

Press Release

Seville, February 2008

The Biacs3 will invite the public to discover a “new universe” – YOUiverse

The third edition of the International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville, to be held from 2 October 2008 to 11 January 2009, will occupy the main exhibition site at the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC) and branch out into public spaces in Seville and other Andalusian provinces, Córdoba y Granada

In the global context of the information and communication society, the third edition of the International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville (Biacs3), which will be held from 2 October 2008 to 11 January 2009, will make a new map of Global Art, World Art, addressing the specific aspect of media, environment and technology. Under the title YOUiverse, the Biennial of Seville will show how contemporary art worldwide has changed through the influence of media, technology, science and architecture.

The artistic curatorial team appointed to plan the contents of the Biacs3 – consisting of Peter Weibel, general director of the ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany, Wonil Rhee, guest curator of PS1MoMA 2009, Korean curator, and Marie-Ange Brayer, director of the Regional Centre of Contemporary Art of Orleáns, France – aims to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the general theme of the exhibition.

YOUiverse refers to the interactivity of each individual with a universe – namely, his or her own personal universe. The creations of the selected artists (approximately one hundred in number) will revolve around mobility, individualisation through technologies, quantum physics, nanotechnology, hydraulic engineering, architecture and the environment. The artistic curatorial team plans to present the public with a showcase of the 21st century's most representative technical breakthroughs at the threshold of a material revolution that will lead us from simulation to stimulation, and will invite visitors to personally interact with the contents of the exhibition. According to the artistic director, Peter Weibel, in YOUiverse the visitor will be the protagonist. The foremost objective is to attempt to foment “the democratisation of art and the emancipation of the masses by means of the individual's interaction with his environment, which has been modified substantially by information and communication technologies.” The public will discover “a new universe” of which they are a part – hence the title.

As in past editions, the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC) will be the official headquarters of the exhibition, although works will also be on display in other public spaces around the city of Seville. As a new development this year, the Biacs3 will branch out into other Andalusian provinces such as Cordoba and Granada with a view to exploring the origins of science and technology in the days when this region was the Arabic *Al-Andalus*, a hotbed of scientific innovation and one of the first cultures to promote the emancipation of the masses through technology and the civil confluence of cultures (instead the clash of civilizations). This will be an exhibition with close ties to the historical legacy of Seville and Andalusia – an event conceived in Seville but with the ability to awaken interest beyond the city limits.

The Biacs3 will attempt to show how the latest technologies have provided us with a gateway to an unknown world where we find that human beings are the nexus for all connections between science, art, technology and media, and that we have the power to control these ties. “The tendency at present is to democratise the use of technology; from personal computers and mobile phones to faucets and light switches, new technologies allow the user to adapt the environment to his needs, anytime, anywhere”.

In this context, the co-curators of the Biacs3, Wonil Rhee and Marie-Ange Brayer, will design specific proposals for the exhibition. Rhee will focus on how art is related to sciences and technologies in modern life, while Brayer will analyse present-day ties between architecture and digital tools.

The Biacs3, “the Biennial of technology,” will strive to offer a new vision of the global concept of biennials; up until now, “art was for the masses, but the Biacs3 will attempt to show that art is of the masses.” The observer will share the spotlight with the artists and interact with their pieces, designed in such a way that “each person can create his or her own work of art”.

BIACS Foundation

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Exhibition venues

Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo

The Andalusian Centre of Contemporary Art (CAAC) is the main exhibition venue of the Biacs3. The CAAC was founded in 1990 with the intention to enhance Andalusia with an institution to investigate, conserve, promote and diffuse international contemporary art in its diverse concepts of expression. Next to the creation of a permanent collection of contemporary art, which evolves over the time, the CAAC conducts a program of activities with a clearly educational character (temporary exhibitions, seminars, workshops, concerts, meetings, recitals, movie screenings and conferences).



The cultural offer of the CAAC is being supplemented by the visit to the monument itself, which accommodates an important artistic and archaeological heritage, a result of its own expansive history. Declared an historical and artistic monument in 1964 and a Monumental Site in 1989, the monastery's fame is primarily attributable to its porcelain and tile factory, which was installed in 1841 by the English merchant Charles Pickman. The bottle-shaped ovens, to which the monumental complex owes its unique exterior appearance, date from this period. At present the monastery houses the headquarters the Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage and the International University of Andalusia.

