

# Art Radar

*Contemporary art trends and news from Asia and beyond*

## **“Between the sky and the earth”: Artistic Director Marc Schmitz on the 4th Land Art Mongolia – in conversation**

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**Held from 22 August to 20 September 2016, the fourth edition of Land Art Mongolia 360° (LAM) includes 30 artists from 20 countries.**

*Art Radar* catches up with Artistic Director Marc Schmitz to talk about this walking Museum without walls located in sacred mountains of the Gobi.



Edgar Endress, Land Art Mongolia 2016. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

The artists in **LAM 2016** develop work in outdoor sites in a natural reserve in the South East Gobi at

Daringanga Sum, accompanied by a conference and exhibition in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. The area of Daringanga Sum includes several sacred mountains such as Altain Owoo and Shiliin Bogd, Sukhbaatar Aimag.



Land Art Mongolia 2014. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

The theme for this edition is "Catching the Axis – Between the Sky and the Earth", which examines the role of maps in the way people view and navigate around lands. It takes the axis as a starting point for creating knowledge of different ways of looking at place, both from the land and sky. Throughout it's history, **Land Art Mongolia** has focused on land art as a "form of spatial visualisation of the relations between nature, culture and social policies".



Land Art Mongolia presentation in Venice in 2015. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

The first edition of LAM was held in 2010, although the seeds of the biennial were sewn during a Land Art Symposium in Bor Undur, Gobi in 2006. Each edition of the biennial has taken place in a different location throughout Mongolia, referencing the nomadic traditions as well as paying homage to the country's vast landscapes. The biennial has expanded in each edition and in 2015 LAM hosted a presentation at Palazzo Zorzi (Palazzo di UNESCO in Venezia) during the opening of the **56th Venice Biennale**.



Land Art Mongolia 2014. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

The LAM biennial includes a number of Mongolian as well as international artists. Featured in LAM 2016 are a number of Mongolia artists who represent a younger generation born in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Amarsaikhan Namsrajav** grew up in a traditional nomadic family and nomadic culture is a strong component of his installation art since 2009. Batkholboo Dugarsuren, another young talent, works principally in abstract sculpture and installations from natural materials. He creates a fusion between tradition and modernity.

**Chinzorig Renchin-Ochir** trained in Mongolian Traditional Painting (Mongol Zurag), and has since experimented with different materials and techniques and has worked on site-specific performances in the countryside of Mongolia.





Chinzorig Renchin-Ochir, Land Art Mongolia 2016. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.



Enkhbold, Land Art Mongolia 2016. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

Another young artist, **Enkhbold Togmidshirev** began carving wood as a teenager in the countryside before being introduced to non-figurative painting, installations and conceptual art through his early study and visits to Europe. His performance work draws inspiration from his nomadic culture, shaping his *ger* performances and establishing him as Mongolia's foremost performance artist.

Other Mongolian artists in LAM 2016 include **Enkhjargal Ganbat**, Gankhuyag Lkh., M. Munguntsetseg and **Munhksetseg Batmunkh**.







Land Art Mongolia 2014. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.



Ochirbold Ayurzana, Land Art Mongolia 2016. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

The international artists include:

- Lisa Batacchi (Italy)
- Edgar Endress (Chile/USA)
- **Zhen + Qiang Gao** (China)
- Severin Guelpa (Switzerland)
- Erica Masuya (Japan)
- Pekka Niityvirta (Finland)
- Marc Schmitz (Germany)
- Jacek Tylicki (Poland/USA)
- Herman de Vries (Netherlands/Germany)
- **Yoko Ono** (Japan/USA)
- **Vibha Galhotra** (India)
- Munguntsetseg Lkhagvasuren (Mongolia)
- Gankhujag Lkhamsuren (Mongolia)
- Badam Dashdondog (Mongolia)
- Ochirbold Ayurzana (Mongolia)

*Art Radar* caught up with Artistic Director Marc Schmitz to talk about why land art is important and its place in the Mongolian social context.





Land Art Mongolia 2014. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

### **Why did you feel the need to create a biennial for land art?**

Today we are in a situation where we can face biennials around the globe either focused on special issues or regions/nations. However, the format of what and how biennials present contemporary art has equalised a lot. Biennials are to present positions beside the marked; but on the other hand, this happens in the same economic structures and related venues. We felt simply the need to switch to a different environment, a kind of walking Museum without walls, and to install a stage for positions that arise plain air.

The idea of Land Art leads to the origin of creativity by experiencing nature. Today we might have forgotten about that source, while artists are forced to spend a lot of time either in a studio or with a computer. And though there might be small numbers of artists that do solely Land Art, it came out that artists following their general work practice found a challenge to evolve ideas in landscape.





Batkholboo Dugarsuren, 'Past, Present, Future', 2014, on-site installation, furniture, ger material, engine. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

### Why in Mongolia?

In most countries men had intervened in nature almost at every place. That is, in the forests, and of course in any kind of agriculture; the rivers are circumscribed, and our view on animals is mainly economical. We are planning to affect the weather and anxious to produce the most of natural resources.

In contradiction, in Mongolia most of the land is undeveloped. The nomadic culture has a complete different approach in contact with nature. A moving nomadic family would not leave any kind of garbage, not even a sheet of paper. Older people would urge not even to kick a stone. They would look for the perfect place to set up a *ger* than digging in the ground to flatten the earth at some point. In that kind of understanding the kind of sustainability that our societies are keen to develop is already there.

