

OUR POSITION ON THE APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW DIRECTOR OF MMCA IN SOUTH KOREA

1. Bartomeu Mari, the prime candidate for the new director of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA) in South Korea, and the controversy over his censorship

According to press coverage quoting officials in the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST), Bartomeu Mari, who was previously the director of the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; MACBA) and is currently the president of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art (CiMAM) under the International Council of Museums (ICOM), appears to be the leading candidate for the directorship of the MMCA.

As has been widely publicized in the media, fierce debates on Mari's censorship and ethical challenges as a curator are underway. Most recently, three board members of the CiMAM—Charles Esche (Director Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven), Vasil Kortun (Director of Research and Programs, SALT, Istanbul), and Abdellah Karroum (Director of Mathaf, Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha)—resigned from the CiMAM board. In doing so, these three figures demanded Mari's own resignation, declaring in their statement that his prior inappropriate and unethical decision to censor a politically sensitive artwork as the curator-director of the MACBA not only caused the CiMAM to lose credibility, but also violated curatorial and universal ethics. Over this course of events, voices in the international press highly critical of Mari's censorship have spread throughout the global art world.

2. The political censorship of art and the destruction of artistic autonomy and freedom

In recent years, the South Korean government's increasing censorship and bureaucratic restrictions have critically damaged every domestic cultural field. The frequency and number of instances involving restrictions on artistic freedom is nothing short of alarming. Several examples include: the Arts Council Korea (ARKO) not only pre-censoring plays for nuancing local sociopolitical issues, but also recently implementing blacklists and pre-exclusion in the jurying process for funding applications in the fields of theater and literature; the drastic and unwarranted cut in government funding for the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) for the screening of *The Truth Shall Not Sink with [the] Sewol*, a documentary on the truth behind the sinking of the ferry and the government's incompetence, irresponsibility, and corruption regarding its attempts to rescue passengers from the tragically capsized MV Sewol; and the abrupt removal of a politically satirical artwork by Hong Sung-dam, a representative artist of the Minjung art movement, from the special exhibition celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Gwangju Biennale. In addition, the South Korean government's bureaucratic restrictions have severely undermined the fundamental artistic principles of professionalism, autonomy, and immediacy that form the inherent foundation of art practice the world over. In fact, both the government's funding system and its public organs have ceaselessly worked to "tame" artists in the most anti-artist ways possible, placing administration at all times before creativity and freedom.

3. Over 400 petition signatures from artists, curators, and other figures in the art field collected in a half day

Artists, curators, and other figures in the art field who are extremely concerned about the above-described situation have issued the statement, "Our Position on the Appointment of the New Director of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in South Korea." We began to gather signatures online at 1:00 AM on November 10, 2015, and approximately 400 people had participated by 2:00 PM on November 11, 2015. The signature campaign is still underway; as of November 13, 2015, over 650 people have joined the petition. The number of participants continues to grow steadily.

4. Sharing our sense of the grave crisis reflected in the current situation

This is the first time that figures from the South Korean art community have collectively spoken out on the appointment of the director of the MMCA. Indeed, this particular issue reflects the public's awareness of the worsening crisis involving the freedom of expression and art in South Korea in recent years. We demand that both the MMCA and its overseeing body, the MCST, offer plausible explanations regarding the appointment of the new MMCA director and institute full-fledged reforms to protect and foster artistic freedom so they may perform the duties they were originally intended as proponents of the arts. Until the resolution of the issues outlined above, we will continue to take action, and will issue another series of statements to follow this initial statement.*

The Statement and Petition of Korean Art Community

Updated: 12:00 PM, 11/17

A total of 771 figures from the Korean art community have signed the petition.

We have now created the Facebook page "Statement from the Korean Art Community on the Appointment of the Director of the MMCA" and will officially question the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA) and the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) regarding the appointment of the director of the MMCA.

This statement is in the name of everyone who has left his or her signature.

Please show your support through the Facebook page and group as well: <https://www.facebook.com/artist.solidarity>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/petition4art/?fref=ts>

Preparations for additional statements, expressions of our position, and activities will be announced through the Facebook page.

Please direct your questions and suggestions to petition4art@gmail.com.

* Required categories

OUR POSITION ON THE APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW DIRECTOR OF MMCA IN SOUTH KOREA

When news recently broke of the potential appointment of a foreign museum director, many people expressed their opposition to this possibility. But contrary to earlier debates, whether or not the director of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA) is a foreigner or a South Korean is of little importance to the undersigned. It is a matter of course that a suitable appointee to the director position be an individual who, regardless of his or her nationality, is knowledgeable of both South Korea and South Korean art and has a deep understanding of and a wealth of experience with contemporary art in Asia and around the world.

