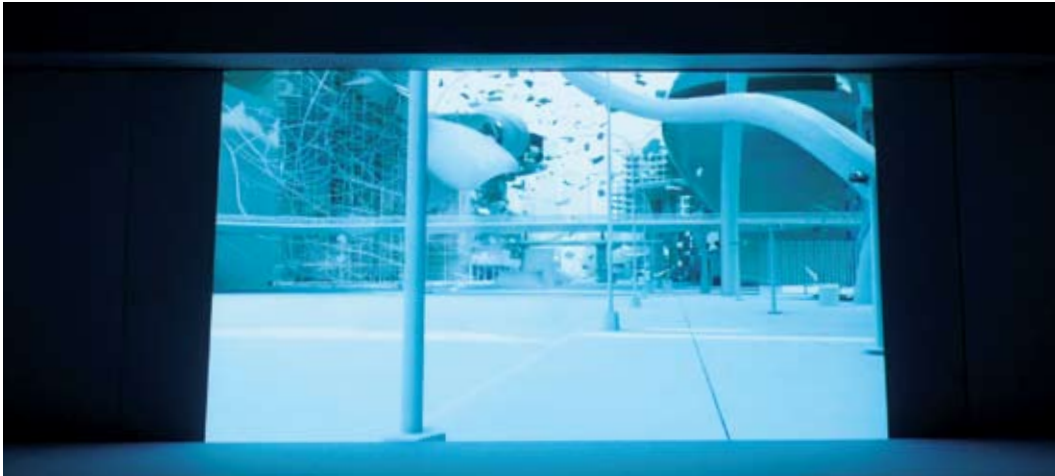


### The Third Guangzhou Triennial



**Disintegrating cities** Zhou Yi's surrealist 3D video animation Hear, Earth, Heart

★★★★★

**Guangdong Museum of Art & Time Museum**, until Nov 16

Stepping out of a dusty cab by the Pearl River, we stared at the imposing Guangdong Museum of Art, and wondered whether it could meet our immense expectations.

In the two-hour journey from Hong Kong to the capital of Guangdong, we had mused over the premise of the Third Guangzhou Triennial's curatorial stance: *Farewell to Postcolonialism*. Just 30 years after Edward Said's seminal 1978 work *Orientalism* was published, postcolonialism has emerged as the driving cultural theory of our times. The intellectual discourse, spanning art, literature, and philosophy, emerged as a reaction to the era of colonialism – offering a new critical position for our globalising world. Yet Gao Shiming, Johnson Chang Tsong-zung, and Sarat Maharaj, curators of this year's Triennial, claim that the very term has become over-institutionalised in its 30-year lifespan, and that the time has come to create new critical tools.

For the first ten minutes in the building, we were disappointed. Liu Dahong's video installation in the foyer, *Faith on a Horse*, brought a plethora of clichés to the fore – the artist has crafted an army-style tent with references to the Cultural Revolution, which felt like it had all been said before. We walked through the tent and stood bemused as to where we were meant to go next...until we finally spotted a corridor to the right. From here, disappointment turned to glee as we entered a five-hour odyssey through

one of the most impressive exhibitions to have hit the region in years.

The Triennial has been organised by the Guangdong Museum of Art, and is co-presented with the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Unlike most biennials and triennials, where a handful of curators pick the talents showcased, for this event the three main curators were matched with seven additional research curators from around the world. The effect is a highly conceptual, busy environment of diverse perspectives and opinions – and 180 artists from 40 countries.

We found ourselves outside a room with a revolving glass door marked with a confrontational message written in English: "No Foreigners beyond This Point". This is the work of Chinese artist Lu Jie, founder of the *Long March Project*, for which contemporary artists are invited to reinterpret the Long March in a modern way. It was a bemusing experience to walk through (who exactly is the foreigner in this context?), and the uncomfortable energy increased with Lu's video installation, *Long March Project*: 30 TV screens on a wall, blasting a spectrum of works by contemporary Chinese artists. Adding tension to the space is Xiao Xiong's sound installation *The Internationale?* – a monolithic steel wall where the rhythm of the socialist anthem is pounded out in blasts that resemble gunshots. Another corner of the claustrophobic room shows a two-channel video of heated debates in a New York kitchen in the *Harlem School of New Social Realism*, led by Zhao Gang and a cast of African- and Chinese-American artists and thinkers.

The explosive tension then switched to blissful calm as we moved into an enormous, darkened space, with a lone bench and a gigantic video projection on the wall showing Japanese-Vietnamese artist Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba's meditative video, *The Ground, the Root, and the Air: The Passing of the Bodhi Tree*. The large screen allows the full power of his work to emanate: silk textures of the Mekong are captured as a group of artists with easels set up on their boats speed up the river to draw a sacred tree in Luang Prabang. With enveloping sound from well-positioned speakers, it is a delight to watch the work in such a decadently large space.

Experimental video and installation are the predominant forms throughout the show, with some excellent pieces by Hong Kong artists Tozer Pak and Amy Cheung. The international element is also compelling and unexpected. American artist Joseph DeLappe's multimedia installation features a mammoth sculpture of Gandhi made from cardboard, in addition to video screens showing his durational performance work, *The Salt Satyagraha Online: Gandhi's March to Dandi in Second Life*. The artist constructed a customised treadmill, and walked for 240 actual miles through the internet based 3D world of Second Life to re-enact Gandhi's march.

The artist who arguably comes closest to the critical position of the Triennial – of moving beyond the boundaries of postcolonialism and negating everything we know in the process – is the remarkable Hong Kong-

Italian artist Zhou Yi and her magical, dream-like 3D video animations. One, entitled *OneOfTheseDays*, depicts a disintegrating monochrome city (seemingly based on Shanghai), where fragments of futuristic buildings float down to an otherworldly soundtrack.

After three hours, we realised with horror that time was running out and we'd only just found *The Tea Pavilion*, a cramped space filled with a staggering number of video installations – you could literally spend an entire afternoon watching them all. Yet we still had to make our way to the Time Museum, at the opposite end of town. We sped away in a cab, and emerged 20 minutes later in a futuristic site where the 1st, 14th, and 19th floors of a residential building have been converted into a very cool (albeit not quite finished) modern space. Feng Mengbo's video corridor is a highlight, yet there were several problems with installations and video pieces not working here, not to mention the stink of wet concrete. If you're strapped for time, give it a miss.

We returned to Hong Kong feeling inspired and deeply satisfied. The curators have successfully questioned the perimeters of postcolonialism. They don't offer any answers, and at times the experience they present is one of sheer chaos, but this is a marvellous opportunity to see some of the world's most fascinating, experimental new artists. And seeing as it only comes every three years, the time to see it is now. *Clare Morin*

More info: [www.gdmoa.org](http://www.gdmoa.org)



**Second Gandhi** Joseph DeLappe



**Ruined** Yang Fudong's installation