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'7 Exhibitions and Events not to Miss at ACAW 2016 in New York

By Rebecca Close

Asia Contemporary Art Week offers a space for critical reflection and action during tense US elections.

Asia Contemporary Art Week is a series of exhibitions, events and symposia held across New York City that seeks to heighten the awareness and visibility of contemporary art practices from Asia within the United States and Asia. A range of institutions is participating in New York between 8 September and 18 November 2016.



Asian Contemporary Art Week Poster, 2016. Image courtesy Asian Contemporary Art Week.

ACA W – celebrating shifts in perception of contemporary Asian art in America

The first edition of Asia Contemporary Art Week (ACA W) was launched in 2002, presenting the first symposium in the United States dedicated to addressing contemporary art and experiences of modernity in Asia. The event

marked a major shift away from perceiving Asian art as derivative of Western art discourses to that of sharing its specific critical contributions to the field at large. As well as being a turning point in the discussion of art from Asia in America, it reflected the growing commercial interest in the region.

Originally focusing on the East Asia region, since Leeza Ahmady took up the post as Director in 2005, the symposium has expanded considerably. ACAW now collaborates with a wide range of commercial and non-profit institutions and covers artists from Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. ACAW is in its 11th edition in 2016, a year that also marks important milestones in the history of Asian art in the United States: it is the 60th anniversary of Asia Society, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Asian galleries are turning 100.

Leeza Ahmady's stated in the press release for the 2016 event:

Each ACAW edition provides a concentrated, critical examination and contextualization of the ever-expanding discourses and cultural production coming out of Asia through collaborative initiatives and curated programs. By presenting artists' projects and programs in a more timely, less-mediated fashion, we address institutional limitations and fill gaps in the field, providing audiences with direct access to artists through annual programs such as FIELD MEETING.

Art Radar picks six not-to-be-missed events from the week.



1. Field Meeting

FIELD MEETING is a series of talks, performances and lecture-performances by 30 contemporary artists from Asia, curated by Leeza Ahmady and held over two days at New York's Guggenheim Museum (11-12 November). Taking place just days after the United States presidential elections, FIELD MEETING: Thinking Practice seeks to explore how art practitioners can maintain sovereignty over their own voice as world citizens and commentators amidst the pervasively hostile political climates and marginalising forces of conservatism around the globe, in addition to contending with art world prescriptions, cultural impositions and shifting market demands.

With an exciting line-up of speakers, activists and artists, Art Radar suggests that performances and talks by Wafaa Bilal, Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Umashankar Manthravadi, Yasmin Jahan Nupur and Sarah Rifky are not to be missed. To see the full programme [click here](#).



Mariam Ghani, 'The City & The City: Mill Creek Valley', 2015. Inkjet print mounted on aluminum, 30 x 45 inches, Edition of 5. Courtesy Ryan Lee Gallery and the artist.



Mariam Ghani, 'The City & The City: Kinloch Flight Path', 2015. Inkjet print mounted on aluminum, 30 x 45 inches, Edition of 5. Courtesy Ryan Lee Gallery and the artist.

2. Ryan Lee Gallery – Mariam Ghani

During ACAW, Ryan Lee Gallery is showing an exhibition of Mariam Ghani's 2015 work *The City & The City*. The project takes its name from China Miéville's novel of the same name. In the novel, two cities are interwoven in the same physical space, but their economic and political systems are completely separate. It is illegal for citizens to even look at each other's cities; each has to pretend the other does not exist. Drawn from the book, the text of Ghani's film powerfully evokes the segregation — physical, mental, and political — that divides cities like St. Louis and Ferguson. The film premiered at the Saint Louis Art Museum in 2015, and now Ryan Lee Gallery is showing it with a small selection of accompanying photographs.



Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, "In God We Trust: Project Another Country", 13 October – 12 November 2016, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York. Image courtesy Sundaram Tagore Gallery.

