Press Release

Tuvalu announces Curator and Artist at the 2017 Venice Biennale

Artist and climate activist Vincent J. F. Huang (Taiwan) will represent the Pacific Island nation of Tuvalu at the 2017 Venice Biennale. Aida Yuen Wong (United States/Canada/Hong Kong) has been appointed the Tuvalu Pavilion Curator. Responding to the biennale theme, “Viva Arte Viva,” the Tuvalu Pavilion will serve as the physical heart of a worldwide “social sculpture” called the Global Interactive Program to be realized through on-and off-line projects designed to rouse the global community to tackle the climate crisis that currently threatens to destroy the biennale’s smallest participating country.

The only small Pacific Island Nation to participate in the Venice Biennale, Tuvalu is best known for its low elevation and its designation, according to the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change, as the likely first victim to the rising sea level. Though it has thrived for thousands of years as a self-sufficient fishing community now numbering just under 10,000, it is paying the price of global industrialization and indifference. As Huang points out, this tiny island country and Venice share a common troubling future.

Huang divides his creative life between Venice and Taipei and has focused his art and activism on a single question: “When extreme weather rages around the world, how could art take a stand, and furthermore, play a role in social reform?” Huang creates art as a catalyst capable of turning the experience of global warming into personal and public action, while at the same time being transcendent aesthetic events that awaken passion for global ecology.

Huang has been visiting Tuvalu since 2010. In 2012 he represented Tuvalu at the United Nations Climate Summit UNFCCC COP, and in 2013 and 2015 he exhibited at the Venice Biennale. It was his 2015 contribution, “Crossing the Tide,” which came to be known as “the flooded national pavilion” that made Tuvalu’s fate of interest to journalists from the mainstream as well as the art press all over the world. In 2017, he will be turning to a range of cultural forms, from myths and story-telling to the immersive poetry of installation in order to keep our eyes on the catastrophic future of a tiny island nation.

From the front lines of climate change in the South Pacific island and the Arctic Circle, Vincent J.F. Huang has
enlisted remarkable creativity to look deeply at global climate crisis and challenge us to answer the question: “Are contemporary cultural developments leading to a beautiful new tomorrow or hurrying us towards a disastrous and crashing end?”

**Artist**

Vincent Huang was born in Nantou, Taiwan, in 1971 and received his MFA from Gray’s School of Art in Scotland in 2001. He taught at the Department of Visual Communication Design at Shu-te University in Kaohsiung from 2001 to 2006. He has been artist-in-residence at the Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Chiyoda Art Center in Tokyo, ARTSPACE in Australia, and the Arctic Circle Project. In 2013, in acknowledgment of his sustained art activism in support of global environmental issues, he was honored with Taiwan’s most prestigious cultural award—the Presidential Cultural Award.

**Curator**

Aida Yuen Wong, Nathan Cummings and Robert B. and Beatrice C. Mayer Chair in Fine Arts is the Chair of the Department of Fine Arts at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts (U.S.A.). She specializes in transcultural exchanges in modern/contemporary East Asia and is currently writing on the recent history of ink painting in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Dr. Wong was awarded the Taiwan Fellowship from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ROC) (2015–2016) and the American Council of Learned Societies (and NEH) American Research in the Humanities in China Fellowship (2012–2013; 2002–2003). Among her publications are *Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-style Painting in Modern China* (2006); *Visualizing Beauty: Gender and Ideology in Modern East Asia* (2012); *The Other Kang Youwei: Calligrapher, Art Activist, and Aesthetic Reformer in Modern China* (2016); and the forthcoming *Fashion, Identity, and Power in Modern Asia*.

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