother organization, and I'm asked every year to do one production for the *Ruhr Triennale*. Here you can see a piece from *Random International*, an artist group from London. They were so fascinated by the scale-less architecture of the coal mines. Here you see again the symbol of the Ruhr area, the shaft of the coal mine Zeche Zollverein. *Random International* were fascinated by the fact that for eternity in the Ruhr area we have to pump water, otherwise the whole area would collapse. We have to pump water all the time, and nobody knows about it. This fact inspired them to create a piece with water. People could interact and have fun and could just understand the history and little bit better. Another piece I curated for the *Ruhr Triennale* is from Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. Here you can see a site in Bochum, the Century Hall. It is also one of the main sites of the *Ruhr Triennale*. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer realized a piece called *Pulse Park*. Behind the Century Hall there's a new part which is not really taken over by the public as public domain, especially not during the night. That's why I wanted to create a piece that gives a new code to this area. There's a sensor you can go to and measure your pulse, which then is transmitted into the installation, and the whole park would move to that rhythm.

This in mind, when we had the *Capital of Culture* year we were thinking of what kind of art project could be developed that would rise international attention. We thought the *Ruhr Triennale* was so successful because its motivation roots within the specific sites. The industrial space was the starting point, and we asked artists to work with that. We tried to find topics that are important for this region but maybe need a little more understanding and also involve the inhabitants of the area.

There is the Emscher, the former river that we still use as an open canalization system due to the industrialization. We started an art exhibition called *Emscherart*, which is an art Triennial because we do it every three years. It focuses on the transformation of the river into an open canalization system and now back into a river since the coal mining stopped. We started in 2010, 2013 we did it again and we are now preparing 2016.

This is the area of Emscher valley. In the center you can see the open canalization system, there's a lot of infrastructure, and in between there are two waterways, the Emscher and the Rhein-Herne-Canal. There's a piece of land we recall the Emscher Island, which is 17 km long. Every three years, we choose a different area for the artists to work on.

This is the piece *Waiting For The River* from 2010 of the Dutch artist group *Observatorium*. They simply created a sculpture in which you can wait for the river to come, because it's placed where in the future the new Emscher will flow. In the end it wasn't really about waiting for the river, but a place where you would understand how to look at such non-places and imagine what can happen and what mankind can do to nature. You could book for a night to sleep there in one of the pavilions.

In 2013 we took the same sculpture and put it into another surrounding. This is now farmland, but the river will flow here in 2020. It's special about the *Emscherkunst* that we buy the concept of some pieces and show it every three years. In between we store the piece and then rebuild it on a different site.

Another piece I briefly wanted to mention is from Michael Sailstorfer. It brings a little bit to the

point what we are trying to do in the Ruhr area: We try to re-nature the Emscher valley. Michael found this so strange that he created a piece called *Antiherbst, Anti-autumn*. In autumn he and his team collected the leaves of a tree that stands in the Emscher valley, dried them and put them back onto the tree. Michael filmed this performance, and during the exhibition you could see the film in this little wagon next to the tree. It was very simple, but also because it was humorous, people started to discuss about it.

Anna Witt is a young artist from Vienna. She realized the maybe most important piece of *Emscherkunst* in 2013. She lived for a couple of weeks in Duisburg in the Ruhr area. Coming from Vienna, she was fascinated that the streets in Duisburg were full of old furniture, refrigerators, bulky trash – not only at certain times, but every day. She observed that, and in the end she said: Can we not start something productive with this, instead of trying to avoid it? The Ruhr area was always an area of production. She did an audition with local people who wanted to work with her as performers. The idea was that every day six people would range the streets searching for bulky trash and then build furniture out of it. Anna Witt worked together with *Uglycute*, a design collective from Copenhagen. They advised her that she should use also something glittery that will give the designed objects a different meaning instead of being just recycled furniture. Therefore they used this stretchy fabric you would normally design costumes out of. The objects that were built by the performers were left in the streets, so people could just take them home. Finally people ended up waiting for the objects being finished to take them home. Thus the *Emscherkunst* suddenly was in all these private homes. It was a very successful idea, I still love. There was a headquarter in Duisburg people could go to see how the performers work. Also a few prototypes were displayed there.

