

5 Names You'll Know after the Venice Biennale

ARTSY EDITORIAL

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Work by Newell Harry; The Propeller Group. Photos by Alex John Beck for Artsy.

Certainly one reason many flock to the Venice Biennale is to discover new talent. Sure, the national pavilions beam with the stars of today, and those that receive such an honor are secured a place within art (and often market) history. But what about the young'ns, the underdogs, and the unexpected? When Okwui Enwezor took the curator's torch for this year's edition, the swanky-but-serious Nigerian stoked the fires in a welcome way, by including a much more demographically diverse range of practitioners. Enwezor's headlining exhibition, "All the World's Futures," includes heavy doses of artists from Africa, a continent that has fecund and versatile contemporary practices, and which is often largely overlooked—or worse,

exoticized—in the West. But a spotlight on Enwezor's continental turf isn't the show's only compelling attribute. Rather, within moments of stepping into the Arsenale, it becomes apparent that this show is a triumph, more broadly, of the bold-faced and the yet-to-be-discovered. Below, find five artists that make an indelible impact.

Newell Harry



Photo by Alex John Beck for Artsy.

Ever since Jerry Saltz's 2012 comment that word art is a steady path to commercial success in the art world, legions of young artists have incorporated text into their practices (never mind that the writing has been on the wall for a long time). But copying Christopher Wool or Mel Bochner Newell Harry is not (even if his series "Objects + Anagrams for R.U. & R.U." in Enwezor's show does take an aesthetic clue from Wool). Hailing from Australia, Harry, a South Pacific Islander himself, often explores themes of outsidership and colonialism. This go-round—in the installation Harry has deemed his most ambitious to date—he presents slogan paintings, archival-like photographs of labor in action, and object-based sculptural arrangements that point to his inspiration of *Treasure Island*. His

punchy paintings, however, really jump out as visual puns—one reads “SOJU / TUTU / R2D2 / BUTU,” mixing both pop and political references and poking fun at our mishmash of current cultural freneticism. It’s no accident that his block-letter font resembles both that of political posters and of hipster tee-shirts, breaking down the border between commercialism and civic duty. With the Australian government backing his project, this artist, who is currently represented by Sydney’s Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, will surely make his way off the island, so to speak.

Hiwa K



Photo by Alex John Beck for Artsy.

Iraqi artist Hiwa K, now based in Berlin, presents his *The Bell* video installation. In a two-channel presentation, he explores the exploitation of labor—the driving theme behind Enwezor’s thesis exhibition. K’s video features Iraqi laborers smelting a rather ornate metal bell, comparable in size to the Liberty Bell. In its rendered state, the bell sits complete in front of the videos, which extol the process of its

production (including using pork fat to stencil figuration) and convey Enwezor's ultimate point in a touching-yet-impassioned narrative.

Tiffany Chung



Photo by Alex John Beck for Artsy.

Maps function as navigational guides, obviously. However, Tiffany Chung subverts the innate identity of cartography in what seem to be maps but are actually highly ornate digital designs that resemble their familiar lines. As cities expand and borders fluctuate, Chung's erasure of the meaningful data contained within commonplace maps cleverly and aesthetically drive the point home that we the people are not only living under new rules of identity, but that we're all anonymous data points. From afar, these colorful creations seem innocuous and downright chipper, though upon closer inspection they reveal just how superficial and abstract contemporary pride-of-place can be. The Ho Chi Minh City-based artist, who won the 2013 Sharjah Biennale Prize, has yet to receive any major solo retrospectives or institutional showings. However, we have a feeling Enwezor's show will put

Chung on the map (zing)!

