

The Artists Who Ruled the Biennial Circuit Over the Last Four Years

Our critic analyzed 130 events featuring more than 15,000 participants. Here's what the numbers say.

by Ben Davis • Apr 30, 2026

Who are the artists who are getting the most attention from international curators—not just in one show, but in many? I've done the exercise of tallying up names before. It helps to give substance to vague impressions I have, while also always snapping into focus things I had totally failed to notice.

With the major media moment of the Venice Biennale coming up the first of May, it seemed like a good time to try it again.

I looked at artists appearing in biennials or similar major art exhibitions that opened after the 2022 Venice Biennale (not including it), and up to the 2026 Venice Biennale (including it). Basically, I wanted to see what had changed or stayed the same since the last time I did a similar piece on "Biennial Artists," back in 2022. (It's not a comparable number of years—that time, I looked at five years of shows, while this represents roughly four, so I am not comparing directly.)

I picked 130 recurring global art events, looking at the artists in any editions that went on view in this time period. That list includes all the major art biennials and triennials, plus a host of smaller or more specialized ones (and a few that have since closed, like the Front Triennial in the Cleveland area, as well as ones that have been thrown into chaos by politics, such as the Dhaka Art Summit).

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Tanya Leighton

As a selection, I think the list offers a good cross-section of the global curatorial conversation around contemporary art, spanning continents, and giving me a sense of what's going on out of my very fragmentary, U.S.-centric view. Of course, if you included different events, you'd get a slightly different mix of figures. For transparency's sake, I have listed the 130 events I considered at the end of this post.

I ended up with slightly over 15,000 artists who've been in these shows, all told. From that, only a very few names repeat, and some repeat a lot; as usual, there is a very, very steep drop off from the peak. I decided to break out any artist who was in nine or more shows, mainly because I wanted to share as much as I could from this huge project, but it gets unwieldy after that.

I'll save analysis for a separate post. Below, the artists I think have been the biggest on the biennial scene in the mid-2020s.

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Sky Hopinka



Sky Hopinka. Courtesy of the artist.

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Tanya Leighton

BORN: 1984 in Ferndale, Washington

KEY WORKS: *Cloudless Blue Egress of Summer* (2019), *Kicking the Clouds* (2021), *Sunflower Siege Engine* (2022)

A member of the Ho-Chunk Nation/Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians, Hopinka won a MacArthur “Genius” Grant back in 2022 for works like *Kicking the Clouds*, a 15-minute video featuring audio of his grandmother being taught her ancestral language, woven together with his own poetry. The MacArthur citation said such works “offer new strategies of representation for the expression of Indigenous worldviews.”

1. 8th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (2023), Greece
2. 14th Gwangju Biennale (2023), South Korea
3. Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art (2023), Sweden
4. NGV Triennial (2023–24), Melbourne, Australia
5. Sharjah Biennial 16 (2025), U.A.E.
6. Art Encounters Biennial (2025), Timisoara, Romania
7. Site Santa Fe Biennial (2025–26), U.S.
8. The 13th Seoul Mediacity Biennale (2025), South Korea
9. Guangzhou Image Triennial (2025–26), China
