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# ST PETERSBURG – MELBOURNE, SISTER CITY 25TH ANNIVERSARY FELLOWSHIP

**Jane Devery**

Curator, Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Victoria

Biennials of Contemporary Art : Manifesta 10 and the 8th Berlin Biennale

An ISS Institute Fellowship sponsored by the City of Melbourne





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Published by International Specialised Skills Institute, Melbourne

Extract published on [www.issinstitute.org.au](http://www.issinstitute.org.au)

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report details the research undertaken by Jane Devery, the 2013 ISS Institute / St Petersburg – Melbourne Sister City 25th Anniversary Fellow, in June and July 2014. The Fellow's research centred on the principle activities of attending Manifesta 10: The European Biennial for Contemporary Art at the historic State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg; and The 8th Berlin Biennale, which in 2014 were staged at several venues in Berlin. The venues included the Museum Dahlem complex comprising the State collections of Ethnographic and Asian Art collection and the Museum of European Cultures. The Fellowship also incorporates the visit to the International Biennial Association 1st General Assembly in Berlin and associated conference held at Berlin's Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt.

Through her visits to these prominent international exhibitions of contemporary art and their associated events and programs, and through additional research into contemporary art in the cities of Moscow and London, the Fellow visited a range of exhibitions of contemporary art and met with a number of international colleagues over a three week period from June 26 to July 17. During this time, the Fellow was able to undertake significant research into current curatorial practices and tendencies in contemporary art with a view to future exhibition and collection development at the National Gallery of Victoria, her place of employment.

Specifically, the Fellow's research enabled her to investigate two current large-scale recurring exhibitions of international contemporary art with a view to applying her findings to her own curatorial practice and in particular the forthcoming NGV Triennial, that will take place at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in Summer 2017-18. More generally, the research program was beneficial to the Fellow's general professional development, enabling her to increase her knowledge of contemporary international art and to significantly extend her international network of contacts.

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## II. ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

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|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>APT</b>              | Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art          |
| <b>NGV</b>              | National Gallery of Victoria                        |
| <b>ISS Institute</b>    | International Specialist Skills Institute           |
| <b>QAGOMA</b>           | Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art        |
| <b>WHW</b>              | What, How & for Whom                                |
| <b>V-A-C Foundation</b> | VICTORIA – the Art of being Contemporary Foundation |

# III. EXPLANATORY NOTE

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## **Haus der Kulturen der Welt (“House of World Cultures”)**

Located in Berlin, the Haus der Kulturen der Welt is an international platform for contemporary arts with a special focus on non-European cultures and societies.

Its unique interdisciplinary program presents a forum for current developments and discourse across various fields and includes art exhibitions, theatre and dance performances, concerts, films and academic conferences.

# 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Jane Devery would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide her throughout the Fellowship program.

## **Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)**

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc is an independent, national organisation that for over two decades has worked with Australian governments, industry and education institutions to enable individuals to gain enhanced skills and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading-edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our Fellows. Under the **Overseas Applied Research Fellowship Program** the Fellows travel overseas. Upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

1. Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions.
2. Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses.
3. Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

Over 200 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 22 leaders in their field have shared their expertise in Australia.

According to Skills Australia's 'Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010':

Australia requires a highly skilled population to maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition, and to have the skills to adapt to the introduction of new technology and rapid change.

International and Australian research indicates we need a deeper level of skills than currently exists in the Australian labour market to lift productivity. We need a workforce in which more people have skills, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills across all occupations is crucial to achieving long-term productivity growth. It also reflects the recent trend for jobs to become more complex and the consequent increased demand for higher level skills. This trend is projected to continue regardless of whether we experience strong or weak economic growth in the future. Future environmental challenges will also create demand for more sustainability related skills across a range of industries and occupations.

In this context, the ISS Institute works with Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills in Australia that require enhancing, where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions or other Registered Training Organisations. The Fellows' overseas experience sees them broadening and deepening their own professional practice, which they then share with their peers, industry and government upon their return. This is the focus of the ISS Institute's work.

For further information on our Fellows and our work see <http://www.issinstitute.org.au>.

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## 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### **Fellowship Sponsor: City of Melbourne**

The Fellow would particularly like to thank Jane Sharwood, Manager, Business & International, and Katherine Knowles, International Advisor at the City of Melbourne.

### **Employer Support: National Gallery of Victoria**

- » Tony Ellwood, Director
- » Max Delany, Senior Curator, Contemporary Art

### **Individuals**

- » Yulia Askenova, Curator, Garage Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow
- » Elena Beshpalova, Independent Art Historian, Moscow
- » Katerina Chuchalina, Curator and Program Manager, V-A-C Foundation, Moscow
- » Dr. Rebecca Coates, Independent Curator and Lecturer in Art History Department, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne
- » Alan Dodge, AM CitWA Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Art Adviser, Perth, Western Australia
- » Kate Fowle, Chief Curator, Garage Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow
- » Maria Goddyvonya, independent curator, artist and lecturer, St Petersburg
- » Terry Harding, Head of Communications, Marketing and Fundraising,  
» Manifesta 10, St Petersburg and Amsterdam
- » Nathalie Hoyos and Rainald Schumacher, Curators, Office for Art, Berlin
- » Andrey Kasyanenko, Project Officer, Press and Information Section, European Union, Moscow
- » Elena Kasyanenko, independent art consultant, Moscow
- » Olga Koroleva Senior Officer, Committee for External Relations of St Petersburg
- » Snejana Krasteva, Curator, Garage Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow
- » Natalia Metelitsa, Director, St Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music, City of St Petersburg
- » Paul Myler, Ambassador, Australian Embassy, Moscow
- » Alexandra Paperno, artist, Moscow
- » Alyona Voynova, Head of International Relations, Committee for Culture, City of St Petersburg

### Organisations that may benefit from this report

#### **Government**

- » Australia Council for the Arts
- » Arts Victoria

#### **Industry**

- » National Gallery of Victoria
- » Contemporary art organisations including: state galleries, museums of contemporary art, contemporary art spaces, and independent arts organisations
- » Academic and university research contexts

#### **Education and Training**

- » Universities involved in visual arts education (e.g. Melbourne University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Monash University, Victorian College of the Arts)

