

THE
 MANUAL

ART HITTERS

08. FIVE WAYS TO NAME-DROP IN VENICE

The Biennale, from 9 May, is a cultural must, but how many of the artists have you heard of? Never fear, art critic **Skve Sherwin** has a blagger's guide...

> AS VENETIAN AS a gondolier in a stripy jumper, the six-month long Biennale (Italian for 'every two years') is an unparalleled chance to gorge on culture and enjoy the directional fashion choices of the Italian art crowd. But how to cherry pick from more than 100 individual shows, pavilions, performances and pop-ups? We reckon these are the only five you *really* need to see...

1. ALL THE WORLD'S FUTURES

Curated by notable hard-hitter Okwui Enwezor, this year's main event is the group exhibition in the Arsenale. The Nigerian born, political-science major is renowned for big shows that tackle globalisation's iniquities, conflicts and cross-currents. The 136 artists he's selected to explore 'the

state of things' range from superstar German photographer Andreas Gursky to young Chinese digital-art maverick Cao Fei. According to his pre-show statement, the subject matter is, "crisis, uncertainty and deepening insecurity across the world", so don't expect smiley faces and lollipops.

2. SARAH LUCAS, BRITISH PAVILION

One of the more tenacious Young British Artists, Lucas's bad-girl take on sex and identity has moved on from sculptures of kebabs, fried eggs, melons and buckets to a slightly more sophisticated approach. Nowadays, she's as likely to craft giant white phalluses that recall ancient fertility totems as she is to make bawdy gags with household finds. Still, we'd be surprised if there were no naughty bits.

Clockwise from top *Crowd* by Rashid Rana; *New Management* by Simon Denny; *Bunny Gets Snookered* by Sarah Lucas; *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* by Joan Jonas; Okwui Enwezor



PHOTOS: BHELENA SCHLICHTING; SARAH LUCAS, COURTESY SADIÉ COLES HQ; COMMISSIONED BY THE BRITISH CONSUL; BEATRICE HELLDIGES



3. JOAN JONAS, US PAVILION

Septuagenarian Joan Jonas has been pioneering a video-performance-sculpture-dance-theatre-drawing hybrid since the 60s. She frequently references tribal ritual and folklore, but her work is literally of the moment, including seminal live-streamed early video performances and constant referencing of older works with new installations. Her five-gallery presentation for the US Pavilion is inspired by the ocean and its 'universe of beings'. So fish, basically, but you can bet there'll be a twist in the tale.

4. MY EAST IS YOUR WEST, PAVILION OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN

With Enwezor as curator, it's perhaps no surprise there's a strong political flavour to many of this year's shows. Take this one: the joint presentation of rising international names, Mumbai artist Shilpa Gupta and Lahore's Rashid Rana, is at the least a symbol of a united India and Pakistan. Both artists are politically minded and active in local issues, so the work should be interesting too.

5. SIMON DENNY, NZ PAVILION

It's not often the New Zealand art world gets some notice, but Denny's video installations have made him one to watch, literally. Exploring the landscape of the post-information age, *Secret Power*, his project at Marciana Library, promises to explore 'a post-Snowden world'. Not likely to impress traditional art fans necessarily (impressionism, it ain't), his art does ask interesting questions about what it means to be a digital native.