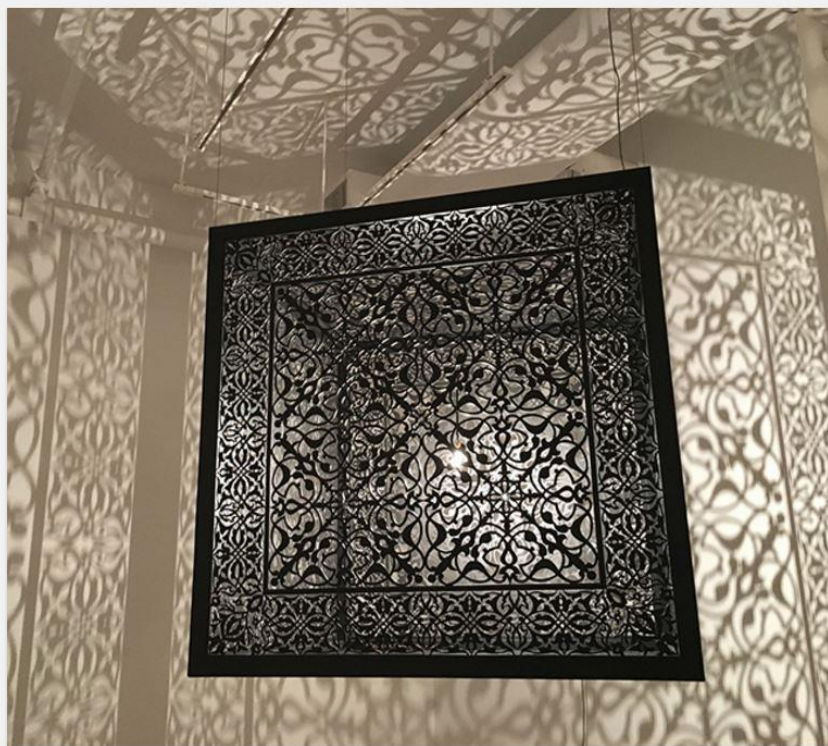


Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, 'Transformers IV (Bartolina)', 2010. Stainless steel, jeep parts & LED lights, 174 x 144 cm. Image courtesy Sundaram Tagore and the artists.

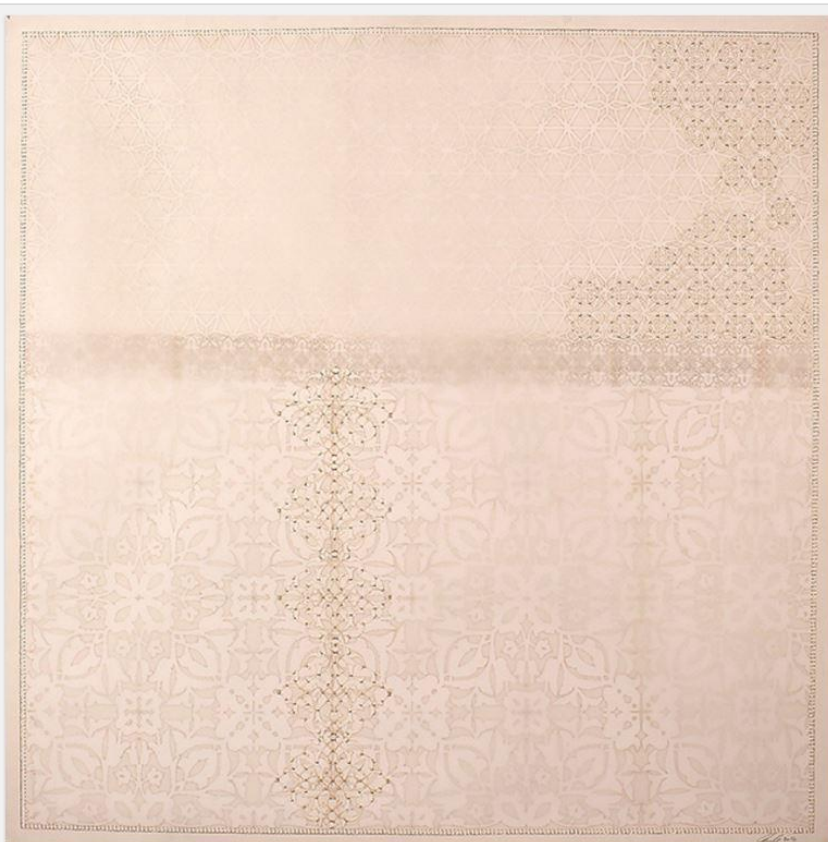
3. Sundaram Tagore – Alfredo and Isabela Aquilizan

Sundaram Tagore gallery presents an exhibition of work by the husband-and-wife team of Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan entitled “In God We Trust: Project Another Country”. The Brisbane-based couple, who emigrated from the Philippines to Australia in 2006, is known for their uniquely cooperative practice, in which they address themes of displacement, change and memory by way of community engagement. This is the duo’s first solo exhibition in New York.