#### **Community**

- » Visual arts practitioners, artists and curators, students and researchers

## 2. ABOUT THE FELLOW

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**Name:** Jane Devery

**Employment:** Curator, Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Victoria

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Arts (Hons), University of Melbourne, 1998  
Master of Art Curatorship, University of Melbourne, 2003

**Short Biography:**

Jane Devery is Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). A graduate of University of Melbourne, she holds a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Art History (1998) and Masters degree in Art Curatorship (2003). Since joining the NGV in 2003 Jane has contributed to more than thirty exhibitions in the Department of Contemporary Art. Recent exhibitions include Emily Floyd The Dawn (2014), Melbourne Now (2013-14, co-curator), Negotiating this world: Contemporary Australian Art (2012-13), Brent Harris (2012) and 10 ways to look at the past (2011-2012). From 2011-2014 Jane was co-editor of Art Journal, the NGV's annual research publication. Jane is part of the curatorium working on the inaugural NGV Triennial scheduled to open at the NGV in Summer 2017.

# 3. AIMS OF THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

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The purpose of the Fellowship Program was to undertake an overseas study program in St Petersburg, Moscow, Berlin and London to gain insight into current developments in contemporary art and its presentation in large-scale exhibition formats. The research focused in particular on Manifesta 10, the European Biennale of Contemporary Art at the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg and the 8th Berlin Biennale at various venues in Berlin. The aim of the Fellowship was to identify successful strategies for the presentation of contemporary art in large-scale formats for international audiences by attending these major recurring exhibitions and by attending the International Biennale Association 1st General Assembly and Conference in Berlin. Additionally, meetings with artists, curators and site visits to galleries in St Petersburg, Moscow, Berlin and London were made throughout the research trip to identify potential contemporary artists, acquisitions, projects and exhibition development opportunities, focussing in particular on artists whose work have not been shown, or have only had limited exposure in Australia.

## **Specific Areas of Study and Development**

- To undertake research into contemporary art in Europe.
- To identify successful frameworks and curatorial strategies for large scale exhibitions of international contemporary art.
- To form alliances, both formal and informal, with artists, curators and contemporary art organisations in Europe and beyond.
- To identify artists for potential future collaborations in Melbourne and in particular in development for the NGV Triennial in 2017.

## 4. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

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Australia is home to a lively and dynamic contemporary art scene but has few prominent recurring large-scale international exhibitions. To date there are only two such exhibitions currently in existence in Australia: the Biennale of Sydney, established in 1973, the latest of which – the 19th Biennale of Sydney - was held in 2014; and the Asia Pacific Triennial (APT), organised by and presented at QAGOMA, Brisbane which was established in 1993 and the latest iteration of which - the 7th APT - was held in 2013. Since the one-off event of the Melbourne International Biennial, which was staged in 1999 with the support of the City of Melbourne and Arts Victoria, Melbourne has not been home to an international contemporary art event of biennial or triennial scope or scale. Opportunities for Australian artists to show their work in large-scale international biennial-style exhibition contexts within Australia are therefore limited, as are opportunities for contemporary art audiences and the broader public to engage with contemporary international art in such contexts.

As the Melbourne-based independent writer, curator and lecturer Rebecca Coates has recently commented, “It has long been asserted that the failure to create a recurring exhibition placed Melbourne at a cultural and artistic disadvantage”.<sup>1</sup> Addressing this widely held view, in March 2014 the National Gallery of Victoria announced the inauguration of a new triennial of contemporary art, the NGV Triennial. The NGV Triennial will be staged across at the NGV’s two campuses, NGV International at St Kilda Rd and the Ian Potter Centre, NGV Australia from November 2017 to March 2018. Following the success in 2013-14 of the large-scale exhibition ‘Melbourne Now’ which promoted a cross-disciplinary curatorial approach by integrating contemporary art with design, architecture, fashion among other disciplines, the NGV Triennial will be a large-scale celebration of the best of contemporary international art and design. Exploring the global and inter-disciplinary nature of contemporary art practice, the NGV Triennial aims to present major figures in contemporary art, architecture and design, film and performance, highlighting the most dynamic and adventurous new shifts and cultural contexts in contemporary art and design practice today. The NGV Triennial represents a major opportunity for contemporary art communities and their audiences in Melbourne and Australia more broadly.

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Coates, ‘Melbourne Then, Melbourne Now and Melbourne’s Future’ contemporary visual art+culture broadsheet 3.2 2014, p49-52

## 4. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

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### SWOT Analysis

#### Strengths

- Australia currently has two well established recurring large-scale international contemporary art exhibitions which are highly regarded internationally - the Sydney Biennial and the Asia-Pacific Triennial (APT).
- Melbourne is served by an active and diverse network of visual arts organisations.

#### Weaknesses

- There are currently no major recurring large-scale contemporary art exhibitions in Melbourne, the city that is arguably Australia's most active centre for contemporary art.
- Opportunities for Australian artists to show their work in large-scale international biennial-style exhibition contexts within Australia are limited.
- Opportunities for audiences to engage with contemporary international art in biennial scope and scale exhibitions in Australia are limited.

#### Opportunities

- The opportunity exists for a major recurring international large-scale contemporary art exhibition to be developed in Melbourne.

#### Threats

- Real and perceived distance from international centres, cost of travel and limited research travel opportunities, may pose a challenge to the potential for Australian visual arts organisations to effectively engage with international contexts.

