

ArtReview

The shows must go on

From the Biennale of Sydney to a human-artwork, Nirmala Devi selects the best exhibitions to see across Australia

By **Nirmala Devi**

Exhibition previews? In this uncertain climate? It's all just speculation!" *ArtReview Asia* hears you shout. Now that numerous art events and exhibitions around the world have been cancelled or postponed as a result of Coronavirus-related issues (and *ArtReview Asia*'s thoughts go out to those many people who are truly suffering from it), there are a number of online exhibitions cropping up – some of which are listed in Adeline Chia's recent '[Art at Home' roundup](#). And while *ArtReview Asia* has never been one for hugs-and-kisses, it's certainly true that the bit of the artworld that involves socialising is taking a bashing. It's a reminder of how much culture, in general, is based on interacting with one another. But it's just as true that not all the artworld's a (cancelled) fair: people are still making art; people are still showing art; and hey, magazines are still writing about it – life hasn't come to an end. And indeed, the Biennale of Sydney, curated by [Brook Andrew](#), is opening this weekend, so *ArtReview Asia* takes this opportunity to zoom in on some of the most interesting exhibitions in Australia at the moment...



Nicholas Galanin, Tsu Heidei Shugaxtutaan Part II [We Will Again Open This Container of Wisdom That Has Been Left In Our Care Part II] (still), 2006, single channel video, 4 min 6 sec. Courtesy the artist

Biennale of Sydney: NIRIN, various venues, 14 March – 8 June

From Tasmania, right on the edge of the real world (unless you live there, in which case it's likely the centre), it's masks on and a short hop to Sydney. There, having caught the end of *Tim* (although not the end that Reinking is waiting for), you can catch the beginning of this year's Biennale of Sydney. The name of the event may be borrowed from Italian, but the name of the show, *NIRIN*, is lifted from the language of the Wiradjuri people of western New South Wales, the Nation to which the biennial's artistic director, (actual) artist Brook Andrew's mother belongs. 'NIRIN,' the biennial's initial press statement declares, 'is a world of endless interconnected centres; a space to gather and to share, to rejoice, disrupt, and re-imagine.' And don't we know about interconnected centres right now. Still, in linguistic terms *nirin* means 'edge'. And perhaps it's really the fact that much of the work on show deals with the marginalised peripheries of both mainstream geography and normative societies that links the output of the 100 or so local and international artists on

PETER BLUM GALLERY

show. Among them are current biennial mainstays, such as Anna Boghiguian, Arthur Jafa, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Ibrahim Mahama and Zanele Muholi. ArtReview Asia is particularly looking forward to the contribution of Tlingit/Unanga artist Nicholas Galanin, who will present a new work involving the excavation of the shadow cast by a statue of Captain Cook in Sydney's Hyde Park as well as his existing videowork *'Tsu Héidei Shugaxtutaan (We Will Again Open This Container of Wisdom That Has Been Left in Our Care), Part I and II* (2006). And, once he's released from Tasmania, Tim will (possibly) be charging over to see Ainu artist and musician Mayunkiki's ongoing project that researches *sinuye*, which translates as 'to carve oneself' and is the name given to traditional Ainu tattooing practices, which were made illegal in 1872, when Westerners started arriving and Japan wanted to appear more civilised. That and the fact that Japan's rulers didn't care for the Ainu people's claim to indigeneity (a claim only fully acknowledged in law last year after centuries of repression and various attempts to obliterate their culture). The artists on show, Andrew states, 'will reflect on the world today, challenging dominant narratives and proposing exciting new futurisms and paths to healing'. And carving.