

## Where artists tread: Kochi-Muziris Biennale promises to be innovative and exciting

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Durbar hall, venue for the Kochi-Muziris Biennale

With just a few weeks to go, excitement is building as Kochi prepares to stage the Kochi-Muziris Biennale (KMB). Conceived by **artists (/topic/artists)** Bose Krishnamachari and Riyas Komu as a platform for artists, KMB has evolved into a unique sensory and intellectual journey and establishes India on the global contemporary art map. The success of the first edition in 2012 played a crucial role in mapping the cultural landscape of India and engaging audiences with outstanding **artworks (/topic/artworks)**

in imaginatively transformed public spaces, altering the conventional manner of presenting art.

Crafting the second edition of KMB, open free to the public from December 12, 2014 to March 29, 2015, is one of India's most cerebral contemporary artists – the Mumbai-based Jitish Kallat. As the artistic director of the biennale, Kallat's thinking approach led to examining how artists, in addition to addressing geographical, historical and cultural aspects, can delve into art making practices."I felt that the biennale must produce themes rather than reproduce a premeditated curatorial theme. My letters to artists were not a thematic curatorial note but a sharing of intuitions in the form of ideas. These have become the coordinates of a project, which is non-linear and layered," says Kallat.

Whorled Explorations, the central exhibition of the biennale, draws upon this act of deliberation, across the axis of time and space to interlace the bygone with the imminent, the terrestrial with the celestial.

The event will be accompanied by History Now, a series of seminars conceived by the Kochi Biennale Foundation, which will run through 108 days. There will also be the Student's Biennale, led by young curators who will be engaging students from government-run art colleges. The programmes also include performances, collateral events, interactive projects for children and cinema project.

Whorled Explorations will feature 95 artists from 30 countries. The stellar line up of creatives includes Italian contemporary artist Francesco Clemente, whose artistic oeuvre has spanned four decades. Clemente will be presenting an installation at the Aspinwall House, a large sea-facing **heritage (/topic/heritage)** property in Fort Kochi, the primary venue of the biennale. Video and installation artist of Palestinian origin, Mona Hatoum, who has featured in a number of recognised group **exhibitions (/topic/exhibitions)** across the world, including the Venice and Sydney biennales and Documenta X, is another celebrated artist who will be presenting an installation. The first winner of the prestigious Artes Mundi Prize, Xu Bing from China, whose artistic practice is an exploration of language, will also take part. Employing cutting-edge technologies and arguably the world's most famous electronic artist, Mexican-Canadian Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, has also been invited.

The stimulating international cast of artists includes French-Algerian Kader Attia who takes a poetic and symbolic approach to exploring the wide-ranging repercussions of Western cultural hegemony and colonialism. Iconic contemporary artists **Anish Kapoor (/topic/anish-kapoor)** and Yoko Ono who have recently exhibited in India will explore their experimental practices at the biennale.

Among the Indian artists selected by the biennale include acclaimed artists Bharti Kher, Dayanita Singh, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh and Surendran Nair. Young turks on the horizon from India, Sahej Rahal and Manish Nai, will be producing site responsive works, adding new insight to their ongoing artistic genre.

Says Kallat, "The historical and the inter-galactic are to be viewed metaphorically within the exhibition; an analogy could be drawn to gestures we make when we try to see or understand something. We might either go close to it or move away from it in space to see it clearly; we may also reflect back or forth in time to understand the present. The intent is to place a divergent set of ideas, a series of sensory and conceptual propositions, as a prod to the imagination."