



Home → Online
Weekly →

ASIA NOW 2024: Transformation into Ceremony. In conversation with Alexander Burenkov, the co-curator of this edition, and Kathy Alliou, curator of Sumayya Vally's installation at Asia Now.

Interview

ASIA NOW 2024: Transformation into Ceremony.

In conversation with Alexander Burenkov, the co-curator of this edition, and Kathy Alliou, curator of Sumayya Vally's installation at Asia Now.

This year, [Asia Now](#) → is celebrating its 10th anniversary. On that occasion, this renowned art fair invited Nicolas Bourriaud and the cooperative Radicants to curate this edition. Under their leadership, Asia Now 2024 explores the themes of sacred and profane rituals, thus transforming its form into a ceremony. 'Rituals embody human actions that not only reinforce social structures but can also transform them', says one of the curators.

[Link](#) [Twitter](#) [Instagram](#) [Facebook](#)

Posted on:
15/10/2024

Author:
Anna Halek

Categories:
Art Fairs, Articles, Visual Arts



Monnaie de Paris Fasade © Bernard Touillon

Tags:

Alexander Burenkov,
 Ariuna Bulutova, Art Fair,
 Asia NOW, Asia Now Paris,
 Bobby Yu Shuk Pui, Chen
 Zhen, Dzongsar Khyentse
 Rinpoche, Kathy Alliou,
 Lusuud, Nicolas
 Bourriaud, Nil Yalter, Qian
 Qian, Rabbia al-Adwiyya,
 Sumayya Valli

Alexander Burenkov, the co-curator of this edition, and Kathy Alliou, curator of Sumayya Vally's installation at Asia Now, talked to Anna Halek about the motivations of their curatorial choices, the importance of non-human agents and nature in art, and the role of air fairs in the current discourse.

Alexander Burenkov, © Yana Sidikova.

Kathy Alliou, ©Sylvain Ferrari.

Anna Halek: This year, Asia NOW will focus on the intersection of collective rituals and performances in Asian art, exploring them through historical and contemporary contexts. The subject matter seems a very well-considered choice under the artistic direction of Nicolas Bourriaud and the curatorial cooperative Radicants. What does this process look like from a programming perspective- do the curators choose the subject, or does the subject choose the curators?

Alexander Burenkov: I bet for each curator, the process of 'cooking out the show' is always an exceptional ceremony by itself, with its repetitive rituals, traditions, and specific components, like preparing a dish based on a detailed recipe, but with a necessary space for improvisation. Just as the holding of

the art fair has become a kind of annual recurring ritual for the Asia Now team, living according to certain calendar rhythms and dynamics. In the case of working on the thematic umbrella for the art fair's public programs and the exhibition this year, the focus was not found immediately. It resulted from a long exchange of ideas and dialogue with the director of the fair, Alexandra Fain, who, better than anyone else, understands the ten-year trajectory of the fair's development and the evolution of the ideas and plots accompanying it from year to year.

Instead of a tautological "celebration", the choice fell on "ceremony" in all its variability and polysemy, based on the desire to consider the non-obviousness of this concept through the optics of not only contemporary artists but also philosophy, science, and poetry which inspire them. A ceremony usually comprises a prescribed sequence of actions, words, and artefacts, frequently enacted at rhythmic intervals, whether daily, weekly, or annually, or during significant milestones. While the term "ritual" traditionally evokes images of solemn religious rites, the ceremony opens the door to the cultural practices embedded in daily existence. From cooking rituals to the communal exuberance of festivals, these moments pulse with significance, bridging the sacred and the mundane.



Isaac Chong Wai, *Falling Reversely* – Reenactment 2, 2022, Archival Pigment print, 110 x 88, Ed 1/5 + 2 A.P

AH: The 2024 edition marks the 10th anniversary of Asia NOW, themed around “Asian ceremonies, festivities and artistic activations.” How did the significance of this edition influence the primary focus of this year’s fair and its preparations?

AB: Personal rituals and ceremonies are integral to an art-making process. A repeated intentional and almost devotional act that accompanies the production of art and signifies the territories of sacral and irrational in defiance of the pressure of the market logic of contemporary art. It points to a space for the inexplicable and magical in contemporary art. In the context of a contemporary art fair, it was essential for us to expand this space, to present it to a public that is usually not ready for this type of non-commercial art, to advocate for this magic of everyday rituals and ceremonies that expand traditional ideas about artistic forms and genres. It was crucial for Nicolas Bourriaud and me, co-curating the programs, to get rid of the ambiguity of the celebration as an expression of joy and honour, but instead to position ritualistic engagements as both a celebration of ancestral wisdom and a critical tool for interrogating and redefining established traditions and power dynamics. Rituals embody human actions that not only reinforce social structures but can also transform them. The artists invited by Radicants delve into the unifying power of communal celebrations—encompassing dances, processions, and festivities—as vessels for interpreting the shared human experience. We wanted to put together established and well-known artists such as **Nil Yalter** and **Özlem Altın** with artists utterly unknown to the French art scene, such as **Qian Qian**, **Bobby Yu Shuk Pui**, or **Ariuna Bulutova**, who turns to Indigenous practices and epistemologies in a quest to heal our relationship with the world beyond the human. Inspired by Lusuud, a Buryat shamanic ritual, and guided by her parents, practising shamans, the video and specially commissioned installation of this fantastic artist interweave ancestral knowledge with climate awareness.

