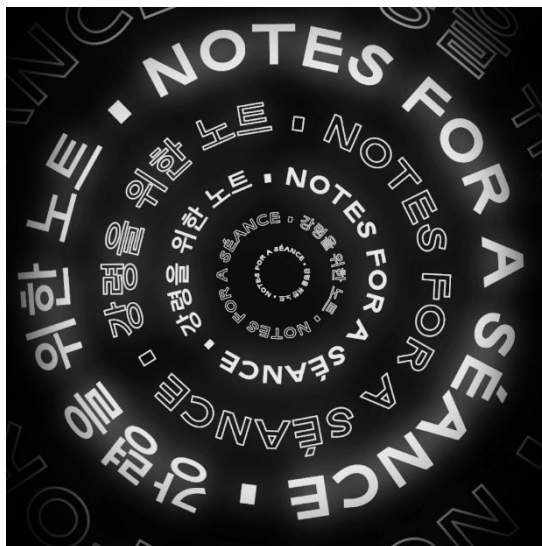


Artistic Directors outline their research towards the 13th Seoul Mediacity Biennale



SMB13 pre-Biennale II *Notes for a Séance*, Graphic identity, 2024. Design: Daniel Leyva

Seoul Museum of Art (Seosomun-dong)

61 Deoksugung-gil, Jung-gu, Seoul, South Korea, 04515

The Artistic Directors of the 13th Seoul Mediacity Biennale—Anton Vidokle, Hallie Ayres, and Lukas Brasiskis—announce the field of their research towards the Biennale.

The practice of *séances*—attempts to make contact with worlds beyond the living, through the agency of a medium—flourished during the social transformations of the early modernist period. This was symptomatic of an explosion of popular interest in spiritism, the occult, mysticism, and syncretic religion as emotional and imaginative alternatives to the stress and alienation of an increasingly mechanistic, regimented, and rationalist industrial society. These practices and ideas would come to influence the work of myriad vanguard artists.

Over the intervening century, rituals as varied as cinema screenings, psychoanalytic sessions, and experimental theater came to be referred to as *séances* (the word might literally be translated as “sittings”). Now—in a comparably traumatic period, characterized by the same disorientation, anxiety, and insecurity—it is not surprising that many artists are looking to make connections with other worlds. For the 13th Seoul Mediacity Biennale, the Artistic Directors will map a selection of modern and contemporary artistic practices that draw on occult, mystical, and spiritual traditions in their attempts to make sense of the present moment.

They propose an “exhibition-as-*séance*,” a show that underscores the entanglements between waking life and the more-than-human world. In seeking to do so, they are researching works of art at the intersection of technology and mystical traditions, with a particular emphasis on historical connections between art, society, and the spirit. The history of images and objects being ascribed magical, sacred, and mystical qualities is as long and rich as human civilization. From cave paintings to Scythian stone totems, icons and sacraments, these objects and representations aimed to channel other-than-human voices and forces. While it has become less common after modernism to read works of art in these terms, the practice—and the writings—of many artists continue to evince a deep fascination with the access they might provide to other worlds existing among and alongside our own.

In doing so, these practices seek emancipation from the structures—capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy, white supremacy—that shape our lived realities. The works to be included in the upcoming Biennale will touch on postcolonial discourse and anti-capitalism as much as feminism and climate justice. These practices are not

obscurantist or reactionary; they do not dismiss scientific enquiry out of hand so much as trouble the marriage of technology and anti-rationalism. If they are united by anything, it is in their rejection of the exploitative logics of industrial capitalism, in favor of a *technology of the spirit*.

The Artistic Directors will present some of the foundational thinking towards the exhibition at an event at Seoul Museum of Art Seosomun, SeMA Hall on November 30. The talks will share the key ideas informing their curatorial imagination of the exhibition, and be accompanied by the screening of films by artists including Bruce Conner, Maya Deren, Jordan Belson, Shana Moulton, Shigeko Kubota, and Yin-Ju Chen.

Further details of the event, and how to secure a seat, can be accessed [here](#).