According to press coverage, the prime candidate for the new director of the MMCA in South Korea is Bartomeu Mari (b. 1966), the former director of the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, MACBA). As was widely reported in the media, while serving as MACBA director he cancelled the exhibition "The Beast and the Sovereign" (*La Bestia y el soberano*) immediately before its opening. The purpose of this decision was to prevent the exhibition of *Not Dressed for Conquering/Haute Couture 04 Transport*, a sculpture by Ines Doujak satirizing the Spanish monarchy and critically addressing the relationship between art and power. In addition, as a consequence of this incident, the two curators who prepared the exhibition were summarily dismissed.

Citing the other candidates' "ineligibility" as the reason, the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) has left the position of MMCA director vacant for a year. From a commonsense perspective, it is incomprehensible why the appointment of the new director should be delayed for so long. In addition, if the qualifications really are so strict as to require such a prolonged delay, we cannot help but hold suspect the South Korean government's motives for seeking to appoint as the director of an art museum (that is, an individual responsible for staunchly defending the autonomy of art)—of all people—a figure who is still enmeshed in a controversy regarding censorship. Indeed, as the artist Jorge Ribalta, who participated in "The Beast and the Sovereign" at the time, has written:

"The consortium [governing body of the MACBA] is constituted by three public bodies—the city, the Catalan regional governments, the Spanish State's Ministry of Culture (all of them now under right-wing rule)—and a private foundation, called [the] MACBA Foundation. It just so happens that King Juan Carlos I's wife, the former Queen Sofia, is the Honorary President of the MACBA Foundation and its President, Leopoldo Rodés, is known as being a personal friend of the former King. Mari always declared he had not received any pressures for such cancellation [of the exhibition] from above and that it was his personal decision, but whether or not this is true, the repressive effect is the same: what is the difference between censorship and self-censorship? Obviously, the director's decision was determined one way or another by the impulse to prevent the current ruling oligarchy from public caricature."

Such testimonies arouse deep concerns that Mari's appointment will be decided in the same manner as the voluntary and involuntary censorship that has occurred in public cultural and art agencies in South Korea in recent years. This is because it is difficult to distinguish the controversy surrounding Mari's erratic handling of "The Beast and the Sovereign" from the full-fledged regression to the police state of decades past that is threatening South Korean society at this moment, as reflected in the current administration's censorship, surveillance, and forced implementation of a state-approved textbook.

Indeed, the fact that such concerns have already become our reality in recent years is evident in the South Korean government's mounting censorship of and bureaucratic restrictions on artistic freedom, including, to cite several examples: the drastic and unwarranted cut in government funding for the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) for its screening of *The Truth Shall Not Sink with [the] Sewol*, a documentary examining the government's incompetence, irresponsibility, and corruption in its attempts to rescue passengers from the tragically capsized *MV Sewol* and subsequent suppression of citizens' demands for a full and impartial investigation; the Arts Council Korea (ARKO)'s pre-censoring plays for addressing sensitive sociopolitical issues; and the abrupt removal of a politically satirical work by painter Hong Sung-dam from a special exhibition celebrating the 20-year anniversary of the Gwangju Biennale. In addition, we have witnessed cases, on scales both large and small, of biased financial support and self-censorship affecting a diverse array of public cultural and art organs. We point out the erratic handling of "The Beast and the Sovereign" precisely because we are witnessing not only direct restrictions imposed by institutions of power but also a gradual but thorough infiltration of pre-censorship by civilian experts—i.e., the act of internalizing power and "voluntarily" obeying the authorities, a politics of cronyism. If this state is permitted to continue, art museums will become even "tamer," and the critical imagination of a contemporary art free from the manipulation of power will not even be attempted, much less encouraged.

The premise that makes all discussions on the value of contemporary art possible is the autonomy of art. At this very moment, the autonomy and independence of culture and art are being undermined on a massive scale in South Korean society. Unless we resist this crisis, we may find ourselves soon living in an era that has all but forgotten memories of past humiliation.

We, the undersigned figures from the South Korean art community, thus declare our position on the appointment of the new director of the MMCA:

1. The South Korean MCST and Bartomeu Mari, the leading candidate for the position of MMCA director, must clearly state their official positions on the erratic handling of the exhibition "The Beast and the Sovereign."

2. The South Korean government must cease its bureaucratic cultural administration that impairs the immediacy and freedom of art, and it must immediately facilitate arenas for open discussion, including public hearings on the delayed appointment of the MMCA director and the process and standards for selecting the new director.

3. The South Korean government must fully expand the legitimate independence of public art organs, including the MMCA. The government must provide support, not interference.

