

Case study

19th Biennale of Sydney

Details

What:

The Biennale of Sydney (BoS) is a non-profit organisation that presents Australia's largest and most exciting contemporary visual arts festival.

Held every two years, the Biennale is a three-month exhibition with an accompanying program of artist talks, forums, guided tours and family days – all free to the public.

In 2014, the 19th BoS: *You Imagine What You Desire* was curated by Juliana Engberg and featured the work of three key contemporary artists from Queensland: Michael Cook, Daniel McKewen and Ross Manning.

The exhibition commissioned 47 new works 12 new presentations of previous works, and 383 performances.

When:

21 March to 9 June 2014

Where:

The 19th BoS: *You Imagine What You Desire* was presented across iconic Sydney museum and non-museum venues including the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Artspace, Cockatoo Island and Carriageworks.



Ross Manning, *Spectra VI*, 2014. Installation view of the 19th Biennale of Sydney (2014) at Cockatoo Island. Courtesy of the artist; Milani Gallery, Brisbane; and Starkwhite, Auckland. Created for the 19th Biennale of Sydney. Photograph: James Horan/Destination NSW

Key stats:

- 3 Queensland artists featured work
- 623,153 visitors including 125,000 from overseas
- 93 paid artists participated in the 19th BoS

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$30,000 – Projects and Program Fund

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Outcomes

- All three Queensland artists developed new work for the exhibition. Cook's new photographic series *Majority Rule* (2014) denotes a new perspective on his *Modern Dreaming*, with the duplication of the same male protagonist seen at familiar sites around Brisbane. Manning's kinetic light sculpture *Spectra IV* (2014) continued his exploration of light and the aesthetic potential of additive colour mixing and McKewen's *Running Men* (2008–14) was shown across five screens, with iconic male actors running in an endless loop.
- Queensland contemporary artists had the opportunity to showcase their work on an international platform to over 600,000 visitors, raising their profile both within Australia and internationally.
- The Biennale has gained a reputation for creating a platform for critical discussion and engagement with current issues in international contemporary art and culture. Artists participated in programs and events during the festival, increasing dialogue and networking opportunities



The Furze Family Variety Hour – Creative Development. Image courtesy Debase productions.

Learnings and reflections

The successful planning and execution of each Biennale lies in strong project management skills and experience including: curatorial support, financial management, professional venue coordination, marketing initiatives, public and education programming, installation, technical management and fundraising.

Biennale staff reflected on the importance of working with partners.

‘To realise the 19th Biennale of Sydney, it was imperative for the Biennale team to work closely with the Artistic Director, Juliana Engberg, and in partnership with the professional staff and crews of the Major Venue Partners – the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Carriageworks and the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (Cockatoo Island), as well as the staff of Venue Partner, Artspace, and with the City Projects Unit of the City of Sydney for the presentation of the inaugural legacy artwork.’

Biennale staff also noted that detailed briefings for the Artistic Director are key to the success of the exhibition, as these lead to clear timelines for forward planning.

‘Regular staff meetings and updates from the Artistic Director are also important as they result in the whole team being aware of all facets of the development of the exhibition. This is a process we will begin with the appointment of the next Artistic Director, and a practice we would recommend to organisations doing a similar project.’