

# News *International*

## Demilitarised zone is made flesh by Turner winner

Douglas Gordon's film, part of UK-South Korea cultural collaboration, shows refugee being tattooed

### ASIA

**SEOUL.** The Scottish artist Douglas Gordon has made a film about Korea's Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), the strip of land separating North and South Korea. The work, entitled *Portrait of Janus* (2017), shows the DMZ border being tattooed vertically along the spine of a young Korean man.

"Janus, who was adopted as a baby by a Danish couple, often returns to Korea to research his family history. The film shows the tattooist's needle moving up and down his spine in an abstract way," says Jon Bewley, the director of Locust+, a visual arts agency based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in north-eastern England. The organisation commissioned the film as part of a season of cultural programming initiated by the British Council (the UK/Korea 2017-18 Creative Futures season).

The heavily fortified DMZ is not just a border point but a hugely symbolic



**"Gordon's work is about physical frontiers as psychological metaphors"**

barrier. "Gordon's work is not about nationalism but, in part, physical frontiers as psychological metaphors. At this moment in time, *Portrait of Janus* is highly prescient," Bewley adds. The piece was made against the backdrop of an escalating war of words between US President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, "supreme leader" of North Korea. Janus was found "through word of mouth via refugee networks", Bewley says.

The work is accompanied by a performance by the high-profile South Korean cellist Okkyung Lee. When the film is shown for the first time later this year at the Art Sonje Center in Seoul, it will be accompanied by a live performance by Lee. The piece is also due to be shown at the Korean Cultural Centre in London in early 2018.

### UK-Korea's new commissions

The British Council's UK-Korea programming is running in parallel with a collaborative project launched in

**Gordon's *Portrait of Janus* (2017) shows a tattoo of the Demilitarised Zone between North and South Korea being created**

March 2016 by Arts Council England and Art Council Korea. The organisations awarded a combined £1.4m to 21 South Korean and English performing and visual arts organisations in a bid to bolster "creative collaborations between arts organisations and artists in England and Korea", a statement says.

The Liverpool Biennial is leading a key strand of this project, working on joint commissions with curators at the Gwangju and Busan Biennales and the Seoul Museum of Art. "We are commissioning [the South Korean artists] Haegue Yang and Suki Seokyeong Kang [to make new pieces] for the 2018 Liverpool Biennial," says Sally Tallant, the director of the biennial in the port city in north-western England.

Meanwhile, eight UK visual arts institutions are working with eight



South Korean institutions to set up an artists' residency exchange programme for emerging artists from both countries, says Emma Dean, a curator at Gateshead's Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, which is leading the consortium of English organisations. This includes Fact in Liverpool and the Wysing Arts Centre in Cambridgeshire; the South Korean institutions have not yet been announced.

**Gareth Harris**

## British Museum plans sweeping redisplay of world cultures

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Africa. "We are lagging behind what we and our visitors would like to see," Fischer says. He also wants a greater emphasis on prehistory (up to around 3000BC), where the museum has a strong collection, but little on show.

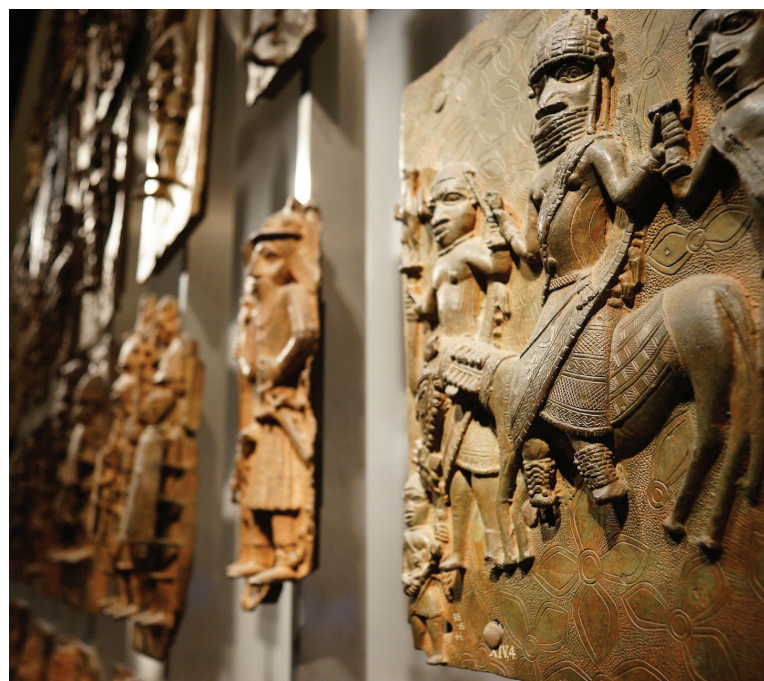
The new displays are likely to have slightly fewer objects. Fischer feels that less dense displays will enable visitors to get a better understanding of the collection. He also wants to introduce thematic displays, possibly including one on how "love is structured in different societies".

Fischer stresses that plans are still at an early stage, although detailed discussions with curatorial departments and museum trustees are now beginning. It is far too soon to estimate the cost of the redisplay, but the full project could well

cost several hundred million pounds. To put this in context, the Victoria and Albert Museum's FuturePlan, mainly for the modernisation and redisplay of some of its galleries, cost £120m from 2001 until last year.

The British Museum would not close while the renovation and redisplay work was carried out. The project would be done in phases, one culture at a time. This would inevitably mean some disruption in terms of what is on show and visitor flow within the building. The full redisplay would take a very considerable time – almost certainly more than a decade.

Fischer also told us about plans to develop a new storage facility, following the closure of the existing store at Blythe House in west London (which



**The reorganisation could give more space to the museum's African collection**

is shared with the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Science Museum). The closure, planned for 2022, means that the museum will receive £50m from the government towards creating a new store, although it will cost significantly more.

The Art Newspaper can reveal that the large new storage facility is likely to be outside the capital. Fischer says: "We are looking at a place outside London that will enable us to work more closely with a university, to make our collections more accessible for research." Its working title is BM Arc – the British Museum's Archaeological Research Collection. Fischer is unwilling to disclose where this storage facility will be located, but it would be linked to a university with a strong archaeological department.

**Martin Bailey**

• For the full interview with British Museum director Hartwig Fischer, see p8

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An Italian 'Maximilian' Breastplate, Etched in the Manner of the 'Danube School', c. 1520

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Private collection, Austria  
Sold at Sotheby's & Co, 26 May 1933, Lot 80

Pair of Fish Bowls  
China – Qianlong period (1736-1795)  
H. 40 Ø 61.5 cm

**Jorge Welsh**  
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