The Propeller Group

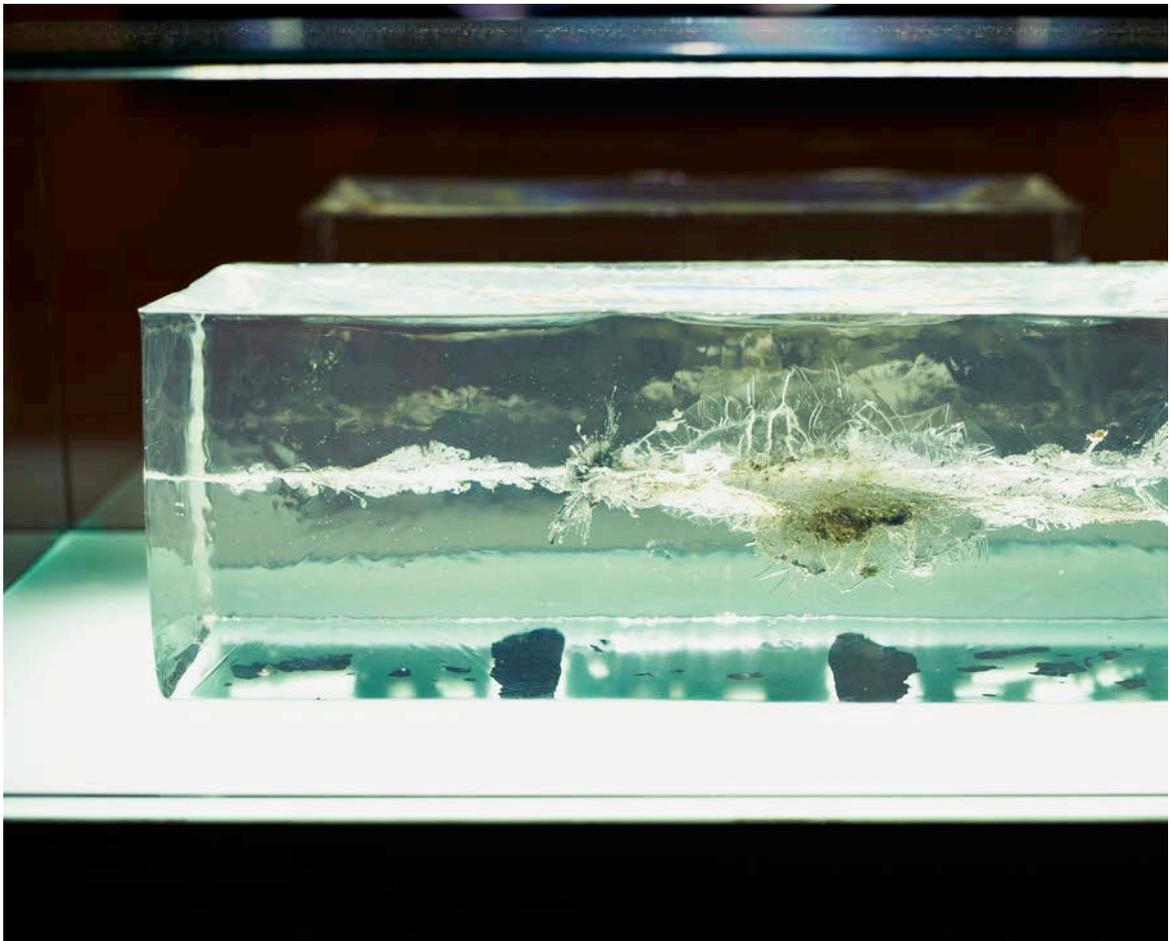


Photo by Alex John Beck for Artsy.

Also based in Ho Chi Minh City (as well as Los Angeles) is The Propeller Group, comprised of Phunam Thuc Ha, Tuan Andrew Nguyen, and Matt Lucero, which has been blowing up biennials lately—quite literally, in the case of “All the World’s Futures.” While their work *The AK-47 vs the M16* seems to have no overt aesthetic relationship to the guns named in the work’s title, in fact—as these guys are wont to do—they’ve extracted the ballistic projectiles created by the war machines, encased them in gel and LED-projected their path, making for fluid and beautiful video sculptures and paintings. It’s no secret that global society glorifies guns but also maintains a very casual, if not blind, relationship to their potency and destruction. The deceptive beauty of this particular piece reacts to the military wreckage and capitalistic insatiability of gun culture. In April, James Cohan Gallery announced The Propeller Group’s inclusion on its

roster, making way for forums outside the biennial circuit for the collective's powerful message to pierce the contemporary art landscape.

