

A Guide to Arts and Culture this December

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Walter Woodbury and James Page, *Ratu Kencana*, principal consort of Hamengkubuwono VI of Yogyakarta, c.1858, ambrotype with frame, 46 × 40 × 2.5 cm. Courtesy Collection of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee

From queering Bollywood film-posters and colour-field embroidery to ‘living pictures’ and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale – our editors on what they’re looking forward to this month



TextaQueen, *Kali ka Choti Behen*, 2022, india ink marker, watercolour and coloured pencil on cotton paper, 53 × 38 cm. Courtesy the artist

TextaQueen

4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney, through 18 December

The artist TextaQueen, of Goan heritage, works across various mediums including painting, printmaking, photography and performance, but it's for their vibrant felt-tip drawings and self-publishing projects that they were awarded the inaugural CAP (Copyright Agency Partnerships) commission to further their *Bollywouldn't* project, which celebrates the queer South Asian diaspora. That commission culminates in an exhibition at one of the partnering institutions – this year Sydney's 4A Centre.

Bollywouldn't is based on a series of portraits TextaQueen made during their residency at ACME studios in London in 2018–19; at 4A Centre, portraits of queer and trans South Asians are incorporated into the Bollywood film-poster format, challenging the South Asian film industry's promotion of heteronormativity and gender roles. Alongside these drawings, TextaQueen is collaborating on performances with queer and trans South Asians, who will engage with the drawings and 'interpret the Bollywood genre in queer and decolonial ways, reclaiming colonial space and asserting identities usually marginalised'. *Fi Churchman*



Luiz Roque, *XXI*, 2022, HD video, 7 min. Courtesy the artist, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, and Isla Flotante Galería, Buenos Aires

Luiz Roque: *XXI*

Proa21, Buenos Aires, through 30 December

In the courtyard of Proa21 a bird swoops and hovers, diving through a concrete jungle. The bird, an urubu, is onscreen, the first of two short videos that Roque has transported from the Venice Biennale for this solo show. The Brazilian artist is known for his cinematic meditations of queer bioethics, transhumanism and human and non-human relationships. *Urubu* (2021) however is a work simple in premise, a super-8 made during lockdown after the artist had suffered a COVID-related family tragedy: an elegiac portrait

of a bird both escaping humanity and being trapped in mankind's earthly mess. The second film, from this year and which gives the show its title, was filmed locally in Buenos Aires, and typically for the artist occurs in a city at night, deserted all but for a pair of lovers, one a wheelchair user, in slow dance, intercut with glimpses of queer creatures who straddle the line between mythological and human. Seen in succession *Urubu* and *XXI* oscillate between feelings of escape and claustrophobia, of being trapped in bodies, and the body as a vehicle to freedom. *Oliver Basciano*



Ghada Amer, *Girls In White-RFGA* [filles en blanc-RFGA], 2004, acrylic paint, embroidery and gel on canvas. © the artist. Courtesy Collection Neda Young, New York

Ghada Amer

Mucem, FRAC Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur and the Musée de Marseille, from 2 December

That it takes three venues (two of them among the city's biggest cultural institutions) to host a retrospective of the Egyptian-French artist is credit to her prolific and influential oeuvre. Trained as a painter in the 1980s, Amer soon came to define her pictorial language by overlaying expressive colour fields of acrylic with embroidery to speak of the feminine condition across her two cultures. Her unique use of thread as brush is both fluid and expressive, serving to by turns bring her female subjects to life and obscure them; their figures (many of which are lifted from porn and women magazines) emerge or recede from a tangled network of capillary filaments, sometimes left dangling on the surface like drips of paint – or blood. The unique scope of this exhibition will also dive into the many other facets of Amer's work, including drawings, ceramics, installation and gardens (one of which, offering a twist on a slogan from the Arab Spring, will be installed on the Mucem rooftop), reflecting some of the other themes dear to the artist – the divine feminine, love and desire, language and crosscultural translation, and the shaping of one's identity within cultural and religious norms. *Louise Darblay*.



