

[Press Release]

Gwangju Biennale Foundation



광주비엔날레
GWANGJU BIENNALE

Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning: 13th Gwangju Biennale

April 1–May 9, 2021

Gwangju Biennale
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Journal: www.13thgwangjubiennale.org/minds-rising

Gwangju Biennale Foundation website: www.gwangjubiennale.org

[Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#)

Virtual tours of the Biennale exhibition will be held on **Thursday 1 April**. To join, click:

[10 am Berlin / 5pm Seoul / 4pm Hong Kong / 1.30pm Delhi](#)
[5pm Berlin / 4 pm London / 11am New York / 8am Los Angeles](#)

The 13th Gwangju Biennale, *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning*, opens on 1 April 2021 with 69 participating artists and 40 new commissions, in Gwangju, South Korea.

Founded in 1995 in memory of the civil uprising and the 1980 Gwangju Democratisation Movement, the Gwangju Biennale is Asia's oldest and most prestigious biennale of contemporary art. Directed by Defne Ayas and Natasha Ginwala, the 13th edition, *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning*, sets out to examine the spectrum of the extended mind through artistic and theoretical means. The exhibition delves into a broad set of cosmologies, activating multitudinous forms of intelligence, planetary life-systems and modes of communal survival, as they contend with the future horizon of cognitive capitalism, algorithmic violence and planetary imperialisms. *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning* encompasses an exhibition across four venues, with 69 artists; an online publishing platform and journal, *Minds Rising*; three publications, including a Feminism(s) reader, titled *Stronger than Bone*; and a series of online public programs bringing together artists, activists, scholars and systems thinkers: GB Talks | *Rising to the Surface: Practicing Solidarity Futures, Augmented Minds and the Incomputable*, and an adaptive procession with live commissions: *Through the Gates*.

The Artistic Directors, Defne Ayas and Natasha Ginwala, said: "With grit and perseverance, in the company of so many artists and thinkers, we are grateful to have manifested an expanded biennale programme addressing living processes — aesthetic, high-spirited, historically conscious and, as such, ever-more inclusive — one that is also shaped by the current global conditions of grief, alienation and systemic breakdown. With several new artistic works and visions that unleash vocabularies of resilience, dissent and renewal, we strive to understand past and future life forms, as well as aspects of organic and machinic intelligence shaped by feminist knowledge and pursuant of racial justice. *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning* assembles and channels these modes of spherical thinking towards a world ethic that is socially and ecologically desirable, despite the pervasive tentacles of militarism and authoritarianism globally. Safeguarding this journey with everyday attention to the process has been an uphill challenge, but also a privilege and an honour."

During the same period as the 13th Gwangju Biennale, *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning*, the following exhibitions will also be taking place: the Gwangju Biennale Commission (GB Commission) which seeks to explore the history, architectural artifacts, traditions, memories and civil spirit of the city of Gwangju and the origin of the Gwangju Biennale; the Pavilion Project which hosts leading international art institutions connecting the Gwangju region to a wider international arts community; and *MaytoDay*, the May 18 Democratization Movement Special Exhibition.

Full information on these projects can be found [here](#).

Artists participating in *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning* (* denotes new commissions)

∞OS (Dmitry Paranyushkin and Koo Des)*, Pacita Abad, Korakrit Arunanondchai*, Katarina Barruk*, Farid Belkahlia, Cecilia Bengolea, Seyni Camara*, Quishile Charan & Esha Pillay (aka The Bad Fiji Gyals), Yin-Ju Chen & Li-Chun Lin (Marina)*, Ali Cherri, Hyun-taek Cho*, Vaginal Davis*, Cian Dayrit*, Emo de Medeiros, Patricia Domínguez, Theo Eshetu*, Gerard Fortuné, John Gerrard, Sonia Gomes, Trajal Harrell*, Femke Herregraven*, Lynn Hershman Leeson*, Tishan Hsu, Gözde Ilkin*, Jeong Kwan, Jumaadi, Karrabing Film Collective*, Sangdon Kim*, Sylbee Kim*, Timoteus Anggawan Kusno*, Duck-Jun Kwak, Gap-chul Lee, Kangseung Lee*, Sangho Lee, Liliane Lijn, Candice Lin*, Vivian Lynn, Abu Bakarr Mansaray, Angela Melitopoulos*, Ana María Millán*, Min Joung-Ki*, Ad Minoliti*, Kyungwon Moon*, MOON & JEON, Siyabonga Mthembu*, nasa4nasa*, Pedro Neves Marques, Kira Nova*, Fernando Palma Rodríguez*, People's Archive of Rural India – PARI, Rajni Perera*, Outi Pieski*, Angelo Plessas*, Gala Porras-Kim*, Ana Prvački*, Judy Radul*, Sahej Rahal*, Zofia Rydet, Jacolby Satterwhite, Arpita Singh, Tcheu Siong, Chrysanthe Stathacos*, Alexandra Sukhareva, Shannon Te Ao, Sissel Tolaas*, Cecilia Vicuña*, Ouattara Watts, Shen Xin*, Tuguldur Yondonjamts*