# 5. IDENTIFYING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENTS REQUIRED

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The Skill Enhancement areas of research identified for the Fellow's overseas study program were as follows:

- Investigate latest developments in contemporary art. Outcomes: During her research trip, the Fellow investigated a range of the latest developments in contemporary art by visiting Manifesta 10 at St Petersburg, the 8th Berlin Biennial in Berlin, and from visiting a large number of other exhibitions of contemporary art and undertaking studio visits and meetings with artists and other arts professionals in Moscow, Berlin and London. For further details please see list of outcomes for each destination in section 6 'The International Experience'.
- Research current curatorial tendencies in the context of recurring large-scale international exhibitions of contemporary art. Outcomes: During her research trip, the Fellow researched current approaches to large-scale recurrent exhibition making by visiting and critically analysing Manifesta 10 The European Biennial of Contemporary Art at the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, the 8th Berlin Biennial in Berlin, and the International Biennale Association 1st General Assembly and Conference in Berlin. For further details please see list of outcomes for each destination in section 6 'The International Experience'.
- Investigate curatorial strategies for presenting contemporary art in conjunction with historical collections. Outcomes: During her research trip, the Fellow investigated strategies for presenting contemporary art in dialogue with historical collections by visiting Manifesta 10 which was remarkable for its use of the historic buildings and collections of the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, and the 8th Berlin Biennial which provided the Fellow with an opportunity evaluate the use of historic and ethnographic museological contexts for displaying contemporary art. For further details please see list of outcomes for each destination in section 6 'The International Experience'.
- Develop opportunities for extending professional networks. Outcomes: During her research trip, the Fellow engaged in productive meetings with artists, designers, curators and dealers to identify potential contemporary artists, projects and exhibition development opportunities that will result in long-term benefits for the arts community and the wider audiences of the NGV. For further details please see list of outcomes for each destination in section 6 'The International Experience'.

# 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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## Destination 1 - St Petersburg, Russia, June 27 to July 3, 2014

### Objective

To investigate latest developments in contemporary art; to research curatorial practices in an international setting of a major biennial exhibition; and to investigate and evaluate strategies for presenting contemporary art within an historic museum collection.

### Manifesta- background

Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, emerged in the early 1990s in response to new social, cultural and political conditions in Europe post-1989. Conceived as an itinerant biennial of contemporary European art that would take place in a different European city or region two years, Manifesta 'formed from the desire to explore the psychological and geographical territory of Europe and provide a dynamic platform for cultural exchange throughout the region.'<sup>1</sup> Since its first iteration in Rotterdam, the Netherlands in 1996, Manifesta has taken place in Luxembourg (1998); Ljubljana, Slovenia (2000); Frankfurt, Germany (2002); San Sebastián, Spain (2004); the region of Trentino–South Tyrol, Italy (2008); Murcia, Spain; Genk, Belgium (2012); and most recently in St. Petersburg in Russia (2014).<sup>2</sup> Over the course of its ten Biennials spread across more than twenty years, over a million people have visited Manifesta's events and participated in its programs.<sup>3</sup> The Manifesta Biennials are initiated and co-organised by the International Foundation Manifesta (Manifesta Foundation), an independent, not-for-profit organisation based in Amsterdam with the support of various arts organisations and ministries of culture from different European nations. Manifesta Biennials are renowned for their innovative programming, emphasis on research, pedagogy and fostering of productive networks between artists, curators and other visual arts practitioners.

### Manifesta 10 at the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

Manifesta 10, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, opened at the historic State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg on June 26, 2014. Despite calls for its cancellation in response to the introduction of laws restricting gay rights in Russia and increasing tension in the Ukraine and subsequent pressure from the international arts community and the withdrawal of several high profile artists, the itinerant biennial opened under the direction of the esteemed German curator Kasper König.

Continuing the recent global trend of bringing biennials into dialogue with historical collections, the exhibition was staged across two venues of the Hermitage: the Winter Palace, the main site of the museum's collection, and the General Staff Building, a significant area of the institution now dedicated to contemporary art. Manifesta's staging in St Petersburg marked two milestones: the 250th anniversary of the Hermitage and twenty years since the inauguration of Manifesta. During the opening week of the exhibition the Fellow attended the professional preview and had the opportunity to meet with several participating artists, members of the curatorial team and other staff employed by Manifesta.

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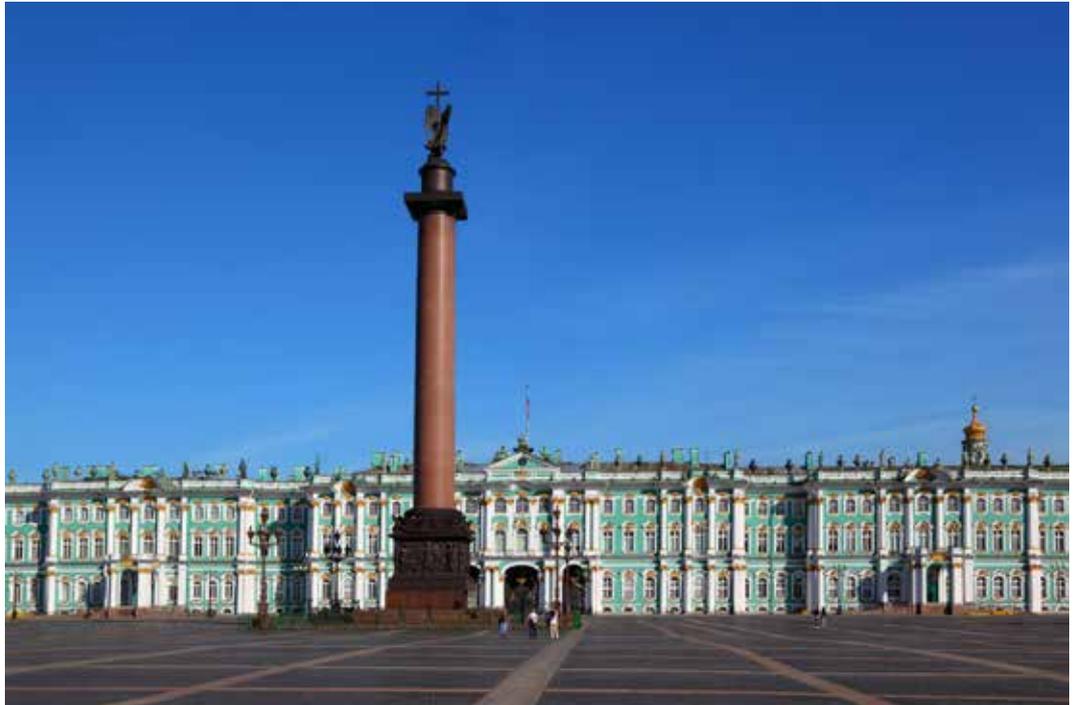
<sup>1</sup> Manifesta The European Biennial of Contemporary Art, 2014, Manifesta Foundation, Amsterdam, last viewed 9 November 2014, <http://manifesta.org/biennials/about-the-biennials/>