Ikeda Hiroshi, *Shinsuke Shiiku July 2022, Shibetsu, 2022*

Roppongi Crossing 2022

Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, through 26 March 2023

The triennial survey show *Roppongi Crossing* has been a mainstay of Mori Art Museum's programme since the museum opened its doors in 2003, offering a vivid snapshot of recent art in Japan. Previous editions have responded to both global and more local cultural shifts and social developments; the 2015 show paid attention to the changing

image of the body and gender in a networked world, while the 2019 edition focused more loosely on the question of 'connection' in a world increasingly split between intimacy, isolation and the polarising downsides of social media. It's no surprise, then, to find the 2022 edition, titled *Coming & Going*, preoccupied with charting the cultural aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic: expect a heightened, more documentary attention to the experience of everyday life, so profoundly upset by lockdown; and a fresh attention to the – often sidelined – ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Japan outside the metropolitan centre. *J.J. Charlesworth*



Wawi Navarroza, *May in Manila / Hot Summer (After Balthus, Self-Portrait)*, 2019, archival pigment print on Hahnemühle, cold-mounted on acid-free aluminium, 136 × 102 cm. Courtesy Michelangelo and Lourdes Samson Collection

Living Pictures: Photography in Southeast Asia
National Gallery Singapore, through 26 March 2023

On show in time to coincide with Singapore Art Week (6–15 January) and the inaugural edition of the island's newest art fair, Art SG (12–15 January), *Living Pictures* is a wide-ranging exhibition that promises to explore the history of photography since its arrival in the region during the nineteenth century. Naturally this begins with the (largely) European colonisers recording and registering the flora, fauna and inhabitants of their newly conquered (or acquired) domains, before the technology passes into the hands of local people, who use it to tell their own stories, or to complicate and subvert the narratives of their invaders. Perhaps there will be some surprises along the way, but that's the traditional way in which these narratives are spun in Southeast Asian institutions. Naturally too the show will examine the use of the medium in recording moments of conflict and harmony across Southeast Asia's recent history, and its aesthetic 'elevation' to an artform, before tumbling into the present and the use of photographic images as the lingua franca of social media, virtual reality and even the actual world today. Hurrah!

Nirmala Devi





Lee Alexander McQueen, Alexander McQueen, London, woman's capelet, pants and shoes, 2003, Deliverance collection, spring/summer 2004. © Alexander McQueen and Museum Associates / Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Alexander McQueen

NGV International, Melbourne, 11 December – 16 April 2023

Haute couture and art are usually thought of as distinct – high fashion is supposed to be luxurious but essentially frothy, art is supposed to be thoughtful and a bit serious, though not as much fun. But then an artist (in the widest sense of the word) like the late fashion designer Alexander McQueen (1969–2010) comes along and blows those distinctions to pieces. With McQueen, the catwalk became the platform for an imagination that sought inspiration from history – with collections reaching back to the eighteenth century and the Middle Ages – and swept prophetically into the future, as with McQueen's extraordinary 'posthuman' collection *Plato's Atlantis*, the last before the designer took his own life. To make the point that artistic inspiration is to be found everywhere, NGV's exhibition *Mind, Mythos, Muse* (produced in partnership with LACMA) presents over a hundred of McQueen's garments and accessories, alongside painting, sculpture, photography and decorative arts from across the centuries, to illuminate the vast scope of the designer's eclectic, anarchic virtuoso talent. *J.J. Charlesworth*



Sahil Naik, *All is Water and to Water We Must Return*, 2022. Courtesy the artist and Kochi Biennale Foundation

Kochi-Muziris Biennale

Various venues, Fort Kochi, 12 December – 4 April 2023

Titled *In Our Veins Flow Ink and Fire*, the fifth 4 edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India's premier contemporary art event, is directed by Singaporean artist Shubigi Rao (the first artist from India's diaspora to take on the role), fresh from representing the city-state at this year's Venice Biennale. Her presentation there focused on the loss and preservation of languages, and the dissemination and restriction of knowledge. It took the form of a book, *Pulp III* (2022) and an accompanying video. Relatedly, in Kochi the artist promises to 'envision this biennale as a persistent yet unpredictable murmuration in the face of capriciousness and volatility', a commitment, she says, born of her 'unshakeable conviction in the power of storytelling as strategy, of the transgressive potency of ink, and transformative fire of satire and humour'. Artists with work on show include Amar Kanwar (co-curator of the current Istanbul Biennale), Thao Nguyen Phan, Melati Suryodarmo, Lawrence Lek and Jumana Manna (whose first major us museum show is currently on view at New York's MOMA PS1). And despite the presence of many familiar names from the world of art fairs and art-related commerce, the exhibition as a whole is designed, in the artistic director's words, to (at least in part) 'explore the possibly redemptive and revolutionary power of practice beyond the market'. Fire indeed. *Nirmala Devi*