

Chow, Vivienne, *The Next Big Names? Here Are 5 Rising Artists to Watch From the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea*, artnet, 7 April 2023

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Shows & Exhibitions

The Next Big Names? Here Are 5 Rising Artists to Watch From the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea

We toured the grounds of the South Korean fair to bring you this list of emerging stars.

Vivienne Chow, April 7, 2023

The opening of the 14th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea on April 6 might have met with a rainstorm and communication breakdown that led to chaotic arrangements, but it was nonetheless a success.

It wasn't due to the K-pop glamor brought by Super Junior's Siwon Choi, who was appointed the ambassador of this edition's biennale onstage; nor did it have much to do with the strong presence of the opposing Democratic Party, including the mayor of Gwangju, Kang Gi-jung. The real star was the stunning main exhibition curated under the theme of "Soft and Weak like Water" by the Tate Modern's senior curator Sook-Kyung Lee, the first South Korean-born curator to helm the event since 2006.

Spanning five galleries in the Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Hall as well as four other off-site locations, the beautifully installed exhibition proved more than just a show to impress, but a platform for important dialogues that aim to inspire.

Featuring 79 artists from around the world, the show is divided into four main sections: Luminous Halo, Ancestral Voices, Transient Sovereignty, and Planetary Times. The biennale set in the South Korean city known for its struggle for freedom and democracy might not be overtly political at first glance, but there's no lack of politically charged yet poetic works that question and respond to urgent issues related to resistance, decolonization, and the environment. The art here is like water—its softness and tenderness can be a powerful mediator that penetrates the hard surfaces to bring about transformation.

Ahead of a full review of this expansive biennial event, we highlight five artists featured in the show deserving of global attention.

Yuko Mohri



Yuko Mohri, *I/O* (2011-23), on view at Gwangju Biennale.
Photo: Vivienne Chow.

Who: Born in Kanagawa in 1980, Mohri is a graduate of the Tokyo University of the Arts and has held solo shows around the world. Her residencies with Asian Cultural Council in New York, the Victoria & Albert Museum, and the Camden Arts Centre in London have enlarged her global exposure. Her works are in the collections of Centre Pompidou in Paris, M+ in Hong Kong, and Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. She is based in Tokyo.

Work on show: Installation work *I/O* (2011-23), on view at the glass pavilion of Horanggasy Artpolygon, one of the off-site venues.

Why you should pay attention: The installation artist has been a regular at biennales around the world since 2017, according to our survey last year, and it is not hard to understand why after seeing her work at Gwangju. *I/O*, which features a set of kinetic sculptures, is an ongoing series. But the artist has given it a new spin, adapting the site-specific work to a local context. By collecting the almost invisible dust and debris from the floor, and sampling environmental elements such as air flow and humidity, Mohri's work transforms these odd components into a "music score" that is uniquely Gwangju. The artist also links the work to Han Kang's novel *The White Book* (2016) and the multi-layered history of the city, symbolizing the creation of a "tone of history that was never written." She's expecting to show at the upcoming Art Basel in Switzerland with mother's tankstation, with a solo show at gallery's London space slated to open in September.