

Art

Chinese artist offers flower, kitten tattoos to mums with birth scars

# Venice art festival a tonic for global woes

VENICE, May 11, (Agencies): Weary of the modern-day "global disorder" of politics and conflicts? The 57th Biennale art festival promises to lift the spirits of those frazzled by everything from Brexit to global warming.

"Viva Arte Viva", which opens Saturday in Venice, is "a passionate outcry for art" in a world "full of conflicts and shocks", curator Christine Macel said ahead of the opening.

Macel, chief curator of the Pompidou Center in Paris, has brought together 120 artists from 50 countries — with the emphasis on rediscovering great artists who may have been overlooked, rather than blowing the trumpets of rising stars.

"The Biennale challenge is to give as global a picture as possible of the artistic situation" across the world, she told AFP.

Among those exhibiting are pioneering US fiber artist Sheila Hicks, West German-born American Kiki Smith and Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson, the man behind the vast sun at Britain's Tate Modern in 2003 and the New York waterfalls in 2008.

France's Loris Greaud pays homage to the city's famed glass blowers — forced by the Venetian Senate in 1291 to settle on Murano island to protect the industry's secrets — by bringing a disused furnace back to life in "The Unplayed Notes Factory".

**Extracted**

Swiss-born Julian Charriere, perhaps best known for dyeing the feathers of live pigeons in bright colours and releasing them into Venice's Saint Mark's Square in 2015, brings visitors "Future Fossil Spaces" — towers of salt bricks extracted from deposits in Bolivia.

Some exhibits are dotted around "La Serenissima", "the most serene" as Venice is known.

Visitors should take to the gondolas for the best view of the glinting "Golden Tour" (1990) by US artist James Lee Byars, which stands proudly on the canal front next to the Peggy Guggenheim museum.

Alongside the contemporary art exhibition, 85 countries are putting on their own national pavilions at the Biennale.

The French one will be a recording studio with classical, baroque, electronic and folk instruments, which will host over 100 professional musicians from different countries during the exposition, with visitors able to drop in on some lively jam sessions.

Several countries will be showing for the first time in the northeastern Italian city, from Antigua and Barbuda to Kazakhstan and Nigeria.

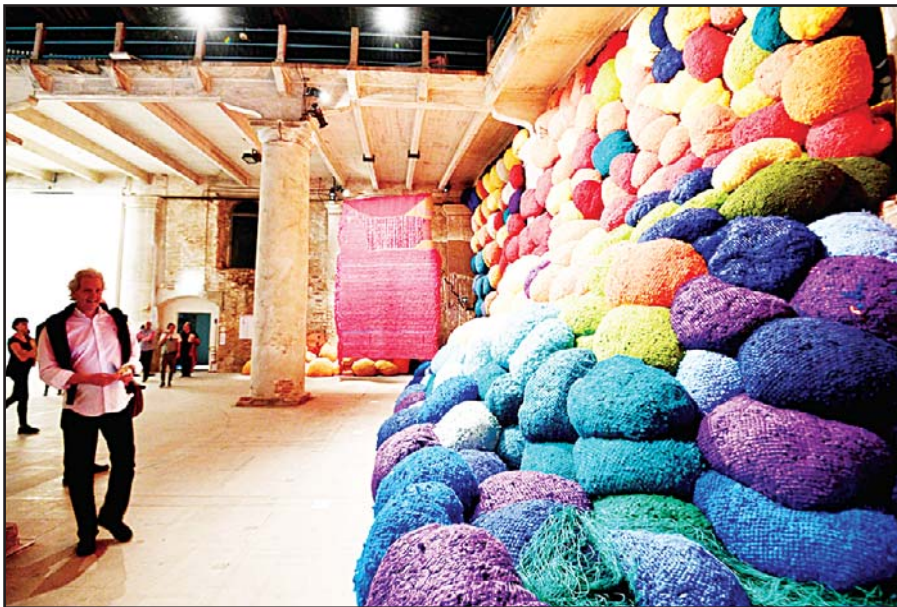
However it is impossible to escape the modern world's problems altogether, even at the Biennale.

"The Pavilion of Joys and Fears", for example, explores "new feelings of alienation due to forced migrations or mass surveillance" in a world shaken by conflicts, wars, increasing inequality and the rise of populism.