<sup>2</sup> The 2006 edition of Manifesta, scheduled for Nicosia, Cyprus, was cancelled.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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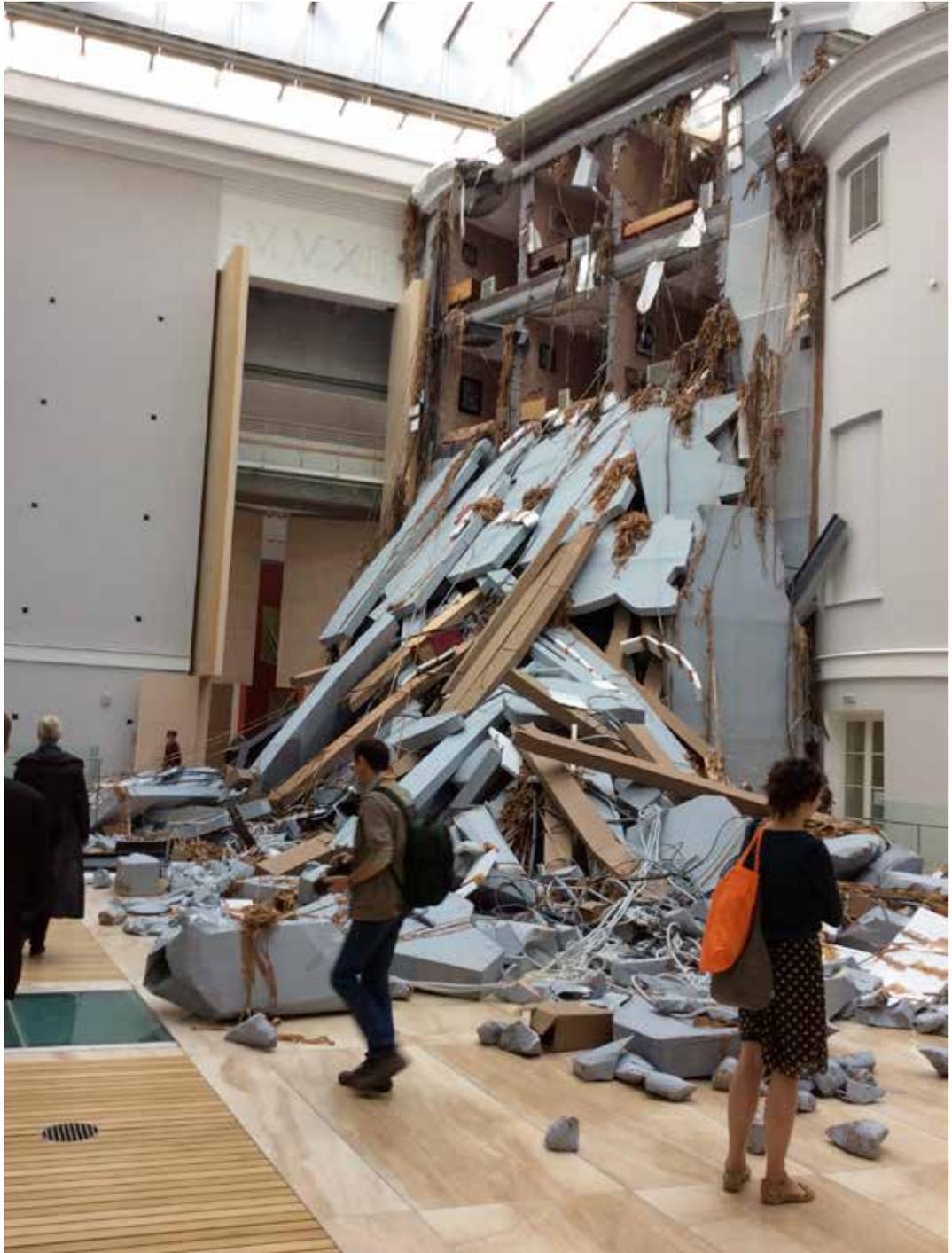
*View of Palace Square and Winter Palace, Photo: Palace Square © Andrey Koturanov - Dreamstime.com*

Manifesta 10 was presented at the primary venues of the Winter Palace and the General Staff Building of the State Hermitage Museum, as well as various sites around the city of St. Petersburg. The exhibition featured the work of more than 50 artists from nearly 30 countries and was complemented by an extensive range of performances, public programs and educational projects designed to further engage audiences with the history of St. Petersburg and its socio-political and cultural context.