Ai Weiwei was already mentioned. I just wanted to talk briefly about his idea he developed for *Emscherart* in 2013. His initial idea was to design 1000 tents. I'm not very good at Chinese mythology, but in a nutshell he said: The Dragon's head is a symbol for the city. But when he saw the Ruhr area in aerial photos and descriptions, he thought it's more the tail but the head, as you have a lot of little bits and pieces of city and infrastructure. That's why he first wanted to call his work *Dragaon's Tail*. But then he changed it to *Out of Enlightenment, Aus der Aufklärung*, because he wanted to make a gesture towards the German exhibition in Beijing in 2011. He designed 10 types of tents, altogether 980. The different designs always referred to some works he realized. In the picture you can see *Fuck Off*, which refers to the exhibition *Fuck Off* he curated. So every tent held a message from one of his projects. People visiting *Emscherart* could hire a tent, and the whole work would only be visible during the night when people would sleep in the tents. Besides that he wanted to create something that doesn't leave any marks, because the Ruhr area already has so many marks from mankind. Instead he wanted to create a piece which is completely gone after the exhibition. We had to sign that we give the tents to the people who used them and not sell them or anything. In the end there was a lottery where people that camped during the exhibition could win one of the tents.

*Emscherkunst* and all the other projects we realize always get the motivation from the people, from a certain problem, from the desire to change something. We have to change so much and therefore need all the creativity we can get. One of the projects we are currently developing is the *Detroit Projekt / This is Not Detroit*. One of the cities in the Ruhr area, Bochum, got an Opel factory after the coal mines closed down. The whole city got their identity from Opel. To be an *Opelaner* and to work for Opel really means something. But now in Detroit they decided that the



Opel factory will be closed. When we came up with the idea to start an art project about the future of the city, the future of work and how people can gain back responsibility instead of letting somebody else decide how the city will develop, we decided – even before the decision was made that the factory will be closed down – to have an artistic gesture showing that there are other options.

*Umschichten* is an office just next to Karlsruhe, they are from Stuttgart and want to do the project *Opelation*. Right now they're collecting anything Opel doesn't need anymore in order to give it back to the people. They are designing little huts for the Schrebergärten, the allotment gardens, and try to make something out of it. Of course this is just another symbol for trying to take back the city.

Thank you a lot.

CAROL LU

Thank you, Katja. We are now moving to the second part of the panel discussion this morning. Besides the panelists we also have two colleagues joining us today as the respondents of the panel.

The first respondent is Blair French. He is the executive director of *Artspace Visual Arts Center*, Sydney and Curatorial Convener for the 6th and 7th edition of *SCAPE Christchurch Biennale* of Art in Public Space. French has worked in art galleries and museums in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Since arriving in Sydney from New Zealand in 1995, he has developed a dual career as writer and curator in the field of contemporary art and photography.

The other respondent is German-based artist Christoph Schäfer. Schäfer helped a community band together to prevent the creation of a contested housing and office development in Hamburg and created *Park Fiction*, a public park in Hamburg, St. Pauli. He actively supports the Occupy Gezi Movement, organizing a movement to rename *Park Fiction* into *Gezi Park* in solidarity with the movement.

I would like to invite the two respondents to make comments and a short statement.

BLAIR FRENCH

Thank you so much. I'd like to thank the organizers for inviting me and bringing me such a long way from the other side of the world to talk about things happening down there. I also need to update my bio, because I no longer work at *Artspace Visual Arts Center*. I'm now with the *Museum of Contemporary Art* as Assistant Director in Sydney.

I thought the role of a respondent was probably to pull a few threads out of the wonderful presentations we had. I also wanted to maybe present just one or two images that speak a little bit for my background and probably the reason I'm here and the thinking that probably informs my responses.

There are actually six points I'd like to make or six issues I'd like to draw out of this morning's presentations – not so much to address them myself but to offer them back to the panel as points of further conversation. Before I do so I'll give you a brief introduction to the slide and

leave you to mull it over.

What you're actually witnessing here is a work in three forms. It's first of all an artwork by a Christchurch artist called Zina Swanson, a young artist who was one of the many artists who effectively lost everything other than her life in the Christchurch earthquakes. Her studio was lost, she had two exhibitions about to be sent out from the studio the following day. She lost years, immediate work and all of her archives. Swanson is an installation artist and painter. When invited by me to come back to post-earthquake Christchurch, she came up with this: On the one hand it's an artwork. On the other hand it's a public gathering of a few people, and that is a point I'd like to come back just briefly in the end. The third point is that it's an act of hypnosis.