With augmented readings by Manduhai Buyandelger, Kate Crawford & Vladan Joler, Lynn Margulis & Dorion Sagan, Vladan Joler & Matteo Pasquinelli, Sun Yung Shin, Kawaguchi Shinnin & Aoki Shukuya, Rafael Yuste, and Zeitguised.

Locations

Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Hall, Gwangju National Museum, Gwangju Theater, Yangnim mountain - Horanggasy Artpolygon; and online on social media channels and the [Biennale website](#).

Premise

The 13th Gwangju Biennale, *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning*, sets out to examine the spectrum of the extended mind through artistic and theoretical means. In challenging the structural divisions imposed upon corporeal, technological and spiritual intelligence, this biennale edition delves into a broad set of cosmologies centralising mind-body relations, activating planetary life-systems, queer and feminist knowledge streams, honouring historical experiences of trauma and avowing communal survival. By investigating diverse practices transacting with multitudinous forms of life, the 13th Gwangju Biennale examines how they contend with the future horizon of cognitive capitalism and planetary imperialisms, as well as the present dimension of neural networks and techno-spiritual emergences that populate our computational biosphere. Living as we are through a traumatic interregnum, the present co-evolution with electronic intelligence and algorithmic regimes needs to be addressed from a planetary perspective. How then can we interpret the incomputable nature of this transition?

In Gwangju, a city that has long been acutely familiar with resistance building and communal trauma, it is the Biennale's intent to navigate theoretical, physical, sonic, olfactory, and spiritual vocabularies in forms of communality and bring mind-expanding practices together with historically conscious propositions. The recent 40th anniversary of the May 18 Democratic Uprising and people's movement in Gwangju provides an impetus to metabolise journeys through the threshold between life and death—the middle world of the undead—to extend analyses of current strategies of solidarity building and global alliances, and to strive for a deeper understanding of the intrinsic relationship between intelligence, healing, dissent and renewal.

Composition

Online and Print journal

The editorial platform of the Biennale, "Minds Rising", an online, bilingual journal which launched in May 2020, serves as an ensemble of the research process and features interdisciplinary content and artistic ideas. Performing as the "extended mind" of the Biennale and published on a bi-monthly basis, it has a tripartite focus: artistic/literary, scholarly and theoretical; and includes features such as long-read essays, poetry, sonic features, and video space for participant contributions, as well as time-based and live programming, laying the intellectual and artistic groundwork from which the Biennale unfolds. All contributions to the journal are printed in the exhibition catalogue, due to be released 1 April 2021. With contributions by a.o., Akbar Abbas, Edna Bonhomme, Yuk Hui, Yani Yoo, Jeong Kyeong-Un, Travis Jepessen, Ko Bo-Hye, Catherine Malabou, Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz, Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Francesca Tarocco, Cecilia Vicuña, Iaroslav Volovod & Valentin Diaconov, Yang Jongsung, Yani Yoo, Yoon Yul Soo, Mi You. Edited by Defne Ayas, Natasha Ginwala, and Young-jun Tak. Designed by Studio Remco van Bladel and Studio RGB. Published by: Gwangju Biennale Foundation. ISBN 979-11-957933-5-8

Publication

The Feminism(s) reader, *Stronger than Bone*, draws upon the embodied strength, intuitive desires, and collective wisdom of feminists and non-binary protagonists to foreground the manifold dimensions of feminist politics and commitments. Written by thinkers and allies across generations with a focus on heterogeneity, intersectionality, and influence across geographies, this reader arrives in the world at a moment of heightened fragility, under the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic. With contributions by: Chris Abani, Gloria Anzaldúa, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun & Sarah Friedland, Tishani Doshi, Maya Indira Ganesh, Eeva-Kristiina Harlin & Čiske-Jovsset Biret Hánasa Outi/Outi Pieski, Laurel Kendall, Kim Hyesoon, Kim Seongnae, S. Heijin Lee, Audre Lorde, Soraya Murray,

