



**X^e Biennale
de Lyon**

The Spectacle of the Everyday

16.09.09 → 03.01.10

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The Biennale de Lyon: 10 editions

An authorial biennale rooted
in a museum project

The Lyon Biennale stemmed from a project by Lyon's Museum of Contemporary Art, directed by Thierry Raspail since its inception in 1984. From 1984–1988, the Biennale was preceded by an annual event entitled *October of the Arts*, which ended with the exhibition *Colour Alone: The Experience of Monochrome*. This retraced the adventure of monochrome, from the beginnings of Impressionism and the historical avant-gardes to topical work by artists ranging from Malevitch to Anish Kapoor. Staged in various venues around the city, *Colour Alone* was highly successful, making its mark and illustrating Lyon's potential for hosting an international event, following the Paris Biennale's closure in 1985. The event gave rise to the inaugural Lyon Biennale in September 1991. The desire to create an event capable of artistic self-renewal while building a stable, long-term project that bonded with its host territory led to an organisational model specific to the Lyon Biennale: an Artistic Director builds the event's identity over time, and for each edition chooses a curator/curators with whom he collaborates closely to devise an artistic project. The Lyon Biennale is therefore truly an authorial biennale and, as Jean-Hubert Martin noted, "a clever way of having themes addressed through the personalities of others". Each biennale provides the opportunity to explore a specific issue. Its nine editions thus far have formed three successive trilogies: the first devoted to History, the second to Globalisation, and the third to Temporality. They have been curated by an international array of art historians, critics and professional curators including: Harald Szeemann, Jean-Hubert Martin, Le Consortium (with Robert Nickas and Anne Pontégnie), Stéphanie Moïsson and Hans Ulrich Obrist, and now, in 2009, Hou Hanru.

The Biennale de Lyon 2009

Everyday life as art was born in the '50s with John Cage's *Silence*; between East Coast and West Coast with George Brecht and Allan Kaprow; with Anna Halprin, Richard Rauschenberg and the Judson Dance Theater; with Terry Riley and La Monte Young too, and George Maciunas. That was long ago. In the Western world, spectacle was born with the Greeks and tragedy. The Renaissance turned it into perspective; and the Situationists, into an ideology. That was long ago. *Spectacle* and *Everyday* have set the tempo for civilisation since time immemorial, but today they have become underpinnings of a globalised artistic practice involving exchange, comparison, reciprocal contradiction and reversal of signifiers.

The dazzling success of art biennials in the '90s, and the way they have swept the planet, have paradoxically helped to flatten particularisms — Edouard Glissant's isthmuses and archipelagos — and to erode the processes of filiation and transmission. Today, putting aside the mercantile dealings, the aesthetic issues, the syndromes of universality and relativism, problems of centre and periphery, conflicts between cultural eras, and power struggles of every kind and gender, the everyday ("art and life") remains a central question. Spectacle is its economic extension, its finery, its *bête noire* — and, in a sense, its embodiment. And so, in today's life, what time and narrative, in Paul Ricoeur's sense, are we to construct, if not those of the spectacle of the everyday? This is the title of the 10th Biennale de Lyon.

Thierry Raspail

Artistic Director, Biennale de Lyon

Hou Hanru, Curator

Born in 1963 in China, Hou Hanru is a prolific and dynamic critic and curator based in Paris and San Francisco. He is Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs and also Chair of Exhibition and Museum Studies at the San Francisco Art Institute. Hou Hanru received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, where he was trained in art history. He has been a consultant for several cultural institutions internationally including the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Deutsche Bank Collection, Frankfurt; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Contemporary Art Museum in Kumamoto, Japan. He has taught and lectured at numerous institutions including the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam and the Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten in Ghent. Hou Hanru is a correspondent for *Flash Art International* and a regular contributor to several other contemporary-art journals including *ART iT*, *artasiapacific* and *Yishu*.

He has curated many exhibitions including: the exhibition programme at the Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute, since 2006, featuring artists such as Sarkis, Allora & Calzadilla, Jens Haaning, Adel Abdessemed, Teddy Cruz & Pedro Reyes and Yan Pei Ming, as well as group shows including *World Factory* and *Wherever We Go; Too Early for Vacation*, EV + A 2008, Limerick, Ireland, 2008; *Trans(cient) City* and *Global Multitude*, Luxembourg, 2007; *Not Only Possible, But Also Necessary – Optimism in the Age of Global Wars*, 10th Istanbul Biennale, 2007; *Everyday Miracle, four woman artists in the Chinese Pavilion (Shen Yuan, Yin Xiuzhen, Kan Xuan, Cao Fei)*, 52nd Venice Biennale, 2007; *Laboratoire pour un Avenir Incertain (Laboratory for an Uncertain Future)*, Grand Palais, Paris, France, 2006; *Go Inside*, 3rd Tirana Biennale, 2005; *The Second Guangzhou Triennial: Beyond — An Extraordinary Space of Experimentation for Modernization*, 2004–2006; *Nuit Blanche*, Paris, 2004; *Z.O.U, Zone of Urgency*, Venice Biennale, 2003; *Gwangju Biennale*, 2002; and *Shanghai Spirit*, Shanghai Biennale, 2000.

The Spectacle of the Everyday

We are living in the society of the spectacle. In spite of its alienating effects on our life and social relationships, it's one of the very fundamental conditions of our existence. We perceive the world and communicate with each other through the spectacle – a system of image production and representation dominated by the logic of market capitalism which tends to “develop” our faculties of perception, imagination and reflection towards a “one dimensional model” formatted by the language of consumerist ideology. This is also the very contemporary condition of our self-identification and social order “guaranteed” by the established power system. As a main typology of artistic and cultural events of our time, biennials of contemporary art are no doubt an ultimate form of expression of such a tendency.