The first of my six observations about last night's lecture and today's panel, the first point I'd like to reiterate and offer back out for discussion is the point that I think was strongly made by Fulya. It's the thinking of the biennial as a public domain. It seems kind of self-evident, but we so often talk about art *in* public space as opposed to art *as a form of* public space. And I think what Fulya talked about with Istanbul was the remarkable recognition that there's a clear distinction between what the biennial offers as a form of public domain and the experience of art in another form of public domain – that is outside of the four walls or outside of the institution. I think with her act of re-housing within the institutions of art or within buildings that might be associated more with private gatherings and withdrawing from the public sphere – in the sense of a public domain, a physical space, a gathering space – the Biennale itself creates its own model of the public. This is perhaps something we talk about a lot, but we haven't really recognized this very specific distinction.

It came out in a couple of presentations as well implicitly the distinction between the biennial as a form of public domain and a Museum – which may be some other form of public domain. The idea of the museums as an archive was mentioned last night, and so was the art fair. Maybe that tension between the biennial and the art fair is something that we will be addressing in the coming years quite increasingly.

The second point that comes out of this is the way in which physical public spaces – the streets, the parks, the gardens, the squares – have been utilized or deployed within biennials as a very particular form of meeting places. There was a question from the floor last night about how does one make the link between the international and the local, immediate community. It seems to me that so often biennials that are not dedicated to operating outside of institutions or convention halls etc. nevertheless invite projects into more public spheres. Those public spheres function as the immediate points of meeting, they are the first points of meeting. They offer the most raw forms of meeting, because the artists quite often are visiting and working very hard and very quickly to establish some point of connection or understanding with the local circumstances. So I think again they've been utilized in a certain way, and what Fulya has talked about is the way in which perhaps these meeting places can be withdrawn from the public sphere into something else that is the biennial as a whole.

My third observation is around the city, state and politics and the legitimization of various forms of bureaucratic and political agendas by operating within spheres that have multiple points of interest and control. This is something when working within the public sphere – I think it came

out in Katja's talk in a positive way. It's rather necessary to ask the question of, who does the city belong to, who owns the city, who owns space, whose agendas are we actually addressing through the creation of biennial models and artist projects in spaces that have multiple bureaucratic layerings. I hope we can talk about this some more.

My fourth interest is in temporality. The biennial is always a promise. It's a promise of return, it's built on the structure that two or three or five years later something else will happen. I find this very interesting with regard to the type of work that appears in outdoor spaces. Because the rhythm of absence, presence, action, and then withdraw back into absence is a very pronounced. You might encounter something in a public park, and it's gone one month later. If you are an inhabitant or a regular visitor of the city, what has been changed by that work? Has that work or that action attempted change one's perception or experience of that place? So I think temporality is incredibly important. It was spoken a lot about last night. I think this idea of disappearance and withdrawal is actually one of the founding experiences of a temporary exhibition, and one that we not talk about enough.

The fifth point is around imagination. And this is where I probably come to the work by Zina Swanson. It's not so much about the question of who the city belongs to or who has occupied space, but actually in my experience of the Biennales I've been working on: Who imagines the city and who actually builds the city? And I come back to this work in a moment.

The sixth point is actually to stress the importance of the few. I think so often our operation within the biennial context is predicated on the appeal to large forms of community in terms of involvement, and of addressing issues, agendas and questions. But I often think that what we lose in that is the importance of recognition that so much of the experience of public space or public domain – whether it would be an online public domain or a physical space – is in fact very intimate, generally rarely in mass forms, but in small clusters.