Esha Pillay & Quishile Charan, Djamila Ribeiro, Tamarra & Brigitta Isabella, Oxana Timofeeva, and Cecilia Vicuña. Edited by Defne Ayas, Natasha Ginwala, and Jill Winder. Published by: Gwangju Biennale Foundation and Archive Books, Berlin ISBN: 978-3-948212-30-8

Public Programs – Live Organ

Live Organ is an active element of the 13th Gwangju Biennale, exploring the set of questions at the heart of the exhibition. It includes a series of public forums, online and on-site in Gwangju, alongside a program of newly commissioned live works, enacted online.
<https://13thgwangjubienale.org/live-organ>

- Online commissions

Exclusively commissioned for online audiences, works by Ana Prvački, Kira Nova and nasa4nasa are presented in the forms of episodes and web series on social media channels and streamed on the Biennale's website, leading up to and after the opening of the Biennale. They can be seen online [\[here\]](#).

- *Augmented Minds and the Incomputable*

Interweaving the exhibition's generative topics, *Augmented Minds and the Incomputable* invited philosophers, system thinkers, and researchers to discuss topics including shamanism, cosmotechnics, neuroscience and digital labour, in relation to Korean visual cultures and communal trauma. The three sessions explored non-hierarchical approaches towards replenishing the body and mind, crucial at this time of mass suffering, and mobilise plural and coeval conditions of being and belonging. They can be seen online [\[here\]](#).

- *The Procession: Through the Gates*

The Biennale Hall hosts an adaptive program of initiations that tests the boundaries of resilience and resistance. Composed of live commissions and exhibited works, the procession inverts notions of the living and the dead, the live and the inanimate, “awakening” the works on view and rendering the exhibition a ceremonial ground where the communal mind plays a revitalising role. Continuing their engagement with swarm intelligence, confluence dynamics, and the collective cyborg body, ∞OS (Dmitry Paranyushkin and Koo Des) has choreographed and scored the procession with a machine logic and live soundscape based on the audience's physical movements. ∞OS has spatialised the choreography in collaboration with Biennale artists Angelo Plessas and Sangdon Kim to allow the procession body to morph between states of flow and rupture as environments of sound, movement, and elective affinities create kinetic vortexes across the exhibition's five galleries. Honorable Buddhist monk Jeong Kwan initiates the exhibition with a sutra reading. Corporeal intelligence holds sway in the drumming of shaman Lin Li-Chun (Marina) and artist Yin-Ju Chen's meditative journeys that summon altered states of consciousness. Angelo Plessas adds props and costumes that conjure talismans for the present, inviting repose, collectivity, and mental cleansing and renewal while also playfully adapting rituals of cyber shamanism in which networked intelligence braids with the body and the machine. A remote performance by Sámi singer Katarina Barruk animates the voices and wisdoms of her grandmothers and ancestors in a composition of Ume Sámi lyrics, vocals, and joik. Siyabonga Mthembu echoes, “We fetch songs from places, or songs fetch us from places,” and his work *A Prayer for Healing* draws upon South African jazz and Korean percussion techniques to release incantations that distill dissonance as a mode of living, mourning, and surmounting the discordances and clamours of the present. Cecilia Bengolea continuously

mobilises and re-sculpts the bodily spectrum of tai chi, Taekkyeon, kung fu, and other practices inspired by Asian energy systems in workshops imagined in collaboration with children studying martial arts who lead the audience in respiratory exercises. Exploring memory-keeping and equity through olfactory means, Sissel Tolaas has infused ecological leather armbands designed by Sruli Recht with a molecule prepared at her laboratory in Berlin to remind us that memory never belongs solely to the past but can be brought into the present through sensory intelligence. Virtual prosthetics drafted by Zeitguised probe the thresholds and potentialities of spectral forces and shadowy presences within the exhibition, as metabolic states of mind and matter converge and resound as *Minds Rising*, *Spirits Tuning* reveals its coda, an end that is also a resolution.

- **GB Talks | Rising to the Surface: Practicing Solidarity Futures**

In 2020, through a variety of media and dialogues, *Minds Rising*, *Spirits Tuning* has been sharing contemporary positions of particular relevance to the fortieth anniversary of the May 18 Democratic Uprising. Running from September 2020 until January 2021, the public program [GB Talks | Rising to the Surface: Practicing Solidarity Futures](#) has examined the tidal currents of people's movements, the recurring spectre of oppressive regimes and the inventive tools of current citizen protests. The program features more than a dozen online talks, sessions and video recordings by scholars, artists, activists, and civil society actors from around the world. The documentation is available on the website.