Ayoung Kim

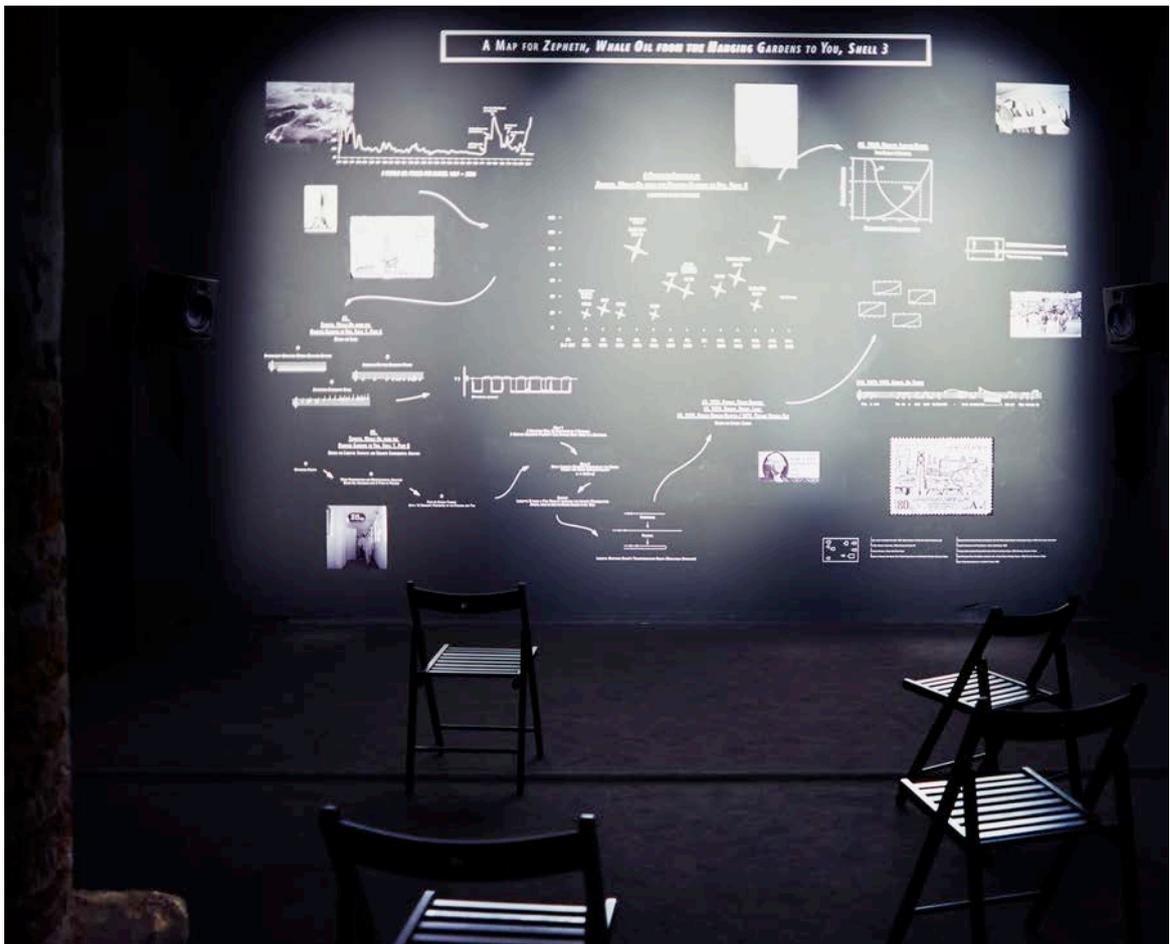


Photo by Alex John Beck for Artsy.

Enwezor's show wouldn't be complete without constant stick-shaking at the fossil fuel industries, and while there is plenty of commentary on the subject, Seoul-based artist Ayoung Kim does so with both profundity and sarcasm. *Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You, Shell 2* is a six-channel sound installation and chalkboard diagram, one that in a non-linear, non-chronological method traces our global dependence on oil—from whale hunting to the present day. Her installation, treated like a classroom with students' chairs, features archival images as well as rounds of voices uttering and whispering—as if imparting memories or fragments of experiences—which is exactly Kim's perspective of what history is. The work requires diving into and actively engaging with all the

scattered mementos of days past, and its haunting presentation certainly leaves an impression that takes time to settle into, much like how events are catalogued in our minds. And as Kim just won the Seoul Museum of Art's Emerging Artist Grant, something tells us that her newfound presence on the global stage is set to continue.



Work by Maja Bajevic; Cao Fei. Photos by Alex John Beck for Artsy.

And since there were many more than five artists with stand-out inclusions, be sure to sit with the works by Samson Kambalu, Mika Rottenberg, Cao Fei, Karo Akpokiere, Nidhal Chamekh, and Maja Bajevic.

—Julie Baumgardner

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