This work by Zina Swanson is taking place in what's left of the inner city of Christchurch. Thousands of buildings and a couple of square kilometers have been destroyed. It takes place in a space that for two years and three months no one was allowed in there, except for demolition crews and army. Many of the people you see standing there, this may well be the first time that they have actually stood this ground for some time. The Biennale took place three months after the city was reopened. So people started walking in, although there wasn't much to walk in for as you can see in the picture. This work is an imaginable, psychological kind of pulling out of an experience. The artist has actually commissioned a hypnotist who is working with people that are associated in somehow with the natural sciences, for instance botanists, gardeners or florists. And he is taking these people into different parts of the city – which is completely overgrown by weeds and various forms of plant life; it has just amazingly re-colonized the urban rubble – placing them into hypnosis with a series of questions. They assume the persona of the plant or the weed that's in front of them. Within that persona – and this is quite remarkable – they start speaking about the experience of place and the experience of community at the experience of destruction. So this person is actually talking as the plant you see right at their feet. Questions like this come forth: Why did you come here? Who are your friends? How do people respond to you? What happened during the earthquake? How did you feel? And I think this light touch about

the public sphere as a very intimate experience is something that's not often talked about in terms of public projects.

The second work I just briefly leave on is another act of projectional displacement. In many ways much of what we do in the public sphere requires this, particularly in places and situations of stress. So again this is a post-disaster work. This is in some part of the city called Hagley Park, which is also a refuge. Thousands of people gathered there in the night of the major earthquake in temporary tents and temporary hospital setups. It has a particular resonance now with that city. The two artist, Maddie Leach and Jem Noble, worked with the local Amateur Radio Club and made this act of reaching out to the world, saying: Hey, we are here. Their work is called *I was using six watts when you Received me*. They worked with the sound archives and pulled out little snippets of radio that predate the Christchurch earthquakes and speak about something from the pre-earthquake condition of the city, including recordings made and buildings now lost. Together with this Amateur Radio Club, they occupied the park and sent these signals specifically to the orbiting space station. They sent a call to outer space, saying: We still exist, and these are our memories.

I wanted to show these works, because they show a different form of acting a public space that is intimate, that is personal, that is emotional, that is psychological and may be different from the one we saw so far, as the occupational public space is inherently political and activist. Thank you.

CHRISTOPH SCHÄFER

I would like to add my own experiences with biennial type of constellations. I was at the *Turin Youth Biennial* curated by Michelangelo Pistoletto in 2002. I wonder if anybody in the room has seen it. It was actually quite challenging, but no one ever spoke about it, I think. And then I was at *Documenta 11* with *Park Fiction*. And I had the pleasure and the stress of being part of Fulya's *Istanbul Biennial* this year.

Today I wanted to elegantly do some drawings while everybody is talking, take some pictures with my smart phone, but I gave up right when you started, because there was not enough time. But yesterday in Ute Meta Bauer's talk on public space and in Fulya's talk of course it was totally clear that *space* is the problem, especially public space. Even the classical definition of public space, let's say in the industrial age, was the promise of being a space of equality, a space for all. It was supposed to be, as Fulya said, a homogenous space, which it is not anymore. Also it has become very problematic because it's a highly gendered space, male-dominated space. It's also based on the public/private split that was established in that Renaissance area, where things like happiness, desire, imagination or cooking were part of the private and not of the public domain or public space. And furthermore it's largely a passive space.

Today the problematic point is – even in a situation like Gezi with a very repressive government acting like it does in Turkey right now – that public space is basically an extended business improvement zone. Everything official art does more or less is supposed to support the business improvement function of public space. Art is basically always in danger of serving real estate owners, real estate business, the global competition between cities and elites – and all this in the

age of the image city. In the age of the image city, biennials and art biennials are extremely important.

I think biennials are not the most crucial transforming factor of cities. There are other things like football championships or Olympic Games. But the weird thing is that the same architects that build museums build football stadiums these days. I just want to remind everybody that Zaha Hadid only two days ago said that she's not responsible for the 500 Bangladeshi workers who died in the process of building the Olympic Stadium in Qatar. So you have the architecture-art-sports connection that is basically transforming cities and urban spaces.

When I saw Ai Weiwei's little food wagon I had to think about the football championship in Japan and South Korea 2002. I was told that one of the rules the *FIFA* wanted to impose during the championship was, that in a circle of 4 km around the stadiums no one else but the sponsors McDonald's and Coca-Cola, I think, were allowed to have advertisement and sell food – which is quite a thing in cities in South Asia.