Partnership with Historical Collections: *Minds Rising*, *Spirits Tuning* stages an inquiry into the ritual and iconographic systems of Korean visual cultures and Shamanism, especially the role of female shamans encountering and healing communal trauma, patriarchal violence and the work of mourning. Modes of kinship are figured not only between humans but also with the "beyond human" world(s), and moreover amid landscape ecologies of the Korean peninsula. These visual registrations are assembled through ceremonial amulets, hand illustrated manuals, folding screen paintings, and artefacts from the collections of the Gwangju National Museum, The Museum of Shamanism and The Gahoe Minhwa Museum in Seoul. The Biennale asks how these modes of intelligence - which address the cleansing of energies, the protection of the ailing body and the forces that renew frayed and toxic relations - may be harnessed beyond their surface readings as an aesthetic practice, through an understanding of sacred and ancestral forms of representation. Further, mappings of the diseased body and personified organs - drawn from a Tibetan bloodletting chart to the lord of death from Hindu cosmology (Yama holding the wheel of life), among other manuscripts and facsimile paintings from the archive of the Wellcome Collection (London) - are projected. These broader cultural ontologies of health and systems of cure are integrated throughout the gradient of life and death, which the Biennale explores.

Gwangju Biennale Commission (GB Commission), Pavilions Projects and *MaytoDay*

First presented in 2018 by the Gwangju Biennale Foundation, the **Gwangju Biennale Commission (GB Commission)** questions the social role of art and tests the Biennale's capacity to sustain itself. Historical sites of the May 18 Democratization Movement— the Former Armed Forces' Gwangju Hospital, the Asia Cultural Center (ACC), allow GB Commission to evolve into a platform where the Gwangju Spirit, the founding spirit of the GB Commission, resonates with various contemporary arts resulting in unconventional artistic experiences.

Also initiated in 2018, the **Pavilion Project** invites the Kunsthhaus Pasquart in Switzerland and Taiwan Contemporary Culture Lab (C-LAB) in Taiwan to facilitate exchange. With the **Swiss Pavilion Project ALONE TOGETHER** and **C-LAB Pavilion Project *Double Echoing*** presented at the Eunam Museum of Art and ACC respectively, participating institutions provide a fresh perspective of Gwangju and funnel the energies arising in international artistic sites into Gwangju. A continuation of **MaytoDay**, the exhibition titled *Between the seen and the spoken* brings together works by twelve artists either born or based in Gwangju to contemplate the city in the May of 1980. The exhibition takes place at the Former Armed Forces' Hospital, a place that has long lost its function as a hospital and remained ostracized from the everyday life of Gwangju.

Gwangju Biennale Foundation President Kim Sunjung said: "Facing unprecedented challenges in these times of the pandemic, we have prepared the event building on the knowledge and experience accumulated over the last 26 years while respecting our founding principles. Having experienced the postponement twice, we are prepared to receive visitors in the safest manner." She added: "The 13th Gwangju Biennale will be a place where multiple forms of solidarity, such as the one created between humans and nature or between the past and the present, can be enjoyed and where a variety of frameworks for contemplation cumulatively forged by the mankind can be examined and appreciated."

Artistic Team

Artistic Directors: Defne Ayas, Natasha Ginwala
Associate curators: Michelangelo Corsaro, Krisztina Hunya, Joowon Park
Producers: Charles Gohy, Davide Quadrio
Procession Co-Director: Davide Quadrio
Research and programming associate: Özge Ersoy
Forum liaison: Riksa Afiaty
Managing editor: Young-Jun Tak
Co-editor of "Stronger Than Bone" / editorial advisor: Jill Winder
Exhibition architecture: Diogo Passarinho Studio
Graphic identity: WORKS
Website design / exhibition graphics: Studio Remco van Bladel (Remco van Bladel and Kimberley ter Heerd)
Website programming: Studio RGB
English copy editors: Tyler Considine, Hannah Gregory
Korean copy editors: Hong-Ki Kim, Young-Jun Tak
Translators: Helen Cho, Yes More Translation, Yu Ji-Won

Gwangju Biennale Foundation team

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Secretary General: Okjo Kim
Head of Department: Keumhyun Han
Chief of Exhibition Team: Bella Jung
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ENDS

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