Mirna Bamieh. Sour Things_ The Pantry. 'Imagine Home' exhibition view. 2024. Photo by Jan-Kees Steenman. Courtesy Het Noordbrabants Museum and the artist.

AH: Asia NOW 2024 is being held at the Monnaie de Paris, a venue with its historical and cultural significance. Has the location influenced your curatorial choices, and how might it shape the experience of visitors and collectors?

Kathy Alliou: What strikes me after the three previous editions of curatorial projects that I have done for Asia NOW at the Monnaie de Paris is just how much this architectural ensemble, which refers to classicism and French taste through its harmonious proportions and symmetry, welcomes works and projects that find their roots in different cultures and periods. As an architectural form, Monnaie de Paris is designed to host vibrant activities that complement its purpose, particularly performances that find suitable spaces to take place within a site-specific spirit.

In general, working in situ is a pleasure for both guest artists and curators, especially in such a historical space, which can be found so close by. Moreover, the site's 12,000 square meters of floor space, arranged around five diverse courtyards, adds rhythm and breadth to the visitors' experience as they wander around and excitement to the works in situ. The experience we aspire to give visitors of Asia NOW is genuinely artistic and far from uniformity. This lively site and activities taking place there (workshops, creative encounters, and culinary invitations) can be compared to a community and its rituals to a global village that we would be dreaming of – free, hospitable, and alive.



CONTEMPORARY
LYNX

READ

PARTICIPATE

JOIN

ABOUT



Performance view of a rain ceremony during 'They Who Brings Rain Brings Life', Counterspace's contribution to the 2023 Dhaka Art Summit. Photography by Shadman Sakib. Image courtesy Dhaka Arts Summit.

AH: This edition will host special projects by Sumayya Vally and Britto Arts Trust. Sumayya Vally has been recognised for her innovative and context-driven approach to architecture and design. At the same time, Britto Arts Trust, especially in their involvement with Documenta 15, highlights a commitment to collective and community-focused art practices. Considering curatorial choices and their reference to contemporary art

discourse, what role are these special projects playing in the broader narrative of the fair?

KA: Sumayya Valli's installation, which is a world first in this form and context, is entitled 'Water in one hand and Fire in the other'. This presentation at Asia NOW, Paris, 2024 is part of a genealogy of installation-performances by Sumayya Vally, whose first creation "They who brings rain, brings life" was presented at the Dakha Art Summit, Bangladesh in 2023, commissioned by the Samdani Art Foundation. This installation, commissioned by Asia NOW in partnership with the Musée d'Art et de Culture Soufis MTO, will be presented in the Cour d'Honneur at La Monnaie de Paris, from October 17. It explores the idea of ceremony and the interactions between humans and the elements. It responds to climatic issues – past and present, around soil, water, and fire and refers to the inner depths of our worlds, which one might call spirituality, an experience deeply linked to art. This interdependence and interconnection between all the planet's inhabitants (living, non-living, and the powers of nature) is precisely what Planet Earth emphasizes.

The cooked and uncooked jars that make up the installation, empty or full of water, are transformed by the test of time, weather conditions, human contact, and use. The installation's core will be the site of performances and music made by sufism practionners where bodies and spirits commune with a whole beyond within. Its title, 'Water in One Hand and Fire in the Other', is also a tribute to the great poetess Rabbia al-Adwiyya and to the women who have made the history of art and culture around the world, right up to the present day, as Sumayya Valli has done.



Charwei TSAI In collaboration with the community of Licchavi House, Kathmandu, Nepal
Ancient Desires – One Taste 2024 A set of 1000 ceramic offering vessels made in Nepal
Dimensions variable Commissioned by Licchavi House, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Charwei TSAI In collaboration with the community of Licchavi House, Kathmandu, Nepal Ancient Desires – One Taste 2024 A set of 1000 ceramic offering vessels made in Nepal Dimensions variable Commissioned by Licchavi House, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Charwei TSAI In collaboration with the community of Licchavi House, Kathmandu, Nepal Ancient Desires – One Taste 2024 A set of 1000 ceramic offering vessels made in Nepal Dimensions variable Commissioned by Licchavi House, Kathmandu, Nepal.

AH: Linking the theoretical work of Nicolas Bourriaud, artistic director of this edition, with curatorial decisions – are there specific installations or artists featured in Asia NOW 2024 that embody the theory of “relational aesthetics”?

AB: The exhibition includes a performative program and participatory projects in the spirit of relational aesthetics. It reflects the growing interest of contemporary artists in recent years in interacting not only with other humans but also with non-human agents, minerals, and nature in general. For example, geographical, social, and spiritual motifs inform the practice of Taiwanese artist **Charwei Tsai** →, which encourages viewer participation outside the confines of complacent contemplation.

