

Mercosul Biennial announces Artistic Directors for the 7th edition

Victoria Noorthoorn and Camilo Yáñez's joint proposal was chosen after an international selection process with 67 applications. The curators propose greater participation of artists as the core of the Biennial concept

The Artistic Directors for the 7th Mercosul Biennial, planned for September to November 2009 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, will be Victoria Noorthoorn from Argentina and Camilo Yáñez from Chile. The joint proposal was chosen after an open international call for submissions, which received 67 applications.

Victoria Noorthoorn holds a degree in Art History from the University of Buenos Aires and a Masters of Arts in Curatorial Studies from Bard College, New York. She was Projects Coordinator at the International Programme of The Museum of Modern Art – MoMA and Assistant Curator of Contemporary Exhibitions at The Drawing Center, both in New York. In Argentina, she was Curator of the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires - Malba / Colección Costantini. Since March 2004 she has been an independent curator and in this capacity she organized the permanent collection of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Neuquén/Argentina (2004). She was Chief Curator of the *29th Pontevedra Art Biennial*, in Spain (2006); Co-curator of *Ricardo Garabito: una retrospectiva* at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires (2007); she collaborated in the presentation of Argentine artist León Ferrari at the 52nd International Venice Biennale (2007) and curated *Beginning With a Bang! From Confrontation to Intimacy. An Exhibition of Argentine Contemporary Artists 1960 / 2007* at the Americas Society, in New York (2007-2008), among many other projects. In 2007 she also directed the arteBA-Petrobras 07 Award, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She is currently on the Curatorial Committee of the 41st National Artists' Salon, which opens in November in Cali, Colombia.

Camilo Yáñez is a visual artist and curator. He holds an undergraduate and a Master's degree in Art from the University of Chile. He teaches at the Diego Portales University, the University of Development, and the UNIACC. He has had solo and group exhibitions in Chile and abroad. His most important exhibitions include *Daniel López Show*, at White Box, New York (2006); *Contragolpe*, at Instituto Divorcados, Karl Marx alle 87, Berlin (2006); *Multiplication*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile (2006) and *Utopías de Bolsillo, Bienal de Arte*, at the National Museum of Fine Art, Santiago, Chile (2006); Yáñez also showed at the 5th Mercosul Biennial in Porto Alegre (2005), and other exhibitions. He has won the FONDART grant three times. As visual arts coordinator for the Centro Cultural Matucana 100, in Santiago, Chile, he curated *Sur Scene*, Château de Tours, Tours (2007); *Feedback*, at Galeria Concreta do Centro Cultural Matucana 100 (2007); *CityScapes - Santiago de Chile*, at ARCO, Madrid (2006); *Parrilla / Video Arte*, at the Centro Cultural Matucana 100 (2005) and *Rúbrica*, at the Centro Cultural Matucana 100 (2003). He was co-editor of *Poblado*, a publication on contemporary Chilean art and a member of the Editorial Committee for *Copiando el Edén: Arte Reciente en Chile* (Puro Chile Ediciones, 2006). He is currently a creative director at CasaZegers, an important advertising agency in Santiago, Chile.

The selected proposal met the Mercosul Biennial Foundation's goals for the next edition of the event as defined in the application. These goals were: priority investment in education and communication; focus on social contribution; a search for real benefits for all audiences, supporters and collaborators; familiarity of the project with contemporary artistic production and its critical discourse; transparent management processes and consolidation of the Mercosul Biennial as a point of reference in the fields of art, education and research.

In general terms, Noorhoorn's and Yáñez's proposal for the 7th Biennial entails the effective participation of the artists involved, and the channeling of their creative energies into structuring the Biennale itself. The curatorial team will largely consist of artists, regarded as social players and constant producers of critical thought. In dialogue with the Chief Curators, they will conceive the exhibition formats, the educational strategies, and editorial policies. All in all, the nine exhibition projects that together compose the structure of the Biennial imply a departure from traditional Biennial formats: the inclusion of an open call, the use of chance - in one of the exhibitions – in the selection of the artists, and the development of a flexible editorial project that will organically respond to the process of the Biennale itself. In terms of content, the curators are interested in a poetics that postulates detention as a mode of subversion and as a way to frame a portion of the real in order to exhibit it and alter it. They are interested in showing art's ability to propose alternatives to current ways of thinking, seeing, and operating in society at large. Accompanying the exhibitions, the educational program will be based upon a micropolitics of artists-led educational practices in Latin America. All in all, the curators propose the Biennial as an open conversation with the public on the state of the most advanced critical arts in Latin America in dialogue with the world; and their curatorial practice as a tool for mediating between the artist and the audience. The exhibitions are currently being planned and should be made public in brief, along with the names of the Adjunct Curators, the Curator of Education and the Editorial team.

About the selection process

The selection process for the Chief Curator began in March of this year with an international open call for submissions. The method adopted marks a new stage in the evolution of the Mercosul Biennial, making the selection of the Chief Curator more dynamic and transparent.

Over a 20-day period, the Mercosul Biennial Foundation received and considered 67 suitable joint and individual proposals, accompanied by the requested attachments, from 74 candidates. Applications were received from 24 countries – Germany, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Spain, USA, France, Netherlands, England, Italy, Mexico, Paraguay, Porto Rico, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Uruguay, Venezuela, Guatemala and Poland. The candidates' names and proposals are filed secretly by the Foundation and will not be made available to the public.

After the applications were analyzed and pre-selected by an international committee of specialists, three candidates were asked to develop their proposals according to the terms of the application invitation. The Selection Committee then passed the more extensive second proposals onto the President of the 7th Mercosul Biennial, Dr. Mauro Knijnik, who decided which proposal would be selected.

The selection committee included Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro – Chief Curator of the 6th Mercosul Biennial and Director of the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection, New York, USA; Henry Meyric Hughes – independent curator, consultant and art theorist, President of The International Association of Art Critics - AICA and ex-President of the International Manifesta Foundation which organizes the European Biennial of Contemporary Art; Rodrigo Naves – lecturer, art critic and historian. The committee was coordinated by Justo Werlang – President of the 6th Mercosul Biennial.

For reference

Created in 1996, the **Mercosul Visual Arts Biennial Foundation**, based in Porto Alegre/RS, Brazil, is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution dedicated to preparing and organizing the exhibitions and events comprising the Mercosul Biennials.

In twelve years of existence, the Mercosul Biennial Foundation has organized six editions of visual arts exhibitions, totalling **399** days of exhibitions open to the public, **50** different exhibitions, **3,616,556** visits with completely free admission, **919,723** school bookings, **165,229** m² of prepared exhibition spaces, rediscovered and revitalized urban spaces and buildings, **3,131** exhibited works, temporary urban interventions and **16** monumental works donated to the city, **128** sponsors and supporters throughout its history, the participation of **923** artists, generation of more than **1,000** direct and indirect jobs per edition, as well as seminars, lectures, workshops, teachers' courses, and training and mediator work for **1,048** young people. The Mercosul Biennial Foundation Board and Administrative and Financial Advisors work **on a voluntary basis**.

The Mercosul Biennial offers thousands of people access to culture and art. The Biennial has become one of the most important contemporary-art events in Latin America and is recognized as the largest event devoted to Latin American art in the world.

The most recent edition took place from September to November 2007; that edition's curatorial model intensified the internationalization of the event, assembling 350 works by 67 artists from 23 countries and organizing a careful education program throughout the whole Biennial process. This emphasis on education was highly innovative, and the 6th Biennial has come to be seen as an important contribution to the discussion about art education in Brazil. It is our hope that its contribution to that debate will soon be recognized the world over.

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