Other spaces in Seville

Widely visited spaces such as Seville's San Pablo airport and the Santa Justa train station, amongst others, are likely settings for housing the Biacs3's larger-scale installations. According to the biennial's artistic director, Peter Weibel, the projects envisaged for these spaces will "combine large structures and new technologies. The public will play a key role as the installations will require viewer participation in order to work properly".

Cordoba and Granada: Al-Andalus

A new feature of this year's biennial is that it will extend to include Cordoba and Granada with the aim of exploring the origins of the science and technology of the Al-Andalus period.

The project's main objective is to analyse through artistic representation the ways in which man incorporated new technologies, focusing particularly on the precursory Al-Andalus period, which served as the precedent for the advances made in Europe from the 15th century and laid the foundations of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. The Biacs3 takes Al-Andalus as a point of reference in scientific innovation and intellectual enquiry and shows how it stands as a model of Christian, Muslim and Jewish cultural integration as well as a paradigm of the "democratisation of art".

Throughout its 800 years of history, Al-Andalus represented a stimulus for the progress of humanity. This is the leitmotif of this year's biennial, and, by centring on man's use of new technologies, YOUiverse aims to encourage dialogue as a medium for shared cultural enrichment.

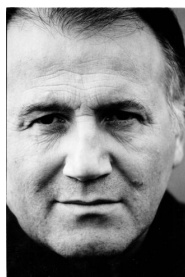
The cities of Cordoba and Granada, hotpots for scientific and cultural research during this period, are to join the project of Biacs3. In Cordoba we will remember its translation school through references to Luis de Góngora, while Granada will divulge the water-based technology that is so characteristic of Andalusian culture and will serve as a central theme around which the artistic proposals on display in the city will revolve.

Second Life

Guided by this preliminary supposition, part of the Biacs3 will take place in the virtual world of Second Life. The project, consisting of an island named Al-Andalus, will recreate in three dimensions the Alhambra of Granada and the Mezquita (mosque) of Cordoba. Using three-dimensional figures or avatars, viewers will be able to dialogue with thinkers and scientists of Antiquity, such as Maimonides and Seneca, and ask them questions, receiving immediate answers put together from their writings. The island of Al-Andalus will work as a "mechanical generator of language".

Curators

Peter Weibel, curator and artistic director



Peter Weibel studied literature, medicine, logics, philosophy and film in Paris and Vienna. Beginning with work in the tradition of visual poetry, Weibel produced «media-based literature» in the form of paper, photographic and object poems, body texts and material poetry, text objects and video texts. End of the 1960s, he worked in the field of Expanded Cinema, action art, performances and film together with his partner Valie Export; his interdisciplinary activities comprise scientific, artistic as well as literary, photographic, graphic, plastic, and digital works.

Since 1976 he has lectured widely at universities and academies in Europe and the US. After heading the digital arts laboratory at the Media Department of New York University in Buffalo from 1984 to 1989, he founded the Institute of New Media at the Städelschule in Frankfurt-on-Main in 1989. Between 1986 and 1995, he was in charge of the Ars Electronica in Linz as artistic consultant and later artistic director. From 1993 to 1999 he was curator at the Neue Galerie Graz and commissioned the Austrian pavilions at the Venice Biennale. Peter Weibel has worked as Professor at the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna and has been Chairman and CEO of the ZKM_Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, since 1999.

Weibel was an early and eloquent champion of a theory of media and communication, which he repeatedly applied in investigating the inherent laws and mechanisms of the various media. Besides his activities as artist and curator his publications about art and media theory earned him international renown.

Wonil Rhee, co-curator



MA New York University, Wonil Rhee worked in the field of Media Art and Asian Contemporary Art. Since 1995, he occupied different charges as chief curator of several museums of contemporary art in Seoul: Total Museum, Sung-Kok Museum and Seoul City Museum of Art. In two occasions he was the artistic director of Media City Biennale (Seoul, 2002 and 2006), as well as co-curator of the fifth edition of Gwangju Biennale (Korea, 2004) and of the sixth Shanghai Biennale (China, 2006) which showcased the global art from Asian perspective.

Abroad, Wonil Rhee worked in Poland as co-curator of Lodz Biennale (2004) and, more recently, of the exhibition *Asia - Europe Mediations*, in the Poznan Museum (2007). Among his last works (2007), we find the exhibitions of mammoth survey of Asian contemporary art *Thermocline of Art - New Asian Waves*, in ZKM of Karlsruhe (Germany), and the dedicated one to Julian Schnabel in the World Art Museum of Beijing (China). Currently Wonil Rhee serves as guest curator for 2009 PS1MoMA show with curator And director of PS1MoMA, Alanna Heiss.