This is one of the drawings – actually not the best one – on the discussion of the local and the global we had yesterday. According to Henri Lefebvre, the city is divided into several layers: the global layer, the middle layer and the private layer, where everyday life happens. The global in this sense doesn't mean that we travel everywhere and fly in and out, but it structures the thinking and the city. So the global level is actually right now controlling all cities. The level of the everyday life is suppressed, I would say, or walking in these lines. The whole idea of public space, as we heard, was so much connected to this global thinking, global politics, global ways of thinking. But it's a poisoned space, I would say, and today it's largely dominated by elites.

As Fulya mentioned the Gezi Park Movement, I think what today happens is very important. Last year we saw not only the occupation and defense of the Gezi Park – and I must say that I like the Gezi Park, but I wouldn't call myself a supporter, that would be too much honor for me. The Gezi Occupation changed the public space into a platform of exchange, into a platform of imagination. I think that's the point where it starts to have a different function. The same can happen in football stadiums. Football stadiums are spaces mostly dominated by capital and sponsors, of spectacle and controlling crowds. But they can be turned around by the audience into arenas of protest. It doesn't only happen in Istanbul, but also in Hamburg, and it happened in Cairo before. In such moments, the very much controlled public spaces are being transformed into something new. The real challenge for biennials is to achieve such a transformation. In this drawing I drew a connection between different localized struggles. Maybe this is one of the chances biennials can take.

This picture shows an example of how the platform-building and the transformation of public space looked like in Istanbul. After Gezi was cleared, there were lots of forums in other parts of the city. There were instant public earth tables, *iftars*, where people came together during the fasting period. Muslims and non-Muslims came together to share food at time. Suddenly the atmosphere changed completely. The public political speech that we know changed into something else. It was six weeks after Gezi when I came back to Istanbul. It was my second visit there. I couldn't meet the person I want to meet, and I was integrated into this situation in a part of the city I didn't know. Within minutes we were in a conversation that had the quality of a very well picked dinner where people who don't know each other but have a lot to say to each other

come together. The conversation floated between cooking recipes, politics, philosophy, the everyday life of your job, what you do and how you would like to change it. If you have a situation where people think about how they can change their job and everyday life, you have a situation I always hoped art could be: a field of resonance where imagination can resonate, where ideas can go back and forth. When such kind of situation happens in public space, it's totally different, it's altering, and it's maybe making superfluous what art was doing up to this point.

I heard the word *platform* very often in the talks today in connection with exhibitions that usually are not platforms but exhibitions. Exhibitions are there for looking at things, not for exchanging things on the basis of equality. The type of platforms we see in short-term temporary exhibitions tend to be romanticized spaces, idealized Marie Antoinette-type villages of the poor. But if biennials try to become platforms for real exchange, they have to become something different from that. We have to think about a different model of globalization. The churches of the Gothic time and their builders might serve as a model of how I would imagine biennials to work. As you probably all know, the Gothic churches were built over hundreds of years. The builders had special knowledge that couldn't be copied easily. But they were very flexible. Whenever within the overall inflexible situation of medieval times they were crossed with the aristocrat, they could just move to a different building site and continue building there. Hence that Cathedral would remain unfinished for a long time. If we could get this kind of power into nomadism – the idea was written about in the chapter on Nomadic Warfare in *Mille Plateaux* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattarie, so you probably all know it – it could be a fantastic example of how one could work in a global structure and at the same time leave things unfinished and have intentions that we don't share.

Thank you very much.

CAROL LU

You probably noticed there was a lot of movement in terms of arrangements on stage, so we have been carrying out a very lively discussion this morning. We don't have much time left.

We've been talking a lot about biennials in the public domain. But as all of you are aware, the public domain is much more than the public space. It implies a certain set of relationships and organizational principles. I would also like to point out that when we talk about biennials, there are different positions to think about, which position we are speaking from, whether we are speaking from the organizer's and infrastructure's point of view. The organizers and the planners make the biennials possible and create it as an infrastructural being, the curators and artists participate in it and actually realize the biennial itself. The question I'd like to pose is this: What is the limit? Should we refrain from over-sizing the biennial format? How far into the public should the biennial go?

