

# Gangwon International Biennale tackles social evil

Posted : 2018-02-04 17:30 Updated : 2018-02-04 21:05



Mexican artist Joaquin Segura's "G8" is on view at the 2018 Gangwon International Biennale held at the Gangneung Green City Experience Center E-ZEN in Gangneung, Gangwon Province, through March 18. / Yonhap

By Kwon Mee-yoo

The 2018 PyeongChang Winter Games and Winter Paralympics will start later this week putting forward fair competition and the promotion of peace through sports.

Running through March 18, parallel to the 2018 PyeongChang Winter

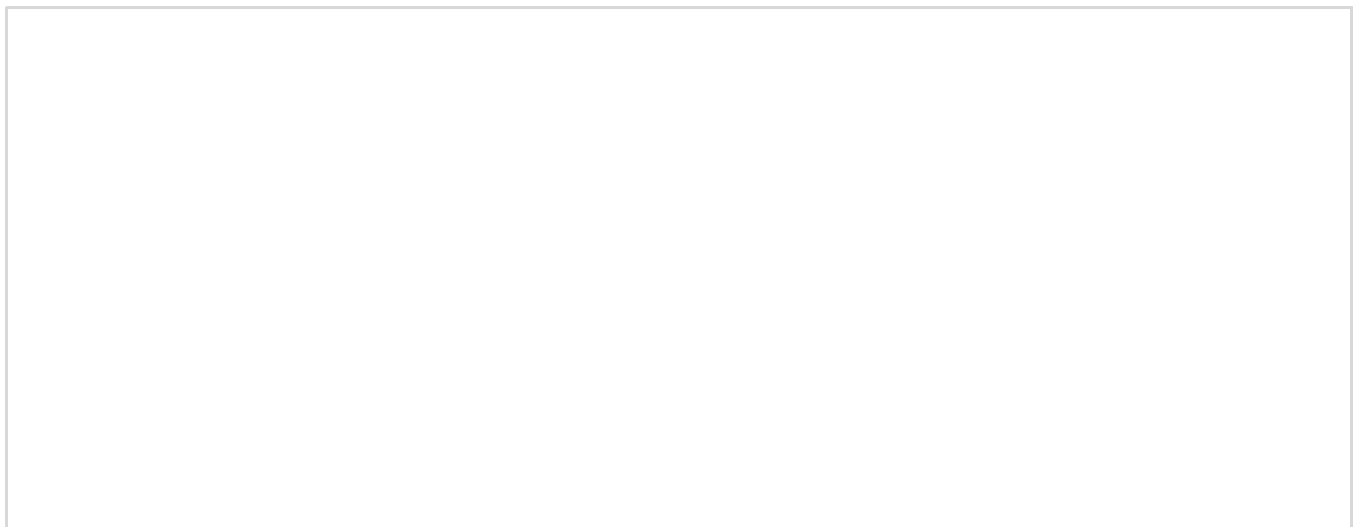
Games and Winter Paralympics, the Gangwon International Biennale (GIB) 2018 is themed "The Dictionary of Evil," which does not immediately seem related to the international sports event.

Hong Kyoung-han, an art critic who serves as the art director for GIB 2018, turned his eyes to the evils rampant in our society to define the direction of the biennale, which is inextricably bound up with the biggest sports event in the world.

Instead of ignoring everyday evils in pursuit of peace, Hong chose to go head-to-head with the frightening, alarming and devilish term. "It is a noun that symbolizes common experiences and situations on one page of a dictionary that should no longer have to write about universal or normal evil," Hong said.

Held at the Gangneung Green City Experience Center E-ZEN in Gangneung, Gangwon Province, the biennale features 110 art works from 58 artists and teams from 23 countries.

"We invited many artists from the First World. Many of the participating artists are from the Middle East and artists from countries suffering civil war or who are refugees, and they are here in Gangwon, speaking through their artistic language," Hong said.





Columbian artist Rafael Gomezbarros explains "House Taken" during press preview of the 2018 Gangwon International Biennale, Friday. / Yonhap

## Refugees and immigrants

Columbian artist Rafael Gomezbarros brought some 500 giant ants to the GIB 2018. The installation "House Taken" questions the idea of hometown, emigration and the uprooting of immigrants, motivated by the violence of the Colombian conflict the artist witnessed in his youth.

The ants, which look like two skulls tied together, represent the wandering status of refugees and the omnipresence of evil, such as war, around the world.

"It's another way to remember immigrant and refugee issues," the artist said during a press preview for the biennale, Friday.

