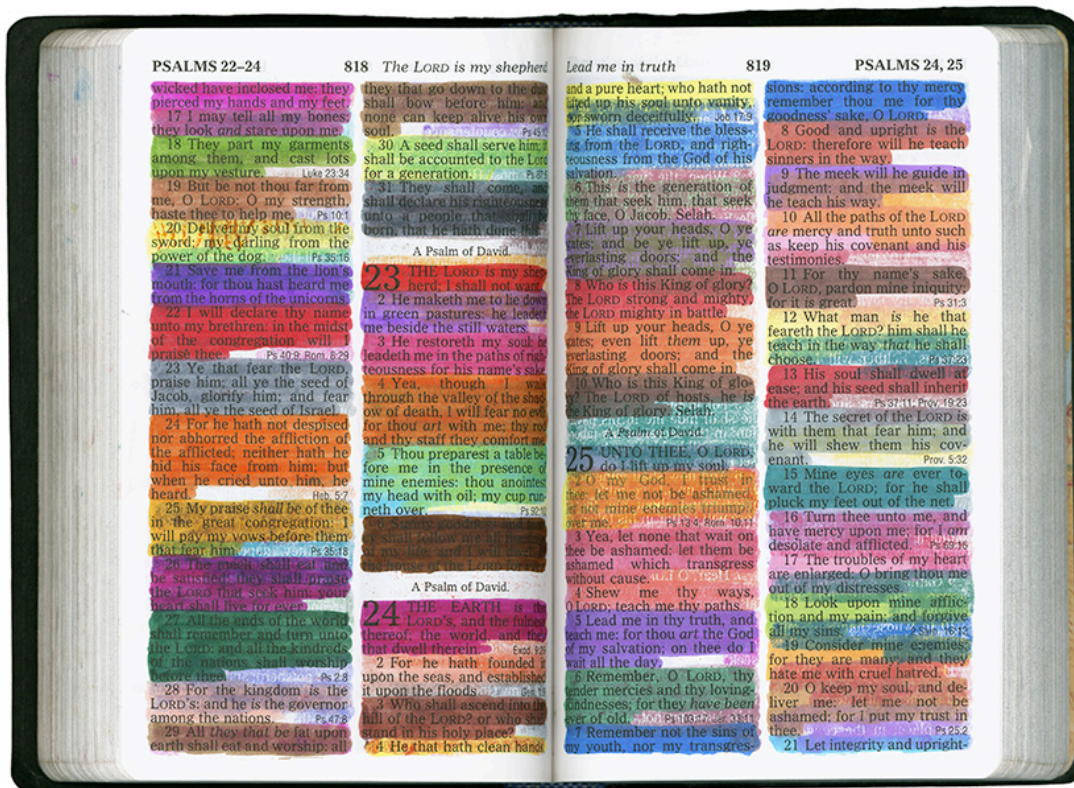


People's Biennial

Traveling Exhibition Project Description



Veda Epling, *Veda's Bibles (Psalms)*, 2006
Representative of the kind of work curators might select for *The People's Biennial*

Curated by Harrell Fletcher and Jens Hoffmann
Organized by iCI (Independent Curators International), New York

Tour Dates: September 2010 through May 2012

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Traveling Exhibition Project Description



Michael Patterson-Carver, *Waiting for Obama*, 2008
Representative of the kind of work curators might select for *People's Biennial*

People's Biennial is a critical response to several challenging issues within the often-isolated world of art. Prominent among these is the fact that most major biennial exhibitions in the United States focus primarily on art from just a few cities, usually New York and Los Angeles. An even larger problem is the art world's ever-increasing exclusivity, which has turned the spaces where art is produced and exhibited into privileged havens detached from the ordinary realities of everyday life.

In contrast to the well-known biennials, *People's Biennial* will display significant contemporary work originating from often overlooked locales by artists who have not had significant exposure, thus offering a potential model for more community-based and even grassroots exhibitions.