YONGWOO LEE

For example the *Gwangju Biennale* has 20 years of history. One of the serious issues until today is communication between the participants and the audience. One of the frequent questions we get from the audience is: Why has the Biennale been torturing us psychologically in the name of contemporary art? As I told you, the number of visitors of the first edition was 1.6 million. After

that it's been radically reduced, from 1.6 million to 900.000 – which is still a lot – to 700.000, then 300.000. Now we are recovering to half a million. If there's something you can learn from the contemporary art context, it is that it's something very good that we can share. *Gwangju Biennale* has been playing as a platform where citizens can participate in discussing about the spirit of democracy that happened 34 years ago. We lost over 200 civilians, and that weakens the civil uprising. Gwangju is a place where this kind of activism has been reactivated in the Biennale context. From the 1st edition up to now, we try to put this kind of activism-oriented discourse into the context of the *Gwangju Biennale*. We are widely opening the Biennale not only to the artistic discourses, but also in terms of inviting artistic directors and curators from all over the world. There is no limit of religion, nationality or whatsoever. I would say that *Gwangju Biennale* has been playing as a platform where people can share the spirit of any kind of activism. Last year's Biennale has received criticism that it had been all the time dealing with too much rhetoric and narratives on democracy and activism – but we are very happy with that.

FULYA ERDEMCI

*Istanbul Biennale itself* acted as a platform last time, but more than that we started our public program in February 2013 (almost 7 months prior to the opening). Since the first press conference we got protests from the people. I'm also taking that as part of the platform function. The protests even for me were useful, because one of the main sponsors was a producer of military vehicles, and I just learned about that at the press conference from the protesters. So it's part of the platform. It doesn't need to be inside to open up this important issue. Besides, this year there emerged a big discussion about the nature of the Biennale itself. It started an institutional critique of the Biennale as an institution. This is why I believe that biennials are open platforms, either deliberately through certain artworks or as a public forum.

KATJA ASSMANN

The *Emscher Triennale* will happen every three years, but we already know that there will be an end. It will only be there until the Emscher River is being transformed. So we already know that in 2020 we will stop this Triennale. That's why it has a different starting point, a different meaning and is a different platform. As an organizer and one of the producers, for me it is very good because I know that there is an end. We have certain steps we want to achieve in this project.

CAROL LU

Thank you. We would like to invite questions from the audience now.

M1 (männlich, erste Reihe rechts neben Ute Meta Bauer)

Maybe just one or two observations or questions. The first one was actually in relation to your presentation. I recall that the Festival in Recklinghausen after the end of the Second World War set the scene for the project you are working on and also was the inspiration for the founding of *Documenta*. I was thinking that in the development of this biennial conversation, it would be important to also do some archival, historical research to keep the memory of these other projects.

This leads me on to my second point, which is: The notion of public space changes depending on the context. For instance the former communist countries at the moment of transition around

1989 – during their communist period one could say there was no public space, it was owned by the state, there was not the notion of the public in the same way, or you could say, the people owned everything. Whatever the case, 1989 represented the moment when there was real public ownership of space, whether it was in Bucharest or cities in Poland, people could actually do things in the space which then the state began to colonize, re-occupy. Now we have this kind of business-in-development-zone in the notion of public space. I'm keeping the memory of these really open public spaces. Are there public spaces in North Korea in the sense that we would understand them? I'm not sure. And even some of the currently existing communist countries like Vietnam – to what extent is there public space in Vietnam, Singapore or Indonesia? This might be an important discussion to have at some point.

KATJA ASSMANN

May I just add something, because Melanie Bohne from Münster is here, and she's setting up the archive of the *Skulpturprojekte* in Münster. Of course this is something I'm looking at, because it's our neighbor, and their experience with public space as well as their archive is very valuable for our future work.

UTE META BAUER

I just want to come back to the notion of the public space. When we sometimes speak about public space, we speak from the privileged position of choice. I think it's very important to see that for example in North Korea or Havana negotiations of the public begin right now when there's no sufficient freedom of speech. You can also negotiate whether there's free public space here with all the CCTV in London for example. Is there public space left? Can you feel free to express what you want to express? We could compare this situation to North Korea for example. I think it's important that we are very precise here. People always negotiate the public, and I think with Gezi Park and other uprisings it's interesting to see what's happening and that this desire of being outspoken can't be repressed for longer terms. Where do artists and cultural producers engage in that? For me this is the more important question instead of whether the biennial is a public platform. But what can it provide? What can all of the cultural institutions provide?

