

Six-page feature on the 23rd Biennale of Sydney with a selection of highlights and extended captions by the Curatorium. Published in print.

TEN GALLERY

TEN GALLERY THE CHOSEN ONES

Situated along the waterways of the Burramattagal and Gadigal people, the 23rd Biennale of Sydney, named *rivus*, is a biennale of epic proportions. “*rivus*, which features rivers and other bodies of water and the ecologies they sustain, departs from issues around water – an element that is a basic right and that has increasingly become a commodity in a globalised world that suffers a progressive and relentless privatisation of the commons,” José Roca, the biennale’s artistic director, tells us.

Text ALISON VENESS
Artwork COURTESY OF BIENNALE OF SYDNEY

He adds: “It branches into other themes, like the rights of nature, voices of the non-human, interspecies collaboration, hybrid ecosystems and many more. Each venue is conceived as a conceptual territory that we call ‘wetlands’, where specific topics are addressed by the participants.” Roca and members of the curatorium share with us their insights on the biennale participants’ previous works, which follow the strong current of thought-provoking ideas that will come to fruition at *rivus* (runs until June 13).

Instagram: @biennaleofsydney
[biennaleofsydney.org](https://www.biennaleofsydney.org)

100
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José Roca, artistic director, Biennale of Sydney
“They [Hanneb Aekroyd and Dan Harvey, the artists behind Aekroyd & Harvey] have done two large-scale portraits of environmental defenders Uncle ‘Chaska’ Madden and Lillie Madden in fine grass [for the biennale], which will eventually fade away in a poignant commentary on the fragility of our environment.”



above: *Grazing the Green Belt*, 2010, by Aekroyd & Harvey
top: *Blaskow*, 2014, by Aekroyd & Harvey

IMAGE: © AERONAUT & ARTIST

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The Great Animal Orchestra, 2016, by Bernie Krause and United Visual Artists

José Roca, artistic director, Biennale of Sydney

“Imagine stepping into a soundproofed black box theatre whose walls spring to life with overlapping electrocardiograms representing different species’ sounds. This darkened meditative space includes a shallow reflecting pool, which translates the deepest sounds of the ocean. Visitors can relax on cushions or stretch out on the floor, listening to the sounds of the animal world and reflecting through an emotional and sensory experience.”

100
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Alluvium (film still), 2020, by Erin Coates

Anna Davis, curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

“Never the same river twice, 2022, continues artist and free diver Erin Coates’s exploration of the Derbarl Yerrigan/Swan River in Western Australia, and the ongoing impact industrial dredging and pollution has had on this fragile ecosystem and its oceanic dolphin population. Her striking sculptural work, made especially for the 23rd biennale, has an eco-horror aesthetic, weaving together masses of discarded oyster shells with fleshy silicon objects that look like small body parts and cancerous growths. As Erin says, ‘Much of my work explores the nature of transformed bodies, both human and non-human. In this work, the human body is not clearly visible yet it is everywhere: dispersed in the water through a thousand tiny changes.’”

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Hannah Donnelly, producer of First Nations programs, Information + Cultural Exchange

"Trawlwoodway artist Julie Gough follows several interconnecting ancestral rivers and tributaries in Tasmania's Midlands and the absence of ancestral objects for the 23rd Biennale of Sydney. Gough has 3D-printed up to 100 Tasmanian stone tools that are held in museum collections off-Country and will suspend them like a shower of black rain at Pier 2/3 [at the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct]. Drone footage of Gough kayaking along isolated waterways is a virtual return to Country and riverways for the tools. Gough is uncovering the glitches in using new technologies to repatriate facsimiles of cultural belongings. Gough never got to hold the tools made by her Old People."



Manifestation (Brumy Island), 2010, by Julie Gough



Fogcatcher (detail), 2018, by Paula de Solminihac

José Roca, artistic director, Biennale of Sydney

"Process is the real subject in the Chilean artist Paula de Solminihac's works, which are always in flux, constantly being transformed by the elements into something new. She will have a series titled Black Bark, which, in her own words, is 'a sequence of containers that contain each other and whose creative process lies in the contact [that they have] with the silent transformative powers that happen in the soil and that end when the photos are opened to be shown.'"

Pascal Daantos Berry, head of learning and participation, Art Gallery of NSW

"Moogahlin Performing Arts and Ontario's Aamjiinagii (arts collective) have created a three-channel video work [for the 23rd Biennale] centred on river stories from the perspective of First Nations peoples. Born out of an ongoing exchange between two important theatre companies, the film is centred on women, creation and the significance of water in shaping Country."



Broken Glass, 2018, by Moogahlin Performing Arts

José Roca, artistic director, Biennale of Sydney

"Wura-Nataasha Ogunji will be travelling to Sydney towards the end of the biennale for a live performance, developed with local participants, that poses questions about gendered labour and the politics of change. She will also be exhibiting her beautiful stitched-through works on paper, which draw on personal and historical movement between Africa and the Americas, and the in-between space of the Atlantic Ocean."



Will I still carry water when I am a dead woman?, 2013, by Wura-Nataasha Ogunji