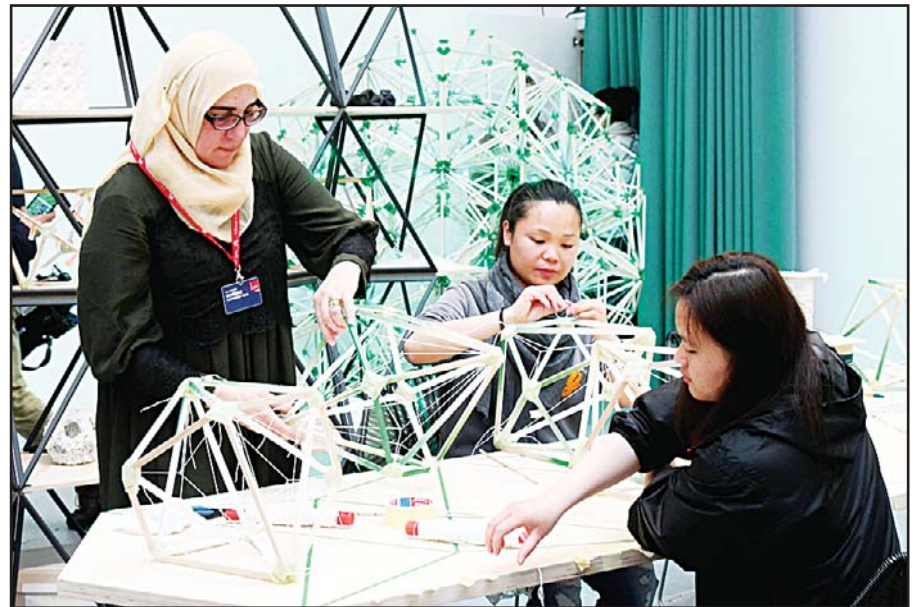
But the topics are approached with humour or warmth, aimed at energising those suffering from 21st century blues.

"At a time of global disorder, art embraces life. Art is the last bastion," Macel says.

At the heart of her show lies Eliasson's "green light" installation, where refugees and visitors come together in a workshop to assemble lamps designed by the artist and



A picture shows the artwork 'Escalade Beyond Chromatic Lands' by US artist Sheila Hicks, on May 10, in Venice during the press preview of the 57th International Art Exhibition Biennale. (AP)



Asylum seekers make lamps as part of the work 'Green Light' by Danish artist Olafur Eliasson. (AFP)



A picture shows the entrance of 'Grotta Profunda, Approfondita' an artwork by French artist Pauline Curnier Jardin (AFP)



A picture shows 'Visible labor' an artwork by Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco. (AFP)

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As the worst migrant crisis since World War II rocks Europe, it represents the metaphorical green light he urges his homeland and other countries to give to taking in those fleeing conflict and persecution.

In the wake of the US presidential election, American artist Charles Atlas presents the large-screen video work "The Tyranny of Consciousness", in which Lady Bunny bemoans American politics to a disco beat.

The Golden Lion for lifetime achievement goes to the pioneering US feminist performance artist Carolee Schneemann, famed for using her body to examine the role of female sensuality and the overthrow of oppressive social conventions. The Venice Biennale is held on odd-numbered years. This year's event will run until Nov 26.

□ □ □

After trying cosmetic creams and surgery, Wang Jing placed her hopes in the skilled hands of a tattoo artist to make the scar on her belly finally disappear.

"Whenever you try to reach for something your belly is exposed. It's not nice looking," Wang, 46, said of the scar from the caesarean birth of her daughter two decades ago that would soon be covered by a kitten tattoo.

China has one of the highest C-section rates in the world, reaching a peak between 2004 and 2008 when nearly half of the country's babies were born using the procedure, the World Health Organization said in 2010.

This has created a niche market for creams, makeup and plastic surgery to hide the four to six inch scars left by the procedure.

Some women spend up to 300 yuan (\$43.44) for a 30 ml tube of silicone gel that promises to make their scars go away. Others

opt for laser surgery costing 2,000 yuan for each centimetre of scar treated.

Tattoo artist Shi Hailei said he offers an alternative to mothers unhappy with the results from gels and tummy tucks.

"A tattoo makes a woman more confident. She will no longer feel ashamed to show her abdomen," said Shi, the 32-year-old owner of Samuray Tattoo in Shanghai.

Shi said he was inspired by Brazilian tattoo artist Flavia Carvalho, who offers tattoos to women physically scarred by domestic violence. He thought tattoos could help improve the self-esteem of Chinese mothers unhappy with their scars.

Shi performed his first free C-section tattoo in 2015. His shop now helps up to six women per month and sometimes there is a waiting list due to high demand.

Health experts cite several reasons for

China's widespread use of the procedure.

"I felt awkward to see my scar when wearing a low-waist dancing dress," said Yuan, who got a rose tattoo in April. "I can dance freely on the stage now without worries or awkwardness."

**Also:**

**NEW YORK:** From cacao beans to truffles, the history of chocolate has been curated inside New York's first museum dedicated to the sweet treat.

Choco-Story New York, created by pastry chef and chocolatier Jacques Torres, opened in March at Torres' flagship sweets store in Manhattan.

"I love to transfer the love that I have for chocolate and the knowledge that I have for chocolates to whoever wants to learn about it," Torres, known as Mr Chocolate, told Reuters.

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