This exhibition showcases work from the couple’s newest series, The Left Wing Project, a body of work fabricated with help from rural communities across Asia. The first of the site-specific installations was created in 2015 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with a group of artists, blacksmiths and farmers. Symbolising the complex social and political realities facing contemporary agrarian communities in Asia, immense, wing-like sculptures made from hand-forged sickles are hung and counter-balanced by sacks of rice, alongside photographs of farmers with video, sound and drawings.



Anila Quayyum Agha, 'Shimmering Mirage', 2016.
Laser-cut black steel and bulb, 36 x 36 x 36 in. Image courtesy Aicon Gallery.



Anila Quayyum Agha, 'SHIMMERING MEMORIES - 1', 2016. Mixed media on paper (Laser-cut patterns on paper with mylar, embroidery and beads)
39.5 x 39.5 in. Image courtesy Aicon Gallery.

4. Aicon Gallery – Anila Quayyum Agha

During ACAW, Aicon Gallery presents “Walking with My Mother’s Shadow”, the first major New York solo exhibition by Pakistani-American contemporary artist Anila Quayyum Agha. Anila’s current work reflects on the complexities of love, loss and gains experienced by the artist over the past year. The works on paper and the sculptural installations explore personal emotions experienced by the artist following her son’s wedding and her mother’s passing within weeks of each other. Agha explores the wider connotations of “loss” in relation to loss of culture and family, or a sense of belonging through displacement or migration. The artist’s work often aims to connect personal experiences of sadness and happiness with the public realm.



5. Ronin Gallery – Sebastian Masuda

During ACAW, Ronin Gallery presents “True Colors” by Japanese artist Sebastian Masuda (b.1970, Chiba), which is the latest in Masuda’s kitsch art practice that involves exploring and expropriating the detritus of popular culture – from music videos to Hello Kitty. Masuda creates bizarre assemblages, which form gradations of all visible colours. His work started on the streets of Tokyo and is now spreading globally with no sign of losing momentum.

In 2014 he held his first solo show “Colorful Rebellion – seventh nightmare” at the Kianga Ellis Project in New York City. His ongoing project, Time After Time Capsule, consists of ten enormous kawaii time capsules to be filled with items personalised by the inhabitants of ten cities worldwide. In 2020, each time capsule will return to Tokyo to be assembled into a sculpture for the Olympic Games. “True Colors” was first shown at T-Art Gallery in Tokyo in 2015.



Nikki Luna, 'Quince', 2016.
Cast resin and lace sculpture in lightbox
24.4 x 30 x 7.6 cm. Image courtesy Owen James Gallery and the artist.



Nikki Luna, 'Quince', 2016.
Cast resin and lace, sculpture in lightbox. 24.4 x 30 x 7.6 cm. Image courtesy Owen James Gallery and the artist.

6. Owen James Gallery – Nikki Luna

Nikki Luna (b. Manilla) is a multimedia artist who creates sculptures and installations that deal with a number of social issues, addressing violence, inequality, gender roles and sexual exploitation against women in the

Philippines. Through travel and encounters with diverse communities, the artist researches different complex narratives, which her sculptures attempt to communicate or work through, using materials such as resin, ceramics, blood, marble dust, sugar, neon and sound. In “Play Ground”, which Owen James Gallery is presenting during ACAW, Luna exhibits 15 sculptural objects.

Each object is composed of a gun made from cast resin and lace, placed in individual light boxes that line the walls of the gallery. The translucency of the resin reveals the lace within the object. In this way, both victim and the instigator of violence coexist in a sombre, ethereal cenotaph. The objects all bear the title Quince (pronounced “kinse” from the Spanish word for the number 15). Each weapon makes reference to both individual acts of violence as well as the recurring ways that the number 15 engages them.





Ai Weiwei, 'Surveillance Camera', 2010. Marble, 39.2 x 39.8 x 19 cm. Image courtesy Lisson Gallery and the artist.

7. Lisson Gallery – Ai Weiwei

“Roots and Branches” is Ai Weiwei’s first solo exhibition with Lisson Gallery New York. For the event, the artist has populated the gallery with felled, cast-iron tree trunks, nearly sixteen feet in length, and a series of iron root sculptures set against the backdrop of a new wallpaper installation. Situated among the beams of the High Line exposed entirely in this exhibition for the first time, the seven sculptures on display combine to create a forest of displaced objects and reveal the artist’s interest in tradition and contemporaneity as well as the prevalence of displacement in post-modern societies. The iron roots and tree trunks shown in the exhibition space appear as organic forms but in presence, reveal their artificiality.