However, whereas there is no longer any “outside” for the society of the spectacle in the age of globalisation, or of the “global empire” (Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt), there is always a necessity to engage critically and subversively negotiate with such a condition of “no-outside”. It's here, in such an engagement, that contemporary art and culture can regain their social role as a critical force and a channel for imaginative propositions for a better future.

If the society of the spectacle has imposed a seemingly unbeatable social, economic and political order and intellectual, artistic and cultural structure, it's at once absolutely urgent and permanently necessary for the art and culture worlds to come up with new visions and strategies promoting different and alternative ideas and solutions for the world to embrace its future. They should be diverse, complex, ever-changing and open to all kinds of

uncertainties and potentials against the static-ness, reductionism and control of the established order. The domain of everyday life, or *le quotidien*, is certainly the most open and efficient space in which, due to “alter-globalisation” — the global trend of social activism and independent initiatives to construct a new, bottom-up and more just world — one can most creatively imagine and propose fresh ideas and vision, as well as energetically encourage social mobilisations for more freedom and common interests. As Michel de Certeau pointed out two decades ago, the (re)invention of everyday life – the quotidian, or the ordinary – through differentiating usages of game-playing (*jeux*) with our daily objects, behaviours and modes of practice, we can obtain a new freedom in our negotiation with the established order. We are now, indeed, witnessing the birth of a new order that brings the global structure of human communication and economic, social and political activities beyond the one-dimensional power system. We are increasingly embracing a world reconstructed upon a complexity blending vertebral and cellular, vertical and horizontal, distant and proximate modes of organisation and circulation. As Arjun Appadurai states, this is a process of grass-root globalisation. Changes in our everyday life practices, or their reinventions, are the most crucial aspect in the making of this new order. It's also the most inspiring context for contemporary art to evolve and obtain new relevance. In the age of globalisation, it is not enough for contemporary art to become a spectacular phenomenon embraced by almost all people in all corners of the world. It's even more important to testify that artists and art communities from different parts of the globe are increasingly sharing the common understanding

and strategies to reinvent themselves through engagements with the realm of everyday life. More and more artists are magically turning the ordinary into novel forms, meanings and usages while innovative collective mobilisations are brought to the forefront as a more democratic structure of art practices and their social functions. They are the core of the global art and culture scene today. Through intensely presenting and promoting these initiatives using the most efficient tools, including spectacular events like international biennials, truly innovative and relevant contemporary art practices will obtain a much larger visibility and help us build a new, genuinely public space for our era.

After 20 years of existence and growth, the Biennale de Lyon is now facing a new challenge to reinvent itself. Exploring and presenting the new tendency of the global art scene in its common efforts to reinvent the ordinary into something spectacular and unique, or a new multitude of expressions of diversity, complexity and interactivity, the Biennale itself will certainly reach a new youth. And it's the best recipe to confront the current crisis that the whole world is entangled with...

The Spectacle of the Everyday is fundamentally changing both the spectacle and the everyday!

Hou Hanru

Curator, Biennale de Lyon 2009

Lyon: an exceptional flair for living

As in a history book, the architecture of Lyon unfolds from one listed quarter to the next, in a journey through 2,000 years of history. You need not walk for long: nestling between two rivers and two hills, Lyon offers myriad views of its matchless city-centre fabric, awarded World Heritage status by Unesco. Lyon is also a city of light. Golden shafts at dawn and dusk, along the Rhône and Saône embankments, bathe their Florentine façades; and over 250 buildings are illuminated nightly in a fairytale tableau. This consummate gastronomic capital, with its refined flair for living, awakens the inner epicurean's taste for good and beautiful things. Courtesy of Lyon's many chefs, you will discover the fine produce of the French terroirs beyond the city, matched with a line-up of famed Rhône Valley *crus*. Celebrated Michelin-starred chefs — Paul Bocuse, Nicolas Le Bec, Pierre Orsi, Mathieu Viannay and many others — await the chance to seduce your tastebuds with their inimitable savoir-faire. Endowed with numerous outstanding museums and venues such as the National Opera House, the Auditorium and the Maison de la Danse, Lyon has a cultural vibrancy you can almost touch. And do not forget that Lyon is the birthplace of cinema: the first-ever film was shot here in 1895 by the locally-born Lumière brothers. The Lumière Institute runs an exceptional year-round programme, and in autumn 2009 will for the first time stage a film festival where leading cineastes will come to present their work. Lyon has the warm atmosphere and flair for living of a southern city, and the effervescence of an inventive and experimental hub. It is a city where every moment is to be savoured.

Only Lyon

Only Lyon is a group of business and institutional stakeholders in the Lyon area who share one goal: to affirm the city's difference, values, identity, personality and exclusiveness. Its strategy aims to make Lyon a jewel in the European economy, capitalising on its leading roles in the sectors of healthcare, green chemistry, urban transport, technical textiles and digital entertainment, but also on its historical assets (tourism, history, gastronomy and heritage). Only Lyon leverages all the core facets of the city's appeal. This new signature primarily addresses the decision-makers and specifiers of Europe's leading capitals. But it is also a way for the people of Lyon to express their pride and identity. By taking ownership of the signature, they will become the city's foremost ambassadors.

Professional preview

Monday 14 and Tuesday 15
September 2009

Visitor information

Dates

From Wednesday 16 September 2009
to Sunday 03 January 2010
Closed 25 December 2009
and 01 January 2010

Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday 12:00 → 19:00
Late night opening: Friday 12:00 → 22:00
Closed on Monday

Media information

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