Preoccupied with the human/nature relationship, Tsai meditates on the complexities among cultural beliefs, spirituality, and transience. The new participatory installation explicitly created for the 10th edition of Asia Now will greet the visitors right in the entrance area: the perishable offerings, hand-inscribed with mantras inside the vessels proposed by the performers to the visitors, will serve as a gesture of gift-giving that benefits the collective well-being of all sentient beings. This project is the new iteration of Tsai's 'Ancient Desires – One Taste' created earlier this year in collaboration with the local community of Licchavi House in Kathmandu, founded by the world-renowned Bhutanese Buddhist teacher and filmmaker Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche.

Together with the local Nepalese artistic and spiritual community of both trained and untrained potters, the artist has created more than 1200 ceramic offering vessels made from local clay. Some perishable offerings are hand-inscribed with mantras that were offered inside the vessels to benefit the collective well-being of all sentient beings.

Still, it also requires constant reconsideration: what does it mean

to be an Asian artist now? Is it essential to be an Asian by blood or to live in Asia? Where does the Asian region end, and what is the Asian mentality, if one can resort to any generalisations? Global Asians, living outside Asia, and moving art forward are major driving forces that should also be explored and invited to dialogue.

AH: With Asia NOW's prominence growth, what are the long-term goals for this fair? How do you envision it evolving, especially as a platform for dialogue and interaction, 'oriented towards a committed future'? What changes and impacts on the voice of Asian art in the global conversation are you expecting to see in the next ten years while celebrating the 20th anniversary of Asia NOW?

AB: Fairtigue goes hand in hand with the growth of new economic markets, but isn't it too much even for professionals to have 5-7 fairs held simultaneously in Basel, Paris, or New York? There are way too many art fairs worldwide, and it seems like nobody can stop cannibalising themselves. Fortunately, Asia Now has a clear boutique-style format and geographically solid focus, which makes it unique. Still, it also requires constant reconsideration: what does it mean to be an Asian artist now? Is it essential to be an Asian by blood or to live in Asia? Where does the Asian region end, and what is the Asian mentality, if one can resort to any generalisations?

Global Asians, living outside Asia, and moving art forward are major driving forces that should also be explored and invited to dialogue. Just as biennials face a crisis of biennialization and are searching for new sustainable post-pandemic ecological models, fairs in the next ten years must also reinvent themselves as events to be relevant and in line with the zeitgeist.

The focus on ceremonies, experimental art practices, participation, and performativity chosen this year will be a productive reboot and open the way for new experiments with the traditional fair format.

The Nature of White, Yoshida Shinichiro and Akimoto Yuji, art collective, art installation.
Photo by Kotaro Tanaka.

**Asia will open for visitors from 17th to 20th October in Monnaie
de Paris, 11 quai de Conti, Paris 6e, France.**

About The Author

Anna
Halek

Ania Halek (she/her) is an interior architect and researcher. Her work focuses on interior practice as a form of spatial perception. Her current research concerns death and its relations and interactions with space. She is interested in exhibition design and methods of textile creation.

1.9 x 4.4 cm (32 x 48 x 1

Tao Hui, Seeing, 2023. Water-based pigment on shell paper 60 x 50 cm (23 5/8 x 19 3/4 in) (unframed) 66 x 56 x 3,5 cm (22 x 26 x 1 3/8 in) (framed) (TH 033)

S

Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin/ Paris/Seoul Photo © Jörg von Bruchhausen

This might interest you

REVIEW

NEWS

INTERVIEW

REVIEW

A positive asymmetry.
About the modern world in the midst of
turmoils

Monika Juskowiak ◊ MAY 24, 2023

LYNX x Gdynia Design Days
We are a proud media partner of
Gdynia Design Days

Contemporary Lynx Team ◊ JUL 12, 2023

Figurative supernova.
With Agata Agatowska about her COSMIC
GENERATION exhibition.

Dominika Górowska ◊ JAN 30, 2024

Must-see Upcoming Independent Films In 2020 Enjoy!

Paulina Prońko ◊ JAN 08, 2020

Contemporary Lynx is an international and independent publication for art, design, collecting and photography on visual culture. With specially commissioned artwork, bespoke cover and a specific theme, it includes interviews with key figures in the art world and a range of insightful essays that debate current trends in arts.

© 2015-2024 Contemporary Lynx.
All images are copyrighted by the authors.
Made by EO + 8080.

- Online Weekly

Our Story
- Team

News
- Partners

Advertise
- Event Calendar

Open Calls
- Contact

Foundation

Newsletter

Stay up to date

Email

☐

I agree to receive emails with the understanding that I may easily opt-out of these communications at any time after signing up.

Sign up

By signing up you agree to our Terms Of Service and Privacy Policy.

- @Lynx_art
- @ContemporaryLynx
- @ContemporaryLynx
- @ContemporaryLynx