Although a large number of exhibited works in Manifesta 10 had already been presented elsewhere, approximately 20 new works were commissioned for the exhibition. Commissioned artists included: Francis Alÿs (Belgium/Mexico), Karla Black (Scotland), Guy Ben-Ner (Israel), Lado Darakhvelidze (Georgia/ the Netherlands), Rineke Dijkstra (The Netherlands), Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (France), Alevtina Kakhidze (Ukraine), Elena Kovylyna, Erik van Lieshout (The Netherlands), Yasumasa Morimura (Japan) Deimantas Narkevičius (Lithuania), Tatzu Nishi (Japan), Susan Phillipsz (Scotland/Germany), Otto Zitko ( Austria) and Thomas Hirschhorn (Switzerland/France). Of the commissioned works, the singularly most spectacular work was Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn's epic installation *Abschlag 2014*, which transformed the courtyard of the newly renovated General Staff Building into a fourteen metre high crumbling façade of a Soviet era apartment block remarkably constructed from cardboard.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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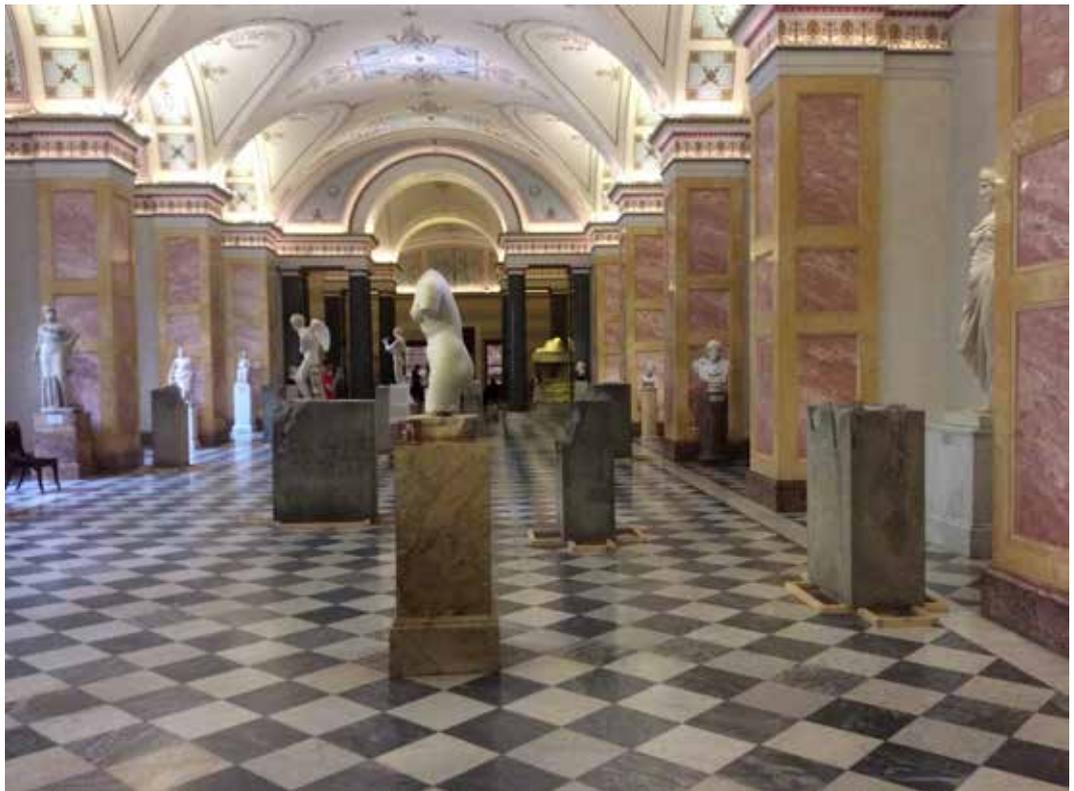
Thomas Hirrschorn *ABSCHLAG*, 2014. Installation view, MANIFESTA 10, General Staff Building, State Hermitage Museum, 2014. © the artist Photo: J. Devery 2014

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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A central feature of Manifesta 10's curatorial strategy was the relocation of certain historic works from the Hermitage collection from Winter Palace to the General Staff Building where the majority of the exhibition's works were shown. This included five rooms of paintings by Henri Matisse that were juxtaposed with two rooms dedicated to the work of German photographer Wolfgang Tillmans. Correspondingly, the Winter Palace hosted among its collection both new commissions and historic works by artists including Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010), Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1788) alongside new commissions by contemporary artists.

Inside the Winter Palace biennial works were dispersed throughout the sprawling collection in what was clearly a deliberate curatorial strategy to encourage biennial visitors to drift amongst the holdings of Hermitage. Staging contemporary art within this historic context, allowed for some interesting contemporary interventions, for example, the Italian artist Lara Favaretto's installation of fragile concrete sculptures that were displayed amongst the Greek antiquities in the Hercules Room in the New Hermitage.



*Lara Favaretto, Untitled 2014 Installation view, MANIFESTA 10, Winter Palace, State Hermitage Museum, 2014. © the artist. Photo: J Devery*

Another effective commissioned work was Susan Philipsz's *The River Cycle (Neva)*, 2014, a haunting fifteen channel sound piece, sited in the majestic staircase of the New Hermitage, the building's former entrance until the October 1917 revolution when it closed to the public. A similar logic governed the curatorial decision to relocate the museum's world-renowned holdings of paintings by Henri Matisse from their usual context in the Winter Palace to the General Staff Building and the main section of the exhibition; a gesture that allowed contemporary art audiences an opportunity to view masterpieces such as *The Dance* (1910) from a contemporary perspective.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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A significant presence was given in the exhibition to a number of Russian artists including Vladimir Mamyshev-Monroe and Timur Novikov, whose respective practices have undergone significant reappraisal in recent years. The former's paintings, drawings, films and performances centred around his drag persona modelled on Marilyn Monroe and the latter's unassuming yet compelling Horizons textile works provided interesting insights into the underground arts scene of 1980s and 1990s St Petersburg. Small but compelling 'exhibitions within the exhibition' were dedicated to these two influential artists.

One of the strengths of Manifesta 10 was the extensive Public Programs including a rich array of performances, talks, off-site exhibitions and events, devised by a dedicated Public Programs curator Joanna Warsza. The main venue for Manifesta's Public Programs was Vitebsk Station, a train station in the city centre. The Fellow attended a range of performances and events during the opening week including the artist collective Slavs and Tatars's performance / lecture *The Tranny Tease* (2014) staged at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Science; Pavel Braila's performance *Another Noon* (2014) at the historic site of Naryshkin Bastion; and Deimantas Narkevicius's rousing performance *Sad Songs of War* (2014) a concert of war songs based on the traditional repertoire of Cossack cultures, performed by a Cossack choir and recorded live at LenDoc Documentary Film Studio in central St Petersburg.



*Deimantas Narkevicius, Sad Songs of War, 2014*  
*Musical performance of Cossack choirs, LenDoc Documentary Film Studio, St. Petersburg, Thursday, 26 June, 2014*  
*Commissioned by MANIFESTA 10, St. Petersburg. Image courtesy Manifesta.*

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Engaging with the city's rich history of non-conformist art, one of the most interesting off-site curated projects in Manifesta 10 was 'Apartment art as domestic resistance', a series of week-long exhibitions including performances, poetry readings staged in a former communal flat at Marata St 33 near St Petersburg's Moscow Station. Curated by Olesya Turkina, the project raised interesting opportunities for discussion and debates around the production and display of art within public and private spheres.

Another well-considered and focused curatorial project was Unlooped — KINO the official film program of Manifesta 10 curated by independent curators Nathalie Hoyos and Rainald Schumacher from Office for Art (Berlin). This program presented over seventy individual time-based film and video works from 1970 to the present. Interviews with Hoyos and Schumacher provided insights into the curatorial scope and premise of the project. According to Schumacher, the project was based on two preconditions: the first one assumed that a large part of the general audience at Hermitage was not familiar with contemporary art and especially not with time-based media and the history of film and video since its emergence in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Secondly, for the majority of the local Russian audience, including artists and people working in the field, many of the video works are only known by hear-say or reading about them. From these premises, the curators compiled a survey of some of the aspects, issues and concerns of film and video drawing from collections including the Goetz Collection, Munich, Stoschek Collection and Videoforum at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein.

