Biennale 双年展

(中文)

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Biennale is Italian for "every other year" and can be used to describe any event that happens every two years. It is commonly used within the art world to describe an international manifestation of contemporary art—for example, the Biennale de Paris, which was created in 1959 by André Malraux. The word is spelled identically in French. English speakers sometimes use the equivalent English word, biennial (for example, the "Venice Biennial") in speaking or writing of such events.[1]


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Development

The oldest and perhaps most prestigious biennale is the Venice Biennale, which takes place every second year in the Northern Italian waterside city. Established in 1895, the Biennale has in recent years seen attendances of over 300,000 visitors in a single run.
Though the Venice Biennale remained popular throughout the 20th century, taking its only break for six years during World War II, the proliferation of these large-scale international recurrent exhibitions did not occur until a century after the Venice Biennale's founding. This culmination came in the 1990s, when over 40 biennials were initiated worldwide. Today, we count over 60 major exhibitions of this type, most of them located in territories until now considered peripheral: central and eastern Europe, Asia and South America. Over the past two decades, biennales have been instrumental in conducting the global debates of contemporary art and theory, in particular those surrounding cultural globalisation, post-colonialism, the three-worlds model and identity politics.[2]

Location

The term is most commonly used in the context of major repeating art exhibitions and may refer to recurring exhibitions in any location, including The Biennale of Sydney, Sao Paulo Art Biennial, Shanghai Biennial, Venice Biennale, Whitney Biennial, and Biennale de Paris.[1]

Due to the high volumes of participants, biennales generally take place in large, open spaces. The Venice Biennale traditionally positions its pavilions within the Guardini Park. In large cities, where open space parks may be unavailable, organizations like the Shanghai Biennale and the Whitney Biennale locate their main exhibitions within museums (the Shanghai Art Museum and the Whitney Museum, respectively), dotting their remaining exhibitions around various off-site locations.

Timing

A biennale, which occurs every other year, can vary in length anywhere from 2 weeks to 4 months. It usually takes place during its country's warmer, summer months, when art can be viewed outside comfortably.

Governance

One noteworthy characteristic of contemporary biennials is that their emergence is never fortuitous, as a single gallery show's might be. Rather, it is always part of a larger and often very elaborate agenda. Biennials can and do serve as a vehicle for civic aspirations far beyond the art world, and with very few exceptions they are founded from economic or ideological considerations rather than artistic ones.[2]

The Shanghai Biennale's use of government funding has left it in precarious territory with the local avant-garde scene. Some art-scene power players, like curators Ai Weiwei and Feng Boyi who created the *Fuck Off* exhibition in response to the 2000 Shanghai Biennale, accuse subsidized institutions of concerning themselves with generating good publicity for their governing bodies rather than exhibiting fresh and honest work.

Programming

Biennales are often international, meaning they incorporate work from all over the world. At such exhibitions, work might be organized into country-specific pavilions. In most cases, there is no single format as to how each country manages their pavillion. Great Britain's pavillion at the Venice Biennale is always managed by the British Council, while the United States assigns their pavillion's responsibility to a public gallery chosen by the Department of State.[3] And some international festivals do away with the idea of separated pavillions, altogether. The London Biennale, for
example, is a do-it-yourself free arts festival. This means artists who wish to participate are solely and entirely responsible for their participation: for his/her show, funding, transport, publicity, insurance, documentation, and venue.\[4\]

In terms of the overall exhibition's budget, programming methods vary extensively between institutions. Festivals can be funded by government subsidies, private sector companies, NGOs, or a combination of all three.

As far as overall organization goes, different biennales choose to elaborate on the basic attractions in different ways. In addition to the country-themed pavilions, the Venice Biennale opts to include a large exhibition hall in the Guardini Park that houses a themed exhibition curated by the Biennale's director. Every other year, the Liverpool Biennale assimilates the annual Bloomberg New Contemporaries exhibition, whose pieces are drawn from submissions by final-year art students.

Biennales are often spoken about in conjunction with art fairs that do not submit to the same two-year frequency. The Switzerland-based Art Basel, for instance, occurs every year, while Germany's Documenta, is held only every five years. All of these festivals, biennial or other, share the goal of exhibiting ground-breaking, and often site-specific, contemporary work.

Reception & Reputation

Rafal Niemojewski of the Royal College of Art, who specializes in the historical and theoretical context behind the rise of the contemporary biennale, explains its significance: "These exhibitions have contributed to the development and profusion of certain types of avant-garde art, such as large installations, video art and ephemeral, dematerialised and site-specific and site-oriented projects, as well as relational/discursive works that often have difficulty finding an appropriate place in a museum or commercial gallery. Intersecting new and existing networks, biennials have been responsible for considerably reshaping the contemporary art world, which today largely revolves around them and is punctuated by their calendar as much as by art fairs and annual competitions. As a part of this process, large-scale international exhibitions have also contributed to unprecedented mobility of artists and to instituting and shaping a new profession: that of the curator."

1. ↑ 1.0 1.1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biennale
2. ↑ 2.0 2.1 http://www.rca.ac.uk/Default.aspx?
   ContentID=502472&

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