Biennials, triennials and festivals

The 56th Venice Biennale
Arsenal and Giardini
9 MAY-22 NOVEMBER www.labiennale.org

Nigerian-born Okwui Enwezor is one of the most experienced and established curators on the biennial circuit, having organised exhibitions such as Documenta 11 in Kassel, 2002, the 7th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea, 2008, and the Triennale d’Art Contemporain of Paris at the Palais de Tokyo, 2012. Enwezor can now add the 120-year-old Venice Biennale, the most prestigious and prominent art platform worldwide, to his portfolio.

Enwezor’s framework for the Arsenal and the Central Pavilion in the Giardini, which he has titled ‘All the World’s Futures’, taps into potent political and social topics. “The principal questions… is this: how can artists, thinkers, writers… through images, objects, words, movement, actions, lyrics, and sound bring together publics in acts of looking, listening [and] responding to make sense of the current upheaval?” Enwezor said in a press statement. Three intersecting ‘filters’, or thematic concepts, underpin the biennale. The first, ‘Liveness: On epic duration’, will be a dramatisation of the space of the exhibition as a continuous, unfolding, and unceasing live event, implying that performance art, now a staple of biennials and art fairs, will feature prominently.

Artists will be invited to develop new sculptures, films and performances for the “Garden of Disorder” thematic strand. The Giardini, with its “ramshackle assemblage of pavilions”, says Enwezor, “will act as a metaphor for exploring the pervasive environment and economics”. Enwezor’s main preoccupation—how commodification and commerce dominate political systems worldwide—is addressed by the third filter, “Capital: A Live Reading”, which will see a live reading of Karl Marx’s revolutionary 1867 text Das Kapital take place in the Central Pavilion every day. G.H.

Other highlights
Sharjah Biennial 12
Arts Area Sharjah, UAE 5 MARCH-5 JUNE www.sharjahart.org

This year, two-thirds of the fifty participating artists will present new works for the exhibition, entitled “The post, the present, the possible”. The organisers say “the premise of the biennial stems from a conversation between the artist Danh Vo and the [biennial] curator Eunjei Joo, in early 2013, about the relevance of contemporary art”. The development of education, culture, religion and science in the Emirates will also be under the spotlight. Artists due to participate include Mark Bradford, Michael Joo, Julie Mehretu, Hassan Sharif, Damián Ortega, Kim Beom and Adrian Villar Rojas. G.H.

14th Istanbul Biennial
Venues across Istanbul
9 SEPTEMBER-1 NOVEMBER www.ibiennial.org/en
Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the former artistic director of Documenta 13, is the curator of “Saltwater: a Theory of Thought Forms”. She says the exhibition will take place in a variety of unconventional venues, describing it as “a city-wide project on the Bosphorus that considers different frequencies and patterns of waves”, stressing that the concept of waves “refers to history and resistance”. The biennial will include works by more than 50 oceanographers and neuroscientists as well as artists including William Kentridge, Aslı Çavuş and oceanographers and neuroscientists as well as artists including William Kentridge, Aslı Çavuş and podcasts. 1/3

Chicago Architecture Biennial
Venues across Chicago
1 OCTOBER-31 JANUARY 2016 www.chicagoarchitecturebiennial.org
Surprisingly, there has not been a biennial dedicated to architecture in the US—until now. The inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial, funded in part by the oil giant BP, comprise city-wide exhibitions and installations by established and emerging architects that “address the major concerns of our time: the social, environmental, economic and political issues that shape the world we live in”, say the organisers. The Chicago-based artist Theaster Gates is planning installations and programming on the city’s South Side. G.H.