Press Inquiries | contact@mediacityseoul.kr

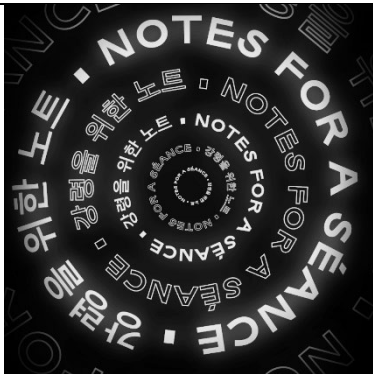
For high-resolution images, please follow the below
[<https://lrl.kr/PiVE>]

The 13th Seoul Mediacity pre-Biennale Website <http://mediacityseoul.kr>
Seoul Museum of Art Website <http://sema.seoul.go.kr>

SMB Social Media channels

Instagram: [instagram.com/seoulmediacitybiennale](https://www.instagram.com/seoulmediacitybiennale)
X(Twitter): [x.com/mediacityseoul](https://twitter.com/mediacityseoul)
Facebook: [facebook.com/mediacityseoul](https://www.facebook.com/mediacityseoul)
Youtube: [youtube.com/seoulmediacitybiennale](https://www.youtube.com/seoulmediacitybiennale)

[Appendix A] Images and credit

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|  | <p>SMB13 pre-Biennale II <i>Notes for a Séance</i>, Graphic identity, 2024. Design: Daniel Leyva</p> |
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[Appendix B] Program Timetable

**The 13th Seoul Mediacity pre-Biennale II *Notes for a Séance*
2024. 11. 30 (Sat) 1PM – 6PM**

Venue SeMA Hall

13:00-13:10 Introduction

Jung So-La, Director of Curatorial and Research Bureau, SeMA

13:10-14:45 Part 1 *Death, Art, and Spirituality*

Presentation: Anton Vidokle, SMB13 Artistic Directors

Screening Artworks

Kenneth Anger, *Death*, 2009. 52 sec

Yin-Ju Chen, *Somewhere Beyond Right and Wrong, There is a Garden. I Will Meet You There*, 2023. 16 min

Pelin Tan and Anton Vidokle, *Gilgamesh: She Who Saw the Deep*, 2022. 47 min

14:45-15:00 Intermission

15:00-16:05 Part 2 *Mediating the Invisible: Spiritual, Cinematic, and Psychoanalytical Séances*

Presentation: Lukas Brasiskis, SMB13 Artistic Directors

Screening Artworks

Maya Deren, *Ritual in Transfigured Time*, 1946. 15 min

Jordan Belson, *Samadhi*, 1967. 5 min

Bruce Conner, *Looking for Mushrooms*, 1959-67/1996. 14 min

16:05-16:15 Intermission

16:15-17:30 Part 3 *Contemporary Techno-Mysticism and its Discontents*

Presentation: Hallie Ayres, SMB13 Artistic Directors

Screening Artworks

Shigeko Kubota, *Video Girls and Video Songs for Navajo Sky*, 1973. 26 min

Shana Moulton, *MindPlace ThoughtStream*, 2014. 12 min

17:30-18:00 Q&A

[Appendix C] About Seoul Mediacity Biennale

Since its inauguration in 2000 as an initiative of the Seoul Metropolitan Government, Seoul Mediacity Biennale has earned international recognition for its experimental engagement with contemporaneity and the changes of media in the city. The Biennale began sharing conceptual experiences on media beginning with its precursor exhibition SEOUL in MEDIA, which was held three times between 1996 and 1999. Since then, the Biennale has presented twelve editions, each embodying varying ideas and activities that resonate with its respective time.

For each edition, some 50 participating artists (individuals and collectives) have presented works that respond to the project's thematic focus and contend with the urgent issues of our time, attracting approximately 140,000 visitors during each Biennale period. Centered around Seoul Museum of Art Seosomun Main Branch, the Biennale also activates various satellite and collaborating spaces across the city of Seoul, accompanied by public programs and publications that serve as important mediators in fostering artistic awareness and experience among both participatory and audience members.

The Biennale also commissions, supports and presents new artworks by celebrated artists who faithfully advance the Biennale's objectives. A total of 35 such works have been acquired by SeMA and are currently in the museum's permanent collection, serving as concrete documentary evidence of the evolving forms, tendencies and concepts in contemporary media art. Next year, the Biennale's archives will be cataloged and disseminated via an integrated online platform, ensuring access to Biennale resources as a collective property of the public.

A pre-Biennale program initiated in 2022 seeks to explore conceptual media, evaluate the Biennale's identity, encourage local engagement and expand the project's purview based on the accumulated resources from throughout its history. Conceived as a form of media unto itself, the historic record of previous Biennales as presented in the pre-Biennale program establishes a space for contemporary experimentation and thought integrating aesthetic participation, production and mediation.