Marie-Ange Brayer, co-curator



Since 1996, Marie-Ange Brayer has been director of the Centre Regional Contemporary Art Collection [FRAC, Centre] in Orléans, France. The FRAC centre has been putting together a collection to do with architecture in its utopian and experimental dimension, from the 1950s up until the present day. She has organized many exhibitions based on this collection (about twenty a year) both in France and abroad (London, Beijing, Budapest, Siena, New York, and Tokyo, to mention just the most recent). In 1999 and 2000, together with Frédéric Migayrou, she co-curated the Orléans International Architectural Conference, ARCHILAB, which brings together younger international practitioners involved in the latest forms of architecture, in its most forward-looking dimension. In 2001 and 2002 she co-curated ARCHILAB with Béatrice

Simonot. In 2002, Marie-Ange Brayer and Béatrice Simonot were co-curators of the French Pavilion at the 8th International Architectural Biennale in Venice.

As an art and architectural critic, Marie-Ange Brayer has published many articles in magazines and catalogues. Marie-Ange Brayer is currently working on a PhD at the EHESS [School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences] in Paris, retracing the legal status of the architectural model since the Renaissance, by way of a history of representation (*A model object, the architectural maquette*).

Peter Weibel. YOUiverse

The Biennial

The Seville Biennial will be — indeed, cannot be otherwise today — a global Biennial. Contemporary art production is not restricted to Europe and North America (Euramerica), but takes place all over the globe, from Chile to Korea. The Biennial will make a new map of Global Art, World Art. The Biennial will try to initiate a shift of paradigm: from the Euramerican paradigm to the Eurasian and Eurabian paradigm. This could be achieved by addressing this shift through the specific aspect of media and technology, that technology is transreligious, transgender, transnational and transracial.

In this age of information and communications technology (ICT), how the world is perceived and enacted is increasingly dominated by the media, and the influence of the media on art is also on the increase. The Biennale will show how contemporary art worldwide has changed through the influence of media, technology, and science. ICT owes its development to the findings of science, from semiconductor physics to nano-technology. Thus the common point of origin of the media and media art is science and technology. So how are the equations between technology and art, nature and science defined in a new way? Earlier, this question was downplayed through the use of the conjunction “and,” for example, media and art, art and technology, or art and science. A more radical answer is enabled when that conjunction is replaced by another, “as:” for example, culture as technology, science as art, and so on. If this method is applied, then new consequences arise as a result, which this Festival will exhibit in the form of exemplary artworks.

The Biennial is structured according to four spheres:

Section 1 offers a retrospective view of the great masterpieces of media art, from Nam June Paik to Bill Viola. Also included are little known artistic positions, which deserve to be relocated from the periphery to the center.

Section 2 showcases the very latest trends in media art: interactivity and participation of the public, Internet art, and multiplayer media, the spectator as user. Using state-of-the-art technology the art at the Biacs 3 will open a gateway onto an unknown world that science, technology, art, and media place at our disposal, a world where humans are central and can influence the world in any way they wish.

In Section 3 the transformations in architecture through the use of computers and new software programs will be on display that generate new forms of conviviality. Biomorph architecture is emerging that goes far beyond the deconstructivist demolition of the White Cube and the Black Box as the basic module of architecture. In the new architecture the boundary between system (building) and environment (nature) is variable. We cannot destroy the notion of a boundary because we need it; however, we can vary it. To vary and adjust the relations between humans and environment architecture invents new technological interfaces. These interfaces provide for a variable exchange of signals between environment and system. In the future a great deal can be expected from architecture that consciously and deliberately connects internal systems, like a house, with the external environment, the city. Architecture will invent new interfaces.

Section 4 is the city of Seville itself. The exhibition not only takes place in CAAC, but also in public spaces in the city. Further, there will be satellites of the exhibition at other locations, such as Cordoba, Granada, etc. The purpose of these annexes is to delve into the archaeology and deep time of the sciences and technology in Andalusia, and demonstrate that Andalusia has a long history of science, technology, and art.

The Biennial’s goal is the participation of the public. There will be a democratization of art. The audience is the star, not the artists.

Looking makes people happy, and experiencing art can be euphoric. The encounter with art at the Biennial of Seville will make people euphoric.

Technology as human-made Nature

Recent scientific discoveries in the fields of molecular electronics, molecular biology, molecular chemistry, and genetics, which may be grouped under the heading of nanotechnology and life sciences, indicate that we are at the threshold of a material revolution. Physics has invaded the subatomic molecular dimension of matter and expects to discover new properties of matter in these molecular dimensions.

