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Q&A Marseille 2020

Manifesta Origins

Manifesta was conceived in the early 1990s as a nomadic, European biennial of contemporary art, responding to the new social, cultural and political reality that emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War. Following a desire to explore the psychological and geographical territory of Europe and to provide a dynamic platform for cultural exchange throughout the region, it takes place every two years in a different European city. Along with the Venice Biennale and documenta in Kassel, Manifesta is one of the foremost art events in Europe.

Since 1996, Manifesta has taken place in Rotterdam, Luxembourg, Ljubljana, Frankfurt, Donostia/San Sebastián, Trentino–South Tyrol, Murcia, Genk and most recently St. Petersburg. Over the course of ten biennials and twenty years, more than 2.5 million people have visited Manifesta's events and participated in its programs. It has successfully presented artists, curators and young professionals from as many as forty different countries, and in each edition, continues to innovate and reimagine contemporary art practices. The eleventh edition is being hosted by the city of Zurich and runs from 11 June until 18 September 2016.

Manifesta is an initiative and co-organized by Manifesta Amsterdam, an independent and not-for-profit organization with offices in Amsterdam. Every edition of Manifesta is initiated and co-organised by Manifesta Amsterdam. The final execution of the concept of the curators is the responsibility of the director Hedwig Fijen and the Manifesta team.

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Every two years Manifesta takes place in a new Host City. Manifesta explores the genius loci and serves as a think tank to re-identify how we live, work, think and see our future in Europe within the context of the growing challenges of economic recession, migration and climate change. Manifesta also studies and hypothesises on how these affect our changing habitats, our thinking and our society. Because of its migratory existence, Manifesta is able to mount a diverse and ongoing analysis of the state of European culture.

Where will Manifesta 13 take place and why?

Manifesta 13 will take place in Marseille, in France in 2020. From the Odyssey to the current migrant crisis, the port city of Marseille is a place from which to acknowledge the weight and presence of the Mediterranean Sea in the historical construct of the European identity. More than ever, water and environmental challenges need to be examined within the political ecology of past and current conflicts. Within its urban territory, Marseille offers an ideal setting to consider a non-dualist re-appropriation of nature within the social form of the city – soon becoming a metropolis. Manifesta 13 in Marseille, the second largest city in France, will offer an opportunity to look at the past and think about the present challenges Europe is facing from a people's perspective and from a shared public space. Voices and forms would certainly be multiple, diverse and powerful.

Where will Manifesta 12 take place and why?

Manifesta 12 will take place in Palermo, Sicily in 2018. The City of Palermo was important for Manifesta's selection board for its representation of two important themes that identify contemporary Europe: migration and climate change, and how these issues impact our cities. The multi-layered and deeply condensed history of Palermo – being occupied by almost every European civilisation and having long-term connections with

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Northern Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean over the last 2000 years – has left its traces throughout this multi-cultural society at the heart of the Mediterranean area.

Manifesta 12 will investigate how great the role of cultural intervention can be in allowing the Palermitani citizens to take back ownership of their city. Manifesta 12 in Palermo will act as a grass-root incubator supporting the local communities with cultural interventions: this will help to rethink the city in their socio-economical and cultural structures and will use the existing informal profile of the city to act as a platform for social change.

How will the central thematics of Manifesta be continued in Palermo 2018 and Marseille 2020?

Palermo and Marseille are both cities with an inherent connection to the sea. Migration, the economy and also the environment have always been at the heart of their being. With these issues now coming to a head in the world via current economic, social, environmental and political upheavals and developments, they are ideal cities to be used as an exploratory base for Manifesta.

Where are we now?

Manifesta 11, with its theme, “What People Do for Money: Some Joint Ventures,” focuses attention on the relation between artistic work and labour. In our post-industrial age, it is a concept that resonates acutely with life not only in Zurich but in the rest of the world.

Manifesta 11 in Zurich is something of a collective experiment, questioning the identity of the city. Manifesta 11 in Zurich is something of a collective experiment, questioning the identity of the city through interactions with its citizens. What do we do with our

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lives? How do we work together? We hope Manifesta 11 stimulates questions for all its visitors and opens up new and exciting ways into contemporary art.

Who selects the host cities of Manifesta?

European cities may apply to host Manifesta. The concept of the potential host's bid ultimately determines which Host City or region is chosen by the Board of the International Foundation Manifesta in Amsterdam. The Director of the International Foundation Manifesta, Hedwig Fijen, selects the city which fits most closely within Manifesta's strategic vision of how cities represent a certain stage of transformation or unique status quo in dealing with climate change and migration. This is why Manifesta is particularly interested in hosting the biennial in cities close to the Mediterranean, where the effects of migration because of climate change will be most visible and affect tangibly how we live in urban environments and how we organise our cities in the future. Occasionally, Manifesta pro-actively looks for cities or regions.

Who selects the curators and what role do they play?

As with every Manifesta edition, a specially composed sub-committee, involving representatives of the Host and the Manifesta Foundation organises the curatorial selection. Based on a precise brief, three candidates will be invited to do research on the city and present a clear proposal for the concept for Manifesta 13.

Why is Manifesta more than an exhibition?

Manifesta is more than the sum total of single exhibitions: it is a biennial with research as its core value. Through all its projects, Manifesta defines the actual status of the constantly changing European cultural landscape by contextualising the geo-political issues that determine its dynamics. Manifesta is an itinerant biennial, changing its locations every two years in response to site-specific and current artistic imperatives, as well as a variety of social, political and geographical considerations. Manifesta engages

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in an in-depth analysis of the status and characteristics of a regional and cultural European context – and in 2020, this is will be in Marseille, France.

What kind of audiences is Manifesta 13 aimed at?

Manifesta 13 is aimed to attract a sustainable, broad audience of both professionals and non-professionals. In addition to the local inhabitants of Marseille and the surrounding regions, Manifesta 13 hopes to attract those who are enthusiastic about learning about their city and country. Our high standards of art mediation and extensive support programme ensure a continuous dialogue with both younger and older generations. The Manifesta 13 Parallel Events, which take place with each Manifesta edition, invite a range of diverse local and regional artistic and multi-disciplinary programmes and institutions to participate in a joint collateral framework programme.

How political is Manifesta?

Manifesta acts as a mirror of the socio-political and cultural conditions of its host city. At the same time, it reflects the overall geo-political situation in a Europe that, now more than ever, finds itself in a crisis visible in the current economic and migration debates. Manifesta originated in the turbulent era around the fall of the Berlin Wall, in response to the political, economic and social changes following the end of the Cold War. As a roving biennial, Manifesta generates and includes new audiences, promoting the ability of contemporary art to broaden and deepen conversations between local communities, political grassroots organisations and NGOs. It serves as a platform and resource for critical discourse around the socio-political and cultural conditions of its host city and Europe at large.

How is Manifesta 13 organised?

The main office of Manifesta (based in Amsterdam) and the City of Marseille have founded a new organisational and governance entity for Manifesta 13, directed by Hedwig Fijen, which is responsible for the entire realisation of the biennial edition.

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How is Manifesta 13 funded?

Manifesta 13 is a collaboration between the City of Marseille and the Manifesta Foundation in Amsterdam. As with every edition of Manifesta, Manifesta 13 has its own permanent international team of specialists, which synergises with a local team of art professionals.

How politically independent is Manifesta?

Manifesta operates completely independently of political parties or commercial enterprises, and is a private, non-commercial organisation whose foundation has its permanent headquarters in Amsterdam.