Korean artist Yangachi created a video installation piece "Tree Man." The artist related the idea of evil with the scene of chopping down of trees

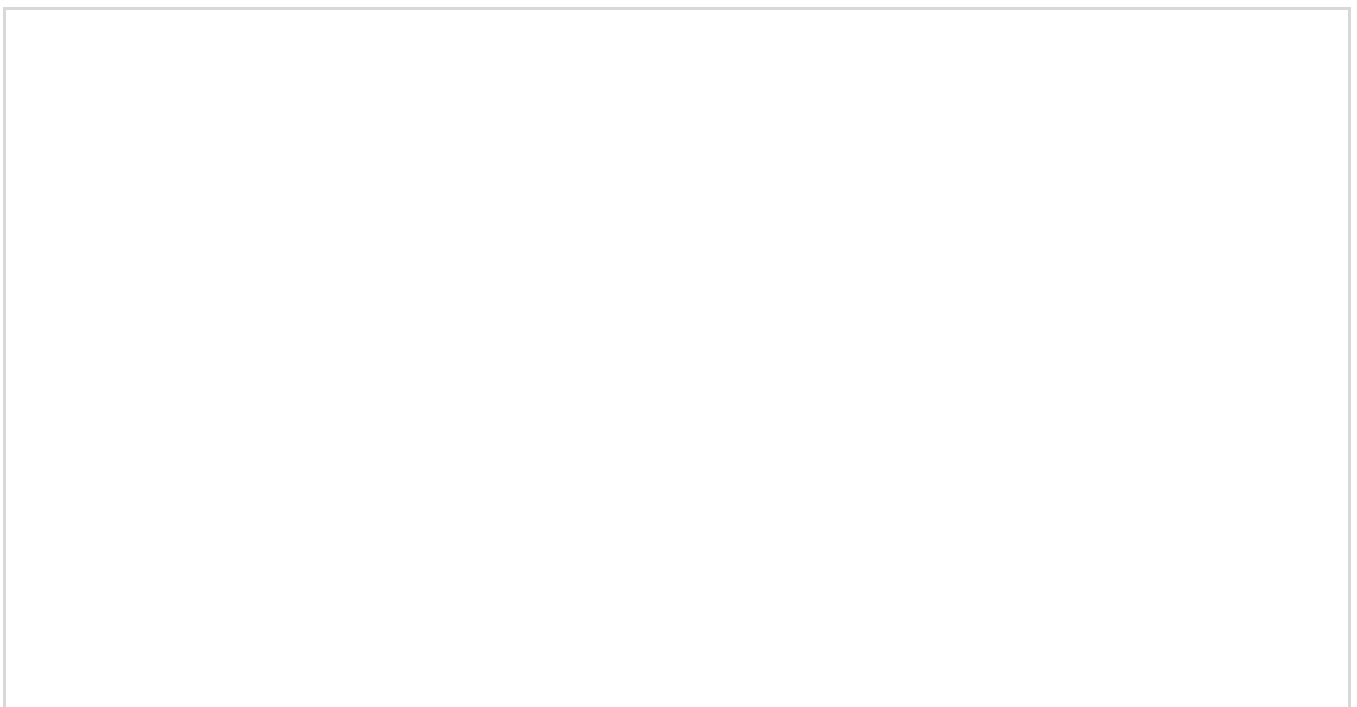
that are hundreds of years old and the artwork was inspired by the Gariwangsan Mountain, which was damaged and developed to build ski slopes for the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Games.

Joaquin Segura's "G8" is a metaphor for international politics lead by the Group of Eight.