On the other hand there is also a different understanding of that land in respect of ownership. Most of the land is shared. Nomads share among themselves the treasure of nature. And that of course goes similar to art. Artists are expressing something they are experiencing rather than owning.





### How do you select the artists that will be featured?

In the past LAM have worked with public calls. On that basis a curatorial committee was considering about a selection that is balanced on different aspects. The goal was to bring together artists from different stadia of career and age, as well as create an international mix out of DAC (Development Assistance Committee) countries and established art centres. However, we have received a very high number of incoming proposals that we decided to organize this fourth edition on the basis of curating and invitation. But we might return in the future to the public call.



Ganzug, the winner of the first prize of LAM 2014, in a live performance at Venice Biennial in 2015. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.



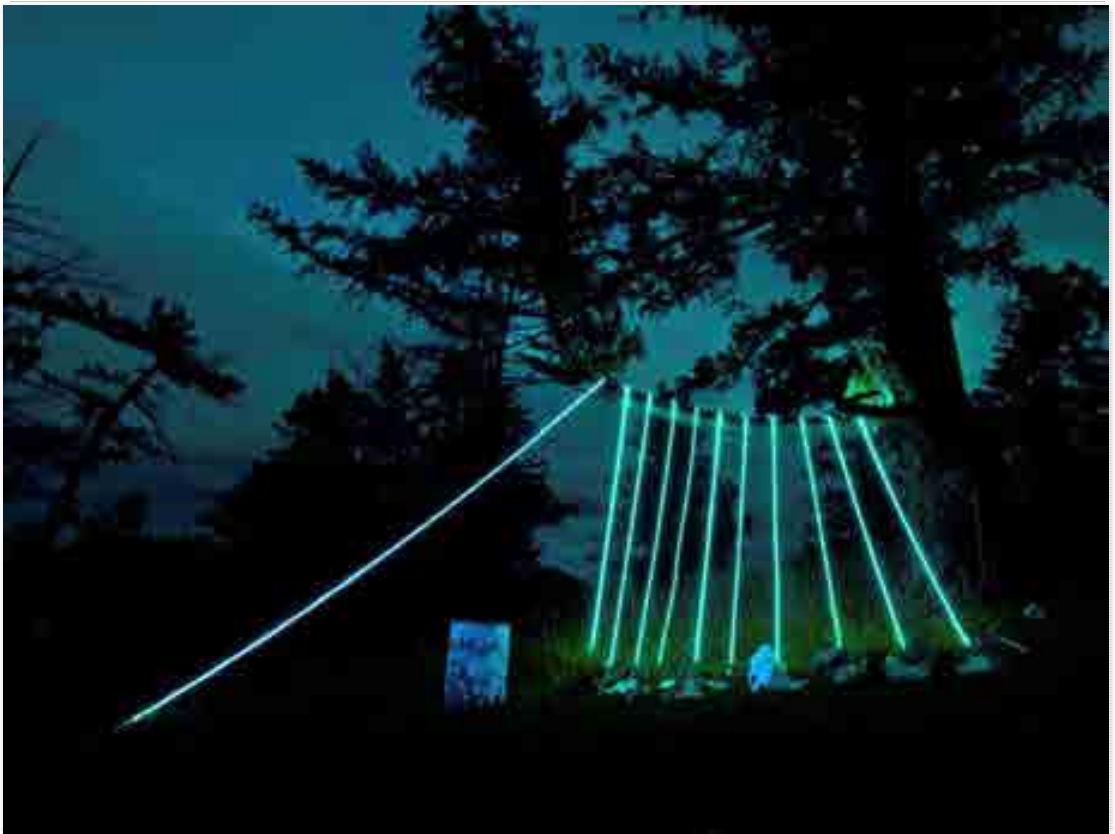




Herman de Vries, Land Art Mongolia 2016. Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

### **How have you seen the Biennial develop or change over the years?**

It is interesting that the basic format of the Biennial has stayed almost unchanged since its beginning, though we have changed the location and also the presentation venues on each edition. Also the focus was very different, starting with environmental questions in 2010, to art and politics, men and animals, and this year to focus on relevance of a shamanistic approach in the arts. And because the Biennial is moving throughout this enormous diversified Mongolian landscape, we can bring questions into speech that could not happen somewhere else.



Max Hooper Schneirder and Kris Lemsalu, 'Oblivion Ovoo', 2014, performance and video (ceramic casts, UV dye, photoluminescent pigment, found materials, bodies and environments). Image courtesy Land Art Mongolia.

### **Why do you think it is important to celebrate land art?**

Personally I think it is important to step back sometimes from artificial to real experience. It does not need a beach or mountaineering to reconnect with ourselves and change our battery. But nature itself can be challenging. If we are not in charge with our useful tools, often we might find we are helpless; but a bit later we can enjoy the absence of "things" and the plenty of time. I have met artists saying that they really enjoy not receiving emails or caring about their VISA card. Once out in the steppe, with time the artists are peeling out of pressure. Still they bring their issues from the dense capitals but we offer a view of distance to the art centres. And this is important for the view itself, to let it go with some kind of

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