YONGWOO LEE

To add a little more to what Ute says: The questions we get from the audience or even from the professionals go to: Why biennial? Is a biennial still one of the liveliest cultural actions? Are for example the *Biennale Foundation* and the biennials growing together? These questions don't apply to the museum. All of us have experiences with museums. Why museums? Are museums useful in terms of the artistic practice? I love this kind of questions a lot, because they really apply to the biennial activities today. Museums are about clarification and history, biennials are about practice and realization.

For example I've briefly explained about the *Gwangju Folly*, the architectural projects. When I first announced to make a Folly, some of the professionals came to me, saying: Now we don't have to see anymore *biennial fatigue*. Basically we aimed to return life to the citizens. Because the urban projects all the time tried to remove the collected memories from the urban life. So we would like to bring that back. This small architectural project has been very well received and was loved by the citizens.



It really depends on how to approach the cultural actions in relation to the biennial practice by whatever you do. So recovering the public sphere and the public places in relation to any kind of situation – you mentioned North Korea, I've been in North Korea twice. It might be very interesting to know what is going on in North Korea. I didn't see any public space there at all. I wanted to visit many different artistic cultural sites, and I was not allowed to. So finding public space in such let's say limited countries is not going to be easy. But think about making an art festival in the neutral zone, the demilitarized zone between South Korea and North Korea that has been protected for over 60 years, but then it's almost inaccessible. If you are able to create an artistic festival in such a demilitarized zone where South and North can participate together, invite global artists to this very much tension-oriented area, it would be another kind of biennial narrative and also another interpretation of the public space.

M2 (hinten rechts, außerhalb des Sichtfelds)

I would like to ask Fulya a critical question about the first reveals in the press. I think she might need to talk about it. From my own experience working with her, I saw that the *Istanbul Biennial* functions as an exhibition first of all rather than as a platform or as a link to the public space. It returned to its original role and function. Maybe we can talk about the change in the map. I don't know if she abandoned the concept, but the content was there, so the exhibition functioned as a canon – especially in the Istanbul case – linking the historical cases to Paris, Amsterdam, London, New York, especially to gentrification and other urban protests. It reminded the people that they're not alone, that this is not the only case happening. So biennials are still exhibitions. How would you comment on this?

FULYA ERDEMCI

Actually when I was answering your question, Carol, I forgot to tell something. We talked about the protests in relation to one of the sponsors of the Biennale. But I forgot to tell you that after we learned this fact, of course, we were sharing the information that we learned through these protests with the participating artists. We were telling them that one of the sponsors is producing military vehicles. So for instance Hito Steyerl came up with the lecture performance project in which she asked the question: Is the museum a battlefield? How are art and capital related? How are all the military situations related? We also invited a collective „Mulksuzlestirme Aglari / Network of Dispossession“ that was formed during the Gezi occupation. Burak Arikan, an artist from the last *Berlin Biennale*, came together with journalists and researchers, and they created a map of a *Network of Dispositions* that showed the relationship between the developers, the government, the media including one of the Biennale sponsors as well. For me this is another discussion. I believe that art has the capacity and possibility to question itself and its relation to life and to the system. I think it works perfectly in this sense. For instance, I told you that around 340.000 people visited the *Istanbul Biennale* within five weeks. It was written about in the newspapers and discussed in the media. So I guess maybe not like earth tables – that was not possible – but as an exhibition it also functions as a social forum, I guess.

CHRISTOPH SCHÄFER

That was exactly my point, and you have been in Istanbul at the time. But of course last summer there was an abundance of forums. Actually there were so many that people couldn't go to all the places where things were discussed and done. In that situation it would have been better to

say that this is not the platform where everything is being discussed. Sorry, no, it wasn't. It was what the German journalists expected and didn't get. Maybe they never had experienced that a self-made platform is something different from one that is given to you by art in a nice gesture.

FULYA ERDEMCİ

I want to add one more thing. For instance we all learned a lot from the last *Berlin Biennale*. I think it was a historically important one and a very strong claim. For me I think art and activism can relate to each other, can learn from each other and change each other, but their processes and impacts are different and need not to be the same.

CAROL LU

As it turns out, having a few extra minutes is never enough for discussions about biennials and biennial making. So with that I would like to thank all of our panelists and respondents of this morning's section. I would like to thank you all for joining us this morning. Thank you very much.