Their selection was programmed into four distinct programs: Fast Forward (presenting mainly works from the nineties by major figures such as William Kentridge, Rosemarie Trockel and Tracey Emin); The Body Then and Now (a program focusing on the role of the body and performance in video art from pioneering artists in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Vito Acconci, Chris Burden through to contemporary artists Klara Liden, Pippolitti Rist and Ed Atkins); Eastern Window a survey of video by Eastern European artists which drew principally from the collections of the Video Forum at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (n.b.k.), Berlin and the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art Archive Collection, Moscow; and New Horizons, a program that looked beyond European time-based work towards contemporary global practices.

Interestingly the Unlooped KINO curators intentionally borrowed videos from private and public collections as a means of introducing The Hermitage museum (which has only relatively recently begun collecting and exhibiting contemporary art), to the idea and practice of collecting, preserving and displaying time-based media by contemporary artists. An innovative aspect of the Kino Unlooped program was its dual presentation both within the museum in the public foyer of the Hermitage's General Staff Building and externally at Vitebsk Train Station for the enjoyment of the broader general public.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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*Unlooped-KINO, installation view, General Staff Building, MANIFESTA 10 Photo: J Devery*

During a meeting with the St Petersburg-based artist, filmmaker, curator and educator Maria Goddyvonya, the Fellow gained further insights into the educational and public programs including the innovative 'Manifesta on Board', a 'floating seminar' that was held on a ferry from Helsinki to St. Petersburg overnight from 7 to 8 October, 2014. More than three hundred artists, students and arts professionals took part in this innovative program consisting of panel discussions, video screenings, performances and workshops. Topics to be discussed included what censorship/ self-censorship means in the region and its impact on the work of artists and art organisations. The program began on board the St. Peter Line ferry in Helsinki and was followed by a program of events within the main venues of the Biennial at the State Hermitage Museum and at various cultural organisations across St. Petersburg.

During her week in St Petersburg, the Fellow visited several other institutions in the city including the State Russian Museum, the St Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music and smaller institutions that were part of Manifesta's parallel program such as FotoDepartment Foundation of Cultural and Informational Projects. During her stay the Fellow also met with representatives from the City of St Petersburg Committee for Culture - Olga Koroleva Senior Officer, Committee for External Relations of St Petersburg and Alyona Voynova, Head of International Relations, Committee for Culture, City of St Petersburg.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### Outcomes

- Manifesta 10 was remarkable for its use of the historic buildings and collections of the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. The exhibition was deliberately curated in such a way as to encourage contemporary art audiences to engage with the historic collections and for audiences unaccustomed to contemporary art to encounter contemporary art within an unexpected context. The inclusion of historic works (by Henri Matisse and Giovanni Battista Piranesi for example) was a deliberate and notable curatorial strategy.
- More than 20 works were newly commissioned for the exhibition, the most successful were largely by artists who had been encouraged to engage with specific histories connected to the museum and or history and culture of St Petersburg.
- Innovative public and education programs included the educational program Manifesta On Board, held on an international ferry from Helsinki to St Petersburg; a program of exhibitions in a former communal flat; and an extensive program of video presented at the Hermitage Museum and Vitebsk train station in central St Petersburg.
- Manifesta's emphasis on events, education and other projects that extend beyond the physical exhibition is reflected in the engagement of a curator dedicated to public programs.
- A strength of the exhibition was a number of smaller 'in focus' exhibitions that featured the work of artists who have had limited exposure to certain audiences. For example, the work of St Petersburg artists Timur Novikov (1958-2002) whose work is well known in Russia but little known internationally, or the recently deceased Austrian artist Maria Lassnig (1919-2014) whose 'body awareness' painting was little known for many decades, and has recently garnered widespread interest internationally.

### Destination 2 - Moscow, Russia, July 4 to 7, 2014

#### Objective

To investigate latest developments in contemporary art, extend professional networks and gain an understanding of the cultural context of contemporary Moscow.

During a brief visit to Moscow, the Fellow visited a number of arts institutions and met with a range of practitioners in the visual arts, as summarised below:

- The State Tretyakov Gallery at Krymsky Val (New Tretyakov) - the Fellow viewed permanent collection, viewed exhibition Dimitri Prigov From Renaissance to Conceptualism and Beyond, a survey of Dimitri Prigov (1940-2007) founder of Moscow Conceptualism.
- Garage Centre for Contemporary Art - the Fellow viewed 'Do it Moscow', an exhibition first conceived by curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and staged in Paris in 1993. 'Do it Moscow', the project's latest iteration included a diverse range of historical instructional works by various artists with a number of contemporary responses by Moscow-based artists.
- The Fellow met with Garage Centre for Contemporary Art curators Snejana Krasteva and Yulia Askenova; viewed partially installed exhibition Untitled... (Native Foreigners) in project space and met with the exhibition curator Andrey Misiano and artists Taus Makhacheva and Babi Badalov.
- Moscow Museum of Modern Art (MMOMA) - the Fellow viewed main section of Moscow International Biennale for Young Art, curated by David Elliot.
- The Fellow attended a function hosted by V-A-C Foundation for WHW (What How and for Whom) curatorial collective and artists in the exhibition Meeting Points 7: Ten thousand wives and a hundred thousand tricks. Informal meetings were held with curators Ivet Curlin and Natasja Illic of WHW; Teresa Iarocci Mavica (V-A-C Foundation Director) and Katerina Chuchalina (Curator and Program Manager); and artists Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Victoria Lomasko, Darinka Pop-Mitić and Mykola Ridnyi.
- Institute for African Studies, Moscow - the Fellow viewed Meeting Points 7: Ten thousand wives and a hundred thousand tricks, curated by WHW (What How and For Whom) in collaboration with VAC Foundation, Moscow.