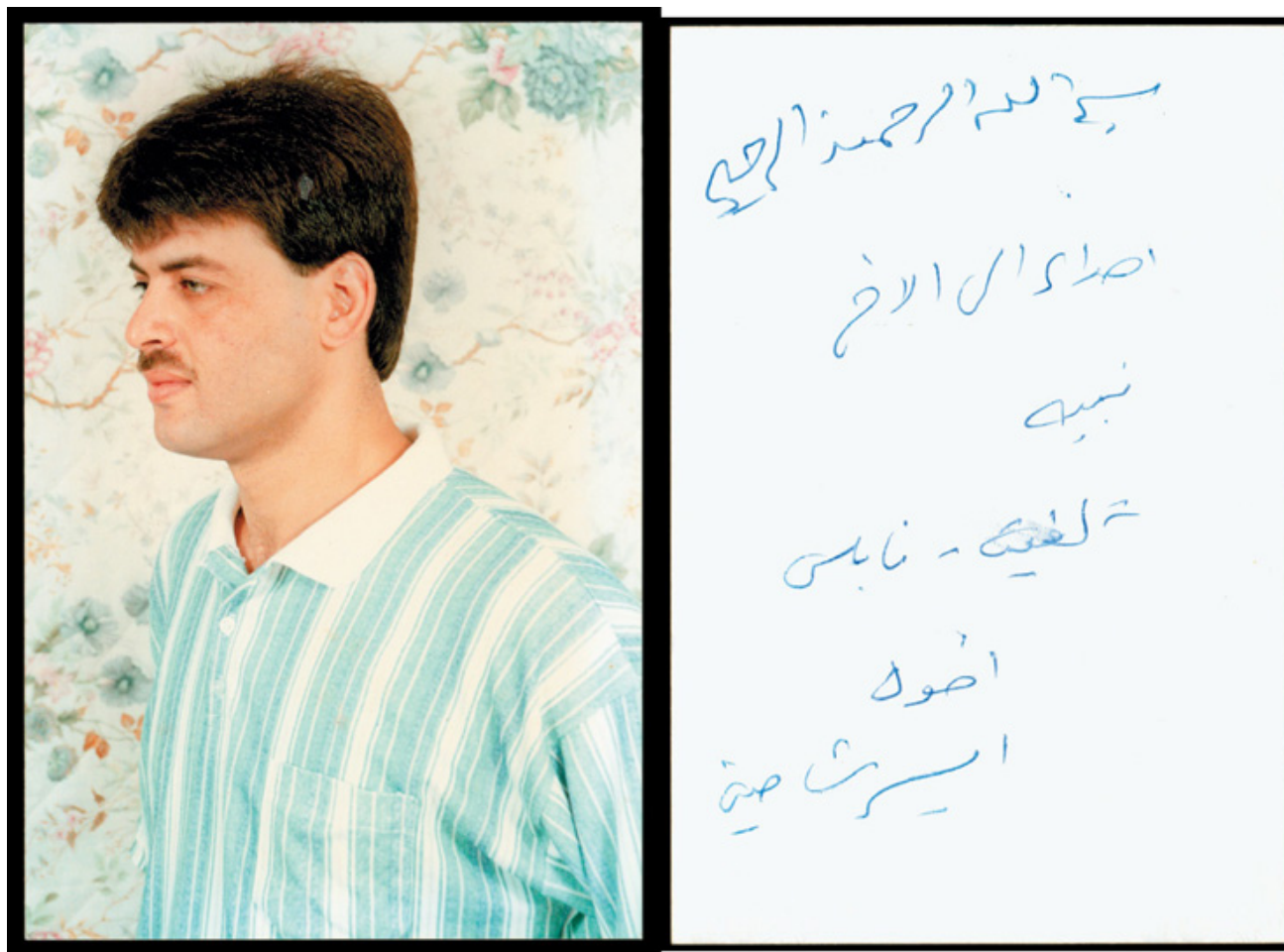
International artist group Don't Follow the Wind presents "A Walk in Fukushima," a 360-degree video filmed by a family living right outside the contaminated area in Fukushima.

"We are an international group responding to the disaster. Nuclear power lasts long and so does art. The contaminated zone is closed but our work there will be open for many years to come until the zone reopens," the artist group said.

Russian artist Chto Delat's video shows the way to democracy in a theatrical way. Among three videos screened for this biennale, "Partisan Songspiel: A Belgrade Story" is about the political oppression on the occasion of the 2009 Belgrade Summer Universiade.







Akram Zaatari's "Untold" / Courtesy of Gangwon International Biennale

## Arabic art introduced to Korea

The biennale also gives an insight into Arabic contemporary art, which is hardly seen in Korea.

"Many Arab artists do archival works, because their countries are prone to war and destruction. However, each artist uses archives in a different way -- some dig up archaeological archives, while others create imaginary archives reflecting reality," Hong said.

Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari's "Untold" series consists of photos of Arab political prisoners in Israel. The photos, originally belonging to former political prisoner Nabih Awada, were sent to him from his friends in different prisons.

"Since political issues were not allowed to be written and exchanged, the messages ended up muted and rather poetic," Zaatari said.

Walid Raad's "Index XXVI: Red" is the artist's take on art history in the Arab world, creating a fictional archive on a torn plastered wall, as if damaged by war.

Khadim Ali's tapestry "The Arrival" pays tribute to Afghanistan refugee victims of capsized boats, who could not make it to Europe. The artist collaborated with Afghan weavers to create the tapestry, recalling the memories of loved ones.

Elaine Hoey's interactive virtual reality installation invites the viewers to experience the global refugee crisis by taking a boat with a group of refugees.

## **Bold and daring**

Korean artist Chang Ji-a questions the way our society "others" minorities. The thin and fragile plaster sculpture is inspired by Gustave Courbet's 1866 painting "Le Sommeil," which depicts two women intertwining their bodies, which was a social taboo back then.

Photograph series "O-N-M-Y-M-A-R-K-!" captures sexual minorities and kiss mark letters, blurring the boundary between private and public parts of the subject.

Kim Ki-ra and Kim Hyung-kyu's videos "The Weight of Ideology -- The Last Leaf" and "The Blind -- Different Paths" pose questions about conflicts and collisions caused by history, politics, ideology, generations and regions.

Sim Seung-wook's octagonal ring in "Stabilized Anxiety: The Stage of

"Eight Stories" represents how modern society consumes violence in the form of entertainment.

Admission is free. For more information, visit [www.gwbien.com](http://www.gwbien.com) or call 033-243-0784.