

The 2004 Taipei Biennial : Do You Believe in Reality?

The 2004 Taipei Biennial is curated by Barbara Vanderlinden and Amy Huei-Hua Cheng. Entitled *Do You Believe in Reality?*, the exhibition responds to an urgent call. Artists, filmmakers and intellectuals all over the world are grappling with the profound transformations currently sweeping society, and are attempting to formulate aesthetic and cultural responses to their new reality. This major exhibition of international contemporary art brings together forty participants who use the concrete world in which they live as their primary material. Far from pursuing abstractions or grandiose ideals, they welcome us back to reality, revealing new ways of looking at the changing world around us.

The exhibition's title: "Do You Believe in Reality?" may seem to pose a paradoxical question, since reality is usually thought to refer to everything that exists in the world, and to be inseparable from truth. But the concept has long provoked philosophical debates about how we come to know this reality and how it can be authenticated as 'truth'. For instance, what we deem to be real in contemporary Western society is hugely influenced by the overwhelming abundance of images produced by the media each day. The artists in this exhibition question the claim of this type of imagery to fully represent the decisive transformations that are taking place in the contemporary world. Through a range of widely differing tactics, they put forward alternative ways of representing the 'real'. The impact of their works lies in their capacity to translate their critical and social observations into imaginative and poetic aesthetic forms.

The exhibition includes a diverse group of artists, some of whom are just beginning their careers, while others like Yoko Ono and Agnès Varda are internationally renowned. They are brought together from a wide range of countries, and their varied practices bridge a broad array of disciplines from architectural projects, photographic studies, performance pieces, fictive reconstructions, documentary films, archival

ventures, collective paintings, as well as community and activist projects. Through these forms, they reveal how such social issues as globalization, labor economies and urban infrastructure are profoundly affecting contemporary life.