ICT is a major enabler of globalization, including global dissemination of and global access to information. At the same time through applying scientific knowledge humans have learned to intervene increasingly in natural environment. The book of nature, which up to now we could only read, is now being rewritten by humankind. Up to now we could read the genetic code, in future we will learn to write the genetic code. In this context new questions arise to which art has some answers on hand. Is technology merely applied science and as such only the offspring of science? Is science, the study of nature, a child of nature or a child of humankind? If technology and science are but children of nature, that is, imitating and applying natural laws, but at the same time are indebted to human cognitive abilities, can we then say that technology is artificial, human-made nature? These questions are concerns both of contemporary science and of contemporary media art.

Therefore, it is imperative to take a contemporary look at the relations between media, art, science, and technology.

The Participatory Universe: Interactive Art

YOUiverse means that “you,” that is, everyone, stands in the center of the universe. YOUiverse also means that at the same time “you” are a part of the universe and thus responsible for it. YOUiverse means that the universe’s structure is participatory: you, the observer, are a part of the system that you observe.

The quantum physicist John Archibald Wheeler has described the universe as a self-excited circuit. In a famous diagram we see a “U” for universe, an “I” for I, me, and an eye as a part of the universe that it is looking at. This figure not only conveys the quantum physics notion of a participatory universe, but also the idea of the participating observer.

This worldview of quantum physics agrees with contemporary praxis of media art, which also lives on the idea of observer participation. The interactivity of artwork and viewer thus reflects the relationship of universe and observer. Art and science have common blueprints of the world, as quantum physics and media art demonstrate.

David and Shlomit Ritz Finkelstein have shown in “Computer interactivity simulates quantum complementarity” (1983) that quantum physics can be regarded as a theoretical model for interactive media.¹

Heisenberg’s famous uncertainty principle has taught us that the act of observing itself influences and restricts the measurement of the world; that in a certain way the act of observation changes reality. A public statement about the stock exchange can change the behavior of stocks and shares. This led the renowned financial expert George Soros to name his hedge fund Quantum Fund.

The aim of all desire, particularly apparent in the infantile phase of development, is that the world should comply with one’s wishes. “Subdue the Earth” was the imperative of classical economy of labor. “By the sweat of his brow” man attempted to achieve mastery over nature. YOUiverse on the contrary means: the world was made for you, you are at the center of the world, which is arranged and behaves as you like it. In former times this paradisiacal state of affairs could only be achieved artificially, by means of drug-induced “artificial paradises” or through religious rituals and exercises. Today technology replaces religious rituals and profane narcotics.

Not only with the title of his play *As You Like It*, but also with the monologue he gave to the singular Jaques — “All the world’s a stage / And all the men and women merely players” — the genius of Shakespeare seems to anticipate like no other the contemporary virtual world of the Internet and the artificial, three-dimensional, interactive game worlds (multiplayer media, massively parallel online games), which are increasingly expanding and improving the real world. *As You Like It* is the real manifesto of the virtual age that is now beginning in the twenty-first century as a second life, as a parallel artificial double of natural life. Second life could become a virtual place for cultural memory, the place for the history of Al-Andalus.

Mobilization

In the nineteenth century, in the industrial age, mechanical mobilization began. Railways, airplanes, and automobiles dominated the imagination and visions of the future. This mechanical mobilization concerned the transportation of goods and human bodies.

¹ D. and S.R. Finkelstein. 1983. *Computer interactivity simulates quantum complementarity*. *Int. J. Theor. Phys.* 22: 753–779.

In the postindustrial twentieth century electronic mobilization began. The signs separated from the bodies and the signs were able to travel alone. Radio, television, and telephone enabled the mobility of information. The global network, the global system of interconnected computers, the development of mobile computers and telephones not only enhance mobility, they introduce a new characteristic of technology: personalization.

Agreement can be assumed regarding the proposition that technology aids us humans to master nature, and thus technology humanizes nature. Likewise, there is probably agreement that Europe would not have maintained its position of supremacy in the world for centuries without science and without its technical know-how; technology also enabled the control of people. Without knowledge of astronomy, navigation, and shipbuilding — early technologies of mobilization — Spain would not have been able to colonize other countries. Without its prowess in engineering (mining, hydroelectric power, urban planning) Spain would not have been able to exploit nature and the resources in its colonies. Thus mastery of science and technology not only serve to dominate nature, but also to dominate people.