For this exhibition, five art institutions in the United States will present a biennial of contemporary art consisting of works by five artists in each of the institutions' local communities, selected by the exhibitions guest co-curators, Harrell Fletcher and Jens Hoffmann. The institutions lie outside mainstream art centers, but in places where art nonetheless thrives. Five appropriate, geographically widespread institutions will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

The curators will visit each community for one week to conduct research in order to choose works by local, non-established, nonprofessional artists. During their stay at each institution, the curators will participate in four events, the first of which will be an open forum where artists who wish to contribute

to *People's Biennial* will have the opportunity to meet and discuss their work with the curators. At a separate event, the curators will present a lecture about their own work and practices. The week will conclude with a dialogue between the curators and presenting institution's staff about their research and proceedings of the week. The fourth event will be left open for the curators and presenting venue to collectively plan.

What drives the idea of the exhibition is a curiosity on the side of the curators to explore the little-known, the overlooked, the marginalized and excluded as well as the desire to present eccentric and under-recognized artistic positions usually dismissed by the mainstream art world. *People's Biennial* is a celebration of the unknown, the peculiar and the disregarded. It privileges art's relationship to local communities, their histories and current realities and will examine the local specificity of the artworks produced in each city by giving it a larger, national platform for presentation. In doing so the exhibition follows the tradition of the French Salon des Refusés (French for 'Exhibition of rejects') of the nineteenth century. Tremendously influential, the Salon des Refusés attracted plenty of critical attention, which also legitimized the emerging artistic avant-garde. In the recent past projects by the art collective Group Material such as 'Americana', presented as a Salon des Refusés during the 1985 Whitney Biennial, and 'People's Choice' (1981), an exhibition organized with personal objects from residents in New York's East Village, have continued this investigation. 'The Folk Archive', co-organized by English artists Alan Kane and Jeremy Deller in 2000, was a similar look into what the larger public might gain from looking at vernacular art and amateur visual culture that is unaffected by the art world's many trends and fashions. 'Thrift Store Paintings' (1991), an exhibition by US artist Jim Shaw, explored similar terrain when the artists exhibited hundreds of paintings that he bought at thrift stores in Los Angeles.

People's Biennial fuses these concerns with a humorous critique of the art world's fascination with biennial exhibitions, their specific politics and economies and the glitz and glamour that is usually attached to them.

Preliminary schedule:

Before October 2009	Venues begin discussions with iCI and curators to schedule and plan events, and announce 1-week curators' visit
November 2009 – April 2010	Curators visit venues' local communities to select artists and participate in events
May 2010	All artists and artworks are announced Catalogue production begins
July 2010	Installation instructions, press materials, and wall text are supplied to venues
September 2010	First venue opens

Criteria for institutional participation:

- Not a major art institution, and not located in a major contemporary art center (i.e. New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, San Francisco)
- Geographic distance of at least 400 miles from other participating institutions; only one venue per state
- Ability to facilitate curatorial involvement with the community
- Willingness to embark upon and support at least 4 events during curators' visit, and ready to record and document events for catalogue
- Minimum of 3,500 square feet of exhibition space
- Adequate security and professional museum procedures
- Ability to help iCI registrar with assembly, preparation, and eventual dispersal of local loans
- Need to have the financial resources to host both curators for a 1-week visit, including their travel, accommodations, and per diem for local expenses
- Have a flexible and open attitude toward curatorial practice

About the guest curators, Harrell Fletcher and Jens Hoffmann:

Harrell Fletcher is an artist who has worked collaboratively and individually on socially engaged, interdisciplinary projects for more than fifteen years; his work has been exhibited throughout the United States, and in Europe. He is a professor of art and social practice at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

Jens Hoffmann is director of the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco. He has curated over three dozen exhibitions since the late 1990s. He was director of exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London from 2003 to 2007. Hoffmann is an adjunct professor at the California College of the Arts, San Francisco, a guest professor at the Nuova Accademia de Belle Arti, Milan and a faculty member at Goldsmith College, University of London.

Basic facts:

Participation fee: \$6,000 for 10 weeks, plus incoming shipping

Number of artists or artist groups: 25

Number of works: to be determined

Space required: minimum 3,500 square feet

Tour dates: September 2010 through May 2012

Wall texts, press, and a catalogue will be provided.

iCI is a dynamic non-profit organization committed to enhancing the understanding and appreciation of contemporary art through its innovative traveling exhibitions and publications. iCI brings challenging artworks to a wide range of museums, giving diverse audiences in the United States and abroad the opportunity to experience new art.