#### Outcomes

The brief time spent in Moscow yielded rich outcomes in terms of professional contacts from meetings with artist and curators and through exposure to a range of contemporary practices by both Russian artists and artists from across Europe.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### Destination 3 - Berlin, Germany, July 8 to 12, 2014

#### Objectives

The Fellow's objectives in Berlin were as follows: to investigate latest developments in contemporary art; to research curatorial practices in an international setting of a major biennial exhibition; to investigate and evaluate strategies for presenting contemporary art within an historic museum collection; to attend the 1st General Assembly of the International Biennale Association; and attend the associated conference "Why Biennial? Why Associate?"

#### 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art

**Venue:** *KW Institute, Mitte, Museen Dahlem and Haus am Waldsee, Berlin*

The curator of the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Juan A. Gaitán, described the biennale as an exploration of "the intersection between larger historical narratives and individuals' lives".<sup>4</sup> Central to his approach was to stage the exhibition across three venues throughout the city each with their own specific historical context: the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin's central Mitte district, the traditional home of the biennale; Haus am Waldsee, a small 1920s private villa-turned public art gallery in the city's outer west; and the nearby Museum Dahlem, home to Berlin's state ethnographic and Asian art collections and Museum of European Cultures.

Echoing the strategies of Kasper König's *Manfiesta 10* and continuing the recent global trend of bringing biennials into dialogue with historical collections, the Dahlem served as both the main venue of the exhibition and the biennale's symbolic centre. Works by the majority of the 52 participating artists were found at the Dahlem Museum and many of them commissioned especially for the biennale. Although most were contained in separate rooms, works were deliberately staged throughout the museum collections in such a way that visitors were faced with a choice of whether to remain with the contemporary art of the biennale or drift into the historical and ethnographic material on permanent display, similar to Kasper König's presentation of contemporary works within the historic rooms of the Winter Palaces at the State Hermitage Museum. Gaitán's approach differed from König's in that it was more self-consciously engaged with the institutional context, with many commissioned works adopting museological strategies and methodologies. Wolfgang Tillman's *Eastern Woodlands Room* (2014), for example, playfully incorporated his own works and objects with pre-existing museum didactic panels and vitrines and Mario García Torres's *Sounds Like Isolation to Me* (2014), employed archival research and museological display methods to trace the little-known story of Conlon Nancarrow (1912–1997), an American avant-garde composer who left the United States in 1940 to live in self-imposed exile Mexico City. One of the simplest and most effective museological interventions was Carsten Höller's installation *7,8 Hz (The Color of Gold)* (2001/14) which involved replacing the museum's existing lighting with a mesmerising stroboscopic light effect in a gallery dedicated to pre-Columbian gold artefacts.

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<sup>4</sup> Juan A. Gaitán, Berlin Biennial website, <http://www.berlinbiennale.de/blog/en/1st-6th-biennale/8-berlin-biennale>, last viewed 9 November 2014

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Mario Garcia Torres, *Sounds Like Isolation to Me 2014*, installation view, 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, © the artist. Photo: J Devery

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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An interesting feature of Gaitan's curatorial approach was his collaboration with an artistic team comprised of artists, writers and curators who contributed to the exhibition and catalogue in varying ways. Some members of the artistic team contributed experimental catalogue entries while others curated sections of the exhibition. The engaging 'exhibition within the exhibition' Double Lives by Natasha Ginwala brought together a diverse range of historical materials, including pedagogical charts of little-known historical figures such as the American women's rights activist Emma Hart Willard (1787–1870), natural science illustrations by the German–Jewish physicist natural historian and colonialist Emin Pasha (1840–1892) and neuro-anatomical drawings of the Spanish neuroscientist Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852–1934).

The emphasis placed on drawing was another surprising aspects of the biennale. Almost the entire ground floor of the KW Institute for Contemporary Art was given over to artists working in this medium, from the carefully observed gouaches of Argentinian artist Irene Kopelman derived from botanical specimens collected in Panama, to the diagrammatic narrative drawings of Pakistani artist Mariam Suhail. Works on paper were also well represented at the Dahlem that included the Notepad Drawings (1992), a series of 30 never-before-exhibited works by Gordon Bennett (1955-2014).

### **International Biennale Association General Assembly**

The Fellow participated in an introductory session for the General Assembly hosted by the curator of the 8th Berlin Biennale by biennale curator Juan A Gaitan at the KW Institute, Mitte.

### **Conference: “Why Biennial? Why Associate?”**

**Venue:** *Haus de Kulturen de Welt, Berlin*

**Keynote lecture:** “Why Biennial?”; Panel Discussions: ‘Biennial Writing—Re-assessing Art History’ and “Institutional Critique—How to be Self-Critical in Biennial Work”

### **Participants:**

- » Maria Hlavajova, Artistic Director BAK, basis voor actuele kunst and Utrecht Bruce Altshuler, Director, Museum Studies Program, New York University
- » Nicolas Bourriaud, Director, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts/Curator, Taipei Biennial 2014
- » Juan A. Gaitán, Curator, 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art
- » Koyo Kouoh, Founding Director, RAW Material Company
- » Galit Eilat, Co-Curator, 31st Bienal de São Paulo
- » Hedwig Fijen, Director, Manifesta
- » Geeta Kapur, art critic and curator
- » Ahmet Ögüt, artist
- » Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, writer, art historian and curator
- » Bige Örer, Director, Istanbul Biennale

The conference presented a range of perspectives on the topic of biennials, examining the ways that biennials might serve as instruments to open up cultural debates. Discussions centred on questions of how biennials as ephemeral exhibitions contribute to art history and how the formats of biennials might be reconsidered in the future.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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*International Biennale Association General Assembly Conference: "Why Biennial? Why Associate?", Haus de Kulturen de Welt, Berlin, July 2014. Photo: J Devery*

### **Other activities the Fellow participated in Berlin are summarised below:**

- Meeting with Nathalie Hoyos and Rainald Schumacher, curators of Office for Art and curators of the Kino film program of Manifesta 10, to discuss their experiences at Manifesta and other projects including an exhibition Schumacher recently curated in Kiev, Ukraine.
- ifa-Galerie, Mitte - previewed South African artist Moshekwa Langa's solo exhibition as part of International Biennale Association program.
- Schinkel Pavilion - viewed Eva Kotatkova: Anatomical Orchestra installation with performative component by Berlin based Czech artist Eva Kotatkova.
- Hamburger Bahnhof - viewed exhibitions Harun Farocki: Serious Games, a small survey exhibition of works from 1960s to present; Wall works, an ambitious exhibition of wall-based works and installations by major practitioners of the past two decades; EVERYDAY LIFE, a group exhibition with works by Paola Pivi, Bojan Šarčević and Florian Slotawa; and selections of the permanent collection.
- Visits to a range of commercial galleries including Neugerriemschneider, Esther Schipper, Silberkuppe and Arratia Beer, among others.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### **Outcomes**

- The 8th Berlin Biennial provided the Fellow with an opportunity to reflect on current approaches to the biennial format and in particular to evaluate the use of historic and ethnographic museological contexts for displaying contemporary art.
- The International Biennale Association General Assembly and Conference provided the Fellow with the opportunity to engage in debates on the status and future of biennials and to establish contacts with a range of international practitioners working in the field.
- The Fellow was able to view a wide range of exhibitions in public institutions and commercial galleries, and establish with a range of professional contacts.