Personalization

In the past technology and science served the powerful few. By contrast, today technology and science tendency serve everyone. Thus science and technology not only signify the humanization of nature, but first and foremost individualization and personalization of nature and the environment. From water taps to light switches, from personal computers to cell phones we encounter technologies that allow users to arrange and design their environment according to their needs, at all times and everywhere. You stand at the center of the universe and the universe adapts itself through ongoing technicalization; that is, increasing humanization and personalization of nature according to your needs. Personalization of technology results in a world behaving as you like it.

The dissemination of knowledge to all, and this personalization of technology, serves enlightenment, emancipation, and democratization.

Art, too, is included in this democratization. Painters no longer have a monopoly on creating images ever since photography made it possible for everyone to take pictures. In the global expansion of the Internet there is almost unlimited storage space in which any user can try out his or her creativity. Artists, in the age of *Youtube.com*, *Flickr.com*, *MySpace.com*, and *Second Life*, lose their monopoly on creativity. Using contemporary media everyone can be artistically creative. As Joseph Beuys said back in 1970, “every person is an artist.”

BIACS Foundation. The Project

The primary goal of the International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville (BIACS) is to offer a selection of today's most avant-garde artwork, bringing people together every other year in a supranational gathering that invites visitors to discover where the latest creative tendencies are headed. At the same time, the BIACS also aims to enrich the present cultural panorama by weaving new energy into the current artistic fabric, in response to the growing social demand for quality cultural productions. Seville shares in this universal demand and rises to meet the challenge armed with the strength of its vast cultural, artistic and intellectual experience.

Thus, the Biennial can be defined as a major artistic and social event that attempts to draw in the most relevant personalities of contemporary art (galerists, collectors, critics, artists, etc.), contribute to the promotion of quality cultural tourism for the city, and mainly awaken the interest and encourage the involvement of the general public, especially the citizens of Seville, by creating a forum in which topics and issues related to contemporary art can be debated and discussed.

The Foundation for the International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville was incorporated on 22 May 2003 for the purpose of directing, organising and producing the BIACS. The 28 founding members of this private, not-for-profit entity were willing and able to provide the necessary impetus for the realisation of the first edition; these founders made every effort to land the Biennial in the cultural limelight, thus guaranteeing its continuity and international relevance. This step represented a milestone in the history of Andalusia: for the first time, a private initiative of citizens and society decided to promote and realise a project of these characteristics and dimensions on an international level.

The BIACS Foundation has received ample support from the principal Public Institutions at the local, regional and national levels, acting as Benefactors and Patrons, as well as from a wide variety of Andalusian and Spanish businesses and professionals who contribute to the creation of the event as Sponsors, Patrons and Benefactors.

The Project

The primary objectives of the International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville are mainly focused on heightening and reinforcing public awareness and understanding of contemporary art by involving population sectors in this initiative that are not generally interested in or informed of the intricacies of this particular kind of art.

Other objectives include serving as a revitalising agent for the current artistic scene and contributing to infuse new energy in today's cultural offerings. In this sense, the BIACS hopes to spawn other cultural activities and events by inspiring the creation of new means and venues of artistic expression.

Our goal is to ensure the presence of the most avant-garde and innovative contemporary creations in our exhibition, which we attain by selecting a qualified artistic director, who in turn chooses the theme of each new edition and designs an expositive project centred on that particular concept.

BIACS provides an opportunity to contemplate the artwork of some of the most internationally renowned artists, many of whose pieces have never before travelled to Spain and others whose creations are exclusively produced for the BIACS exhibit (site-specific works).

The BIACS parallel activities (debate forums, symposiums, shows and performances) included in the so-called "Cultural Biennial" expand upon the contents of the artistic exhibition and invite the public to interact with its discursive proposals.

The purpose of the BIACS cultural proposal is to affect the lives of everyday citizens, drawing in visitors from every walk of life in each new edition. The end goal is to give voice to the commitment of society – principally the society of Seville, from whence emerged the cultural unrest that conceived and promoted this great event – to actively encourage understanding and enjoyment of contemporary art, of a mongrel and multicultural art that requires open forums in which it can be adequately expressed and accepted.

Making a concentrated and united effort based on this commitment also implies an interest in projecting a new image of the city to the outside world, replacing the traditional stereotype that is reinforced by the city's historical attractions with a new context in which modern artistic proposals rife with content and definition can originate and flourish.

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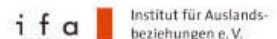
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