

manifesta

The European
Biennial of
Contemporary
Art

Q&A

Manifesta 10 to be hosted by the State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg in 2014

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Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary art

What is the relevance of Manifesta in general?

Manifesta is a research biennial. Every two years it initiates a research project that explores Europe's peripheries on the basis of its history, its changing identity, its urbanity, the notion of the place and its identification as a catalyst for regional communication.

Is every Manifesta biennial edition different?

Manifesta has to reconfigure itself every two years as a result of its nomadic character and prove itself on the basis of its site specificity. In terms of artistic research it has to prove itself through the artistic concept in relation to socio-geo-political and economical contexts.

St Petersburg as Host of Manifesta 10

Why was St Petersburg selected as Host for Manifesta 10?

Manifesta is the only roving biennial in the world, changing locations every two years. Its origin is based on addressing the disbalance in between East and West Europe after the fall of the Wall at the end of the 1980's. St. Petersburg is the crucial European city to question such a disbalance today. Alexander Pushkin called the former capital of Russia the 'window to Europe'.

Who selects the Host city of Manifesta?

The Board of Manifesta Foundation in Amsterdam pre-selects European cities on the basis of their Bid. To host a Manifesta in the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg fits Manifesta Foundation's ambition for the 10th jubilee edition to return to its origins as a pan-European event in which the social and art historical context in which it is embedded, and the audience related educational projects are directive in selecting the city.

Why does St Petersburg want to Host Manifesta 10?

The State Hermitage Museum would like to host Manifesta 10 in 2014 because it celebrates a meeting of anniversaries and shared historical relationships. In the words of State Hermitage Director, Dr. Piotrovsky: *"With the arrival of Manifesta 10 the Hermitage will have the opportunity to highlight its traditions: its roots within the epoch of Catherine the Great and her passion for the contemporary art of her time, and the role that the museum's collections and exhibitions have always played in the artistic life of Russia. We see contemporary art as a natural, albeit intricate, development of these age-old traditions. Therefore, the key moment in Manifesta 10 for us will be the theme of the Hermitage in today's context."*

Manifesta 10

What is the ambition of Manifesta 10?

Every Manifesta edition is completely different. This means that after Manifesta 9's focus on a dialogue between history, heritage and contemporary art, Manifesta 10 might dive into the notion of historicisation, contextualising the future perspective of a museum collection, and the relevance of this collection for a more essential art historical narrative.

What is the objective of Manifesta 10?

The objective of Manifesta 10 as a large-scale exhibition is to create a wide intellectual platform in St Petersburg in order to address particular curatorial concerns as well as to encourage the diversification of curatorial models in regard to the practice and theory of international exhibition making.

Who selects the venues of Manifesta 10?

Both the Host and the Manifesta Foundation, in the person of the director of the Manifesta Foundation, have a voice in selecting the venues. The venues are mostly selected before the curator is appointed. In the case of Manifesta 10 (with the State Hermitage Museum as Host), the premises of the State Hermitage: the General Staff Building will serve as the main venue for Manifesta 10. The history of the place, the identity, the role of the venue in the urban tissue is important since Manifesta has a high degree of responsiveness to a broader community not only the art world.

Manifesta 10 organisation and funding

How is Manifesta 10 funded?

In the Bidding process for every Manifesta Biennial edition the same model is followed. The local Host, which in this case is the State Hermitage Museum, is responsible for the basic funding of both public and private sources. Manifesta Foundation is responsible for international funding. Manifesta 10 is a collaboration between the XXI Century State Hermitage Museum Foundation, The State Hermitage Museum acting within the framework of 'Hermitage 20/21 project for contemporary art' and the Manifesta Foundation in Amsterdam. As in every Manifesta, the cities and regions are facilitators on both logistic and financial levels.

How is Manifesta 10 organised?

The three mentioned parties: the Manifesta Foundation, the State Hermitage Museum and the XXI Century Hermitage Museum Foundation, will establish a new Manifesta 10 private foundation, Foundation Manifesta 10 St Petersburg in which both international and local cultural stakeholders will be represented and will be responsible for the legal and practical execution of the concept.

Manifesta 10 Curators and concept

Who selects the curators of Manifesta 10?

As with every Manifesta edition, a specially composed sub-committee, involving representatives of the Host and the Manifesta Foundation under the aegis of the Manifesta director, Hedwig Fijen, organises the curatorial selection. In the case of Manifesta 10 the sub-committee is composed of: State Hermitage director, Dr. Michael Piotrovsky; the Chair of the Manifesta Foundation, Russian curator, Viktor Misiano; Esther Regueira, IFM board member and Dimitri Ozerkov, curator of contemporary art at the State Hermitage Museum.

Based on a precise brief, three candidates will be invited to make research in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg and make a very precise proposal for the concept for Manifesta 10 including the notion of discourse, research, mediation, publications and the art historical narrative.

What will be the scope of Manifesta 10?

A fundamental aim of Manifesta 10 will be to underline the importance of rethinking history from a traditional art historical perspective to a more transversal non-linear narrative. Fundamental to Manifesta's approach is site-specificity, collaboration, participation, community based mediation as well as a broad critical pan-European vision. These are important discursive issues to be addressed by Manifesta today. Manifesta 10 will be challenged to create a new philosophical, museo-logical approach to address the above themes without oversimplifying or positioning them only within the narrative of globalisation.

Through the spirit of the European enlightenment movement in the 18th Century in which the notion of the Encyclopaedia edited by Diderot and D'Alembert, which were acquired by Catherine The Great as well as the libraries of both Diderot and Voltair for the State Hermitage Museum can become a moral and spiritually inspiration for Manifesta 10 in 2014.

The Encyclopaedia collection, which is partly based in St. Petersburg library and partly in the State Hermitage Museum, could be an interesting starting point for the development of the curatorial concept of the Biennial.

How politically independent is Manifesta?

Manifesta is not aligned to any political party and neither to any commercial enterprise. Manifesta is a private, non-profit arts organisation, which is characterised as a non-monolithic entity in constant flux.

The Board of the Manifesta Foundation prides itself on following the Code Cultural Governance as formulated by the Dutch Ministry of Culture to ensure appropriate and transparent governance.

What is the role of the Host region?

Without the crucial support of the regional and city based structures Manifesta is not able to effectively and efficiently develop the curatorial concept. Manifesta 10 the Bid of the State Hermitage Museum in applying for Manifesta 10 is supported by the City of St. Petersburg and has cordially accepted the conditions and terms in which Manifesta has worked with every previous European Host cities. In the opening period of the Biennial the city authorities will help Manifesta to secure for its venues the visibility within the city, the transport and logistics as every previous Host city has done in the past.

The concept of Manifesta's artistic autonomy is clearly acknowledged by the State Hermitage Museum and the City of St. Petersburg. In an artistic project of such high complexity such as Manifesta 10 - which touches upon different fields of interest and contexts of contemporary life such as urbanity, social discourse, activism and artistic practices - the ability to find moral, practical and sustainable solutions for unforeseen challenges is of the greatest importance. Manifesta attempts to master this process up to its highest standards.

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