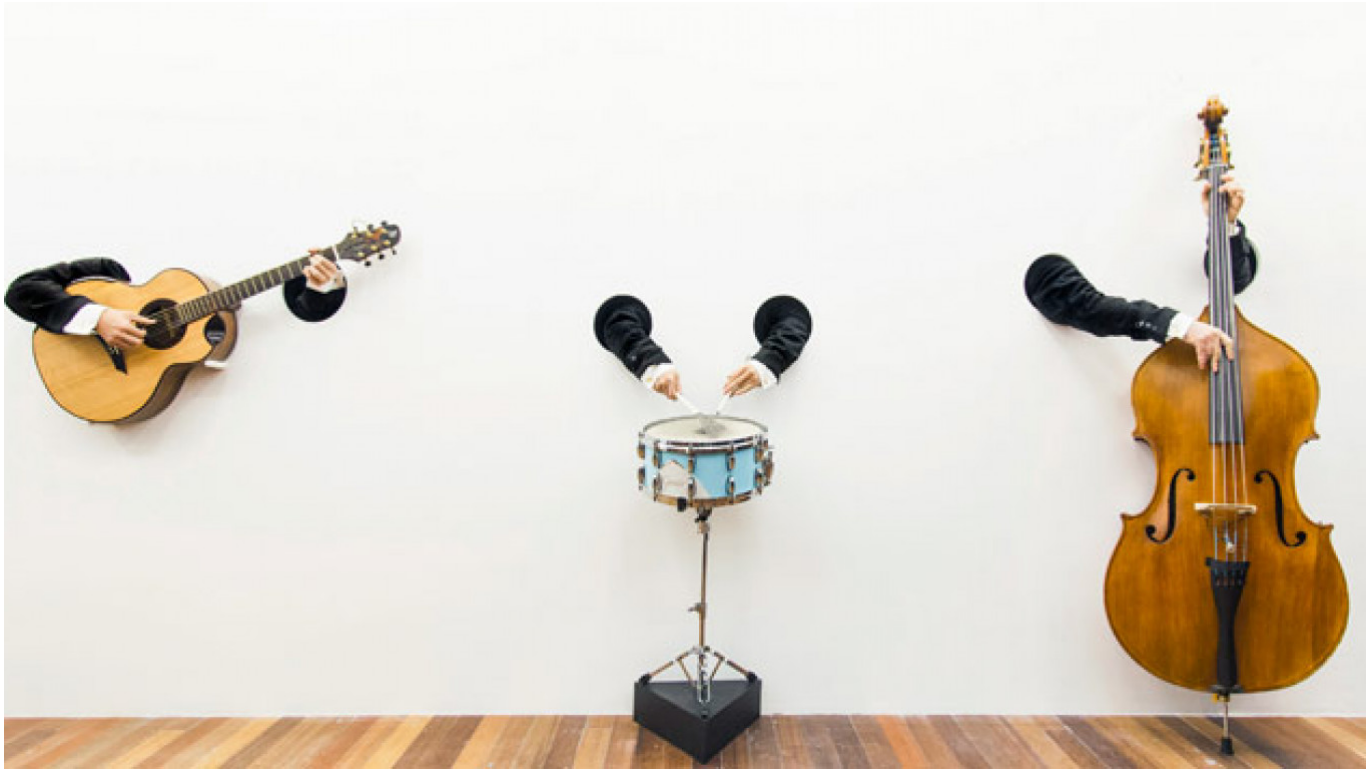
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6th Moscow Biennale Opens at VDNKh

By Timothy Misir

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In artist Gabriel Lester's installation "MurMure," invisible musicians play to the gathered consumers of culture.

The 6th Moscow Biennale, bringing together more than 70 participants from 30 countries, opens today at VDNKh. The biennale, which ran into financial difficulties brought about by the weak ruble, looks to be an interesting one despite its reduced program. Instead of being a full-fledged exhibition, it will function as a "think tank realized in real-time."

"Given the limitations, we felt compelled to scrap everything that makes exhibitions today so expensive — crated air transports, insurance and heavy production — and instead to invest the limited budget in people and capacity-building, which we value highly. We asked artists to be present in a variety of the capacities they may offer besides the installation of art works in situ," co-curator Defne Ayas, director of Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, told The Moscow Times in an e-mail interview.

Every day there will be keynote lectures, statements, open meetings, performances, and a daily talk show hosted by Chinese writer Mian Mian over the course of the 10-day biennale

that was put together by Ayas and her co-curators Bart De Baere, director of MUKHA, Antwerp; and Nicolaus Schafhausen, director of Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna.

Artists, scholars and other specialists will come together to discuss questions raised in the biennale's theme, "How to Gather? Acting in a Center in a City in the Heart of the Island of Eurasia."

Its opening keynote lecture Monday at 8:30 p.m. will feature a discussion with architect Rem Koolhaas and sociologist Saskia Sassen, and lectures in the following days will feature political scientist Ulrike Guerot, economist and former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, and architecture theorists Eyal and Ines Weizman, among others.

The biennale's theme concerns cohabitation and coexistence in the 21st century. Since large migrations are the future — whether due to armed conflicts, economic crises, or natural disasters — people need to be ready to live in more nomadic ways, embrace new forms of cooperation and address emerging forms of apartheid. The biennale's organizers hope that the public will engage with the performances and discussions on these issues.

In addition to system thinkers, there will be artists such as Flaka Haliti, Simon Denny, Rana Hamadeh and Qiu Zhijie, who will be doing the thinking through their art and putting them into action.

"We want to see whether we can find a slightly different "present" during the biennial, one that is focused on potential starting points just beyond the impasse. For this, it may be necessary to exercise critique or to antagonize in other ways, by revolt or exodus, by boycott or transgression that tests limits — but that's not our aim during the ten days of the biennial. Our aim is to test and search for opportunities to gather. ... We hope that it will have outcomes we can't predict yet — that's what public space is about," Ayas said.

The biennale's special projects and parallel program feature more than 80 exhibitions hosted in other venues around the city.

The Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art takes place from Sept. 22 to Oct. 1. Pavilion 1, VDNKh. Prospect Mira 121. More information about the biennale and its parallel events can be found at 6th.moscowbiennale.ru*.*

Contact the author at artsreporter@imedia.ru

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