### Destination 4 - London, July 13 to 16, 2014

#### Objective

To investigate latest developments in contemporary art and to extend professional networks.

During a brief visit to London, the Fellow visited a number of arts institutions and met with a range of practitioners in the visual arts, as summarised below:

- Raven Row - the Fellow viewed Yvonne Rainer: Dance Works curated by Catherine Wood, an exhibition celebrating the work of Yvonne Rainer, seminal dancer and choreographer, including attending re-performances of seminal works Terrain (1963), Trio A (1966) and Chair Pillow (1969).
- Calvert 22 - the Fellow viewed exhibition Close and far, Russian Photography Now, an exhibition centred around a series of early colour photographs taken by Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky who was commissioned by Tsar Nicholas II to document his journeys around Russia between 1909-15. A range of photo and video-based works by a range of contemporary Russian artists was exhibited alongside these recently discovered and reprinted photographs. The exhibition included a video work by the artist Taus Makhacheva, who the Fellow met in Moscow.
- Chisenhale Gallery - the Fellow viewed Edward Thomasson The Present Tense, a new film commission.
- Whitechapel Gallery - the Fellow viewed exhibitions Kader Attia Continuum of Repair: The Light of Jacobs Ladder, a specially commissioned project by French-Algerian artist Kader Attia; Giulio Paolini: To Be or Not to Be; and Francis Upritchard: Do What You Will, children's commission.
- Serpentine Sackler - the Fellow viewed Ed Atkins exhibition, featuring major site-specific presentation of new work Ribbons (2014); and the 2014 Serpentine architecture pavilion designed by Chilean architect Smiljan Radić.
- Tate Modern - the Fellow viewed Malevich: Revolutionary of Russian Art, a stand-out exhibition that was fascinating to see after visiting collections of Russian avant-garde works in Moscow and St Petersburg.
- The Fellow also visited a number of commercial galleries and undertook several artist studio visits while in London.

#### Concluding remarks

- The research trip was an invaluable experience which enabled the Fellow to view the latest offering of biennials of contemporary art in Europe, namely Manifesta10 and the 8th Berlin Biennial.
- The strengths of both biennials was to be found in commissioned works, particularly those that engaged with either the architecture, history or socio-political context of the particular museum and city.
- The use of historical collections was another notable feature of both biennials, prompting consideration of the benefits of showing contemporary art in this context and raising questions about how the art of the past can illuminate contemporary art and vice versa.
- The Fellow attended the 1st General Assembly of the International Biennial Association, participating in discussions around biennials and rethinking their potential in the future and establishing contacts with international colleagues.
- The Fellow viewed a number of outstanding major exhibitions such as the Malevich retrospective at Tate Modern, London as well as a number of excellent smaller projects and shows at commercial galleries in Moscow, Berlin and London.

## 6. THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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- The Fellow engaged in productive meetings with artists, designers, curators and dealers to identify potential contemporary artists, projects and exhibition development opportunities that will result in long-term benefits for the arts community and the wider audiences of the NGV.

# 7. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: APPLYING THE OUTCOMES

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As a Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Victoria, the Fellow is well placed to share her experiences and knowledge through various activities, events and publications targeted at visual arts professionals as well as the general public. Opportunities in the short term include:

- Knowledge sharing through informal discussions with colleagues in the visual arts sector
- Presentation of research to curatorial colleagues at NGV
- Participation in symposium on the Radical Uses of Museums, Monash University, September 13, 2014
- Public lecture on Manifesta 10 as part of Melbourne Knowledge Week, 31 October, 2014
- Published writing - including reviews of Manifesta 10 and the 8th Berlin Biennale, published in the NGV Gallery magazine and Art Monthly Australia respectively.<sup>1</sup>

Opportunities for sharing knowledge in the mid to long term include:

- Exhibition and collection development at the NGV
- Specific research towards the inaugural NGV Triennial in 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Devery, J 2014, 'Intersections: The 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (review)', in Fitzgerald, M (ed), Art Monthly Australia, November 2014, no. 275, p18-19; Devery, J 2014, Manifesta 10 (review) in Coslovich, G (ed), Gallery, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, September/October, pp12-13

# 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

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## **Government**

- Policy and funding recommendations for Arts Victoria and the Australia Council for the Arts:
- Building support for international cultural engagement
- Support research and policy development towards programming of major cultural events
- Support for Australian artists to work in an international context
- Support for Australian organisations to engage with international artists.

## **Industry**

The findings have shown the role that major international periodic exhibitions of contemporary art can play in the development of cultural relations, metropolitan and national identity and establishing a vibrant cultural identity, such as the forthcoming NGV Triennial to be inaugurated in Melbourne in 2017 which will then occur every 3 years. There is scope of other large scale international exhibitions for contemporary art as well as design and architecture to be developed in Melbourne and other cities in Australia. Arts organisations are well placed to develop cultural programming to enhance engagement with international artists and colleague organisations, as well as developing new audiences for contemporary art.

## **Education and Training**

Support and develop specialist courses and research areas around biennial format exhibitions in tertiary curatorial studies courses.

## **ISS Institute**

The establishment of dedicated Fellowships for artists, writers and curators working in the field of visual arts. Future Fellowship aims and objectives to be agreed by ISS Institute and Sponsors such as City of Melbourne Library Services. ISS Institute to investigate possible widening of sponsorship opportunities.

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