4. We strongly oppose all variants of censorship and surveillance that harm the autonomy of art, and we pledge multifaceted, continued efforts to recover the autonomy and independence of art.

*To those outside of Korea who wish to join the petition, please kindly send your name, address and email address to petition4art@gmail.com

***List of 771 figures from the Korean art community who have signed the petition as of 12:00 PM, 11/17/2015**

(Korean alphabetical order in Korean character)

감동환, 강동형, 강민지, 강성원, 강수연, 강영신, 강유나, 강유미, 강은수, 강은엽, 강재원, 강정석, 강진영, 강찬성, 강현아(1), 강현아(2), 강홍구, 고동어(김다정), 고승욱, 고아빈, 고윤정, 고종숙, 고창수, 공도영, 공성훈, 박남신, 박동열, 박이브, 박취곤, 구동희, 구민자, 구민정, 구정아, 구정연, 구현모, 국동완, 권경환, 권기예, 권기환, 권동현, 권세정, 권순관, 권순영, 권순우, 권시우, 권아현, 권여현, 권영지, 권용주, 권은지, 권혁, 권혜원, 권병준, 길선균, 길예경, 김건희, 김경애, 김경호, 김경화, 김경희(1), 김경희(2), 김구루, 김금자, 김기라, 김기수, 김기준, 김나연, 김남시, 김다음, 김도경, 김도균, 김동규, 김동희, 김라연, 김미란, 김미영, 김민엽, 김민호, 김범, 김보경(1), 김보경(2), 김보경(3), 김보람, 김사빈, 김석주, 김상돈, 김석주, 김선옥, 김선화, 김선희, 김설아, 김성렬, 김성수, 김성우, 김세진, 김세진, 김소라, 김소영, 김소철, 김수경, 김수연, 김수환, 김슬기(1), 김슬기(2), 김승덕, 김시습, 김시원, 김시하, 김신재, 김실비, 김아람, 김아영, 김여명, 김연수, 김연용, 김영글, 김영수, 김영옥(1), 김영옥(2), 김영은, 김영중, 김예환, 김용관, 김용익, 김옥, 김월식, 김윤선, 김윤호, 김은정, 김익현, 김인, 김정대(1), 김정대(2) 김정민, 김정복, 김정태, 김정현, 김전화, 김종길, 김종도, 김주현, 김주형, 김준철, 김지영, 김지우, 김지원, 김지평, 김지현, 김지혜, 김지훈, 김진, 김진아, 김진주, 김진하(1), 김진하(2), 김천일, 김청진, 김태균(1), 김태균(2), 김태운, 김태준, 김택상, 김하늬, 김학량, 김한량, 김한은, 김해주, 김허영, 김현정, 김현주, 김현지, 김현진(1), 김현진(2), 김현태, 김형석, 김형준, 김혜경, 김혜원, 김혜진, 김홍범, 김홍석, 김화용, 김한희, 김효선, 김희상, 김희진, 꽃상우, 나종희, 나다, 나무, 남미가, 남민지, 남상수, 남선우, 남수빈, 남예람, 남윤아, 노기훈, 노동식, 노순택, 노아영, 노윤희, 노은주, 노재운, 노정연, 노충현, 노해나, 노혜리, 돈선필, 두눈, 디록 플라이쉬만, 로와정, 류은지, 노원희, 류준, 류충렬, 류한길, 류현미, 류혜민, 류희경, 류희선, 리슨투더시티, 리영, 마리, 맹나현, 맹지영, 문기전, 문성모, 문세린, 문영민, 문이삭, 문인희, 문재원, 문지영, 문혜진, 민경현, 민정 See, 민지훈, 박가은, 박가희, 박경룡, 박규아, 박기민, 박동권, 박동찬, 박미라, 박미주, 박민우, 박보나, 박보마, 박상은, 박석태, 박선운, 박성진, 박소연, 박수민, 박순철, 박승원, 박신영, 박영택, 박은태, 박이원, 박재영, 박재용, 박재휘, 박정원, 박정인, 박정혜, 박종혁, 박준, 박준영, 박준호, 박지아, 박진강, 박진수, 박진아, 박진영, 박진화, 박찬경, 박찬국, 박찬응, 박창서, 박철우, 박충의, 박현정, 박혜민, 박희정, 방혜진, 배미정, 배상윤, 배태량, 배은아, 배한솔, 배희경, 백경원, 백기영, 백수현, 백지혜, 백현진, 변대섭, 변용필, 변현주, 변홍철, 봄로야, 빈진주, 서고운, 서기원, 서버리, 서보경, 서수경, 서이을, 서재민, 서주연, 서하늬, 서현석, 서현수, 서현지, 서희선, 석대범, 석혜영, 성연석, 성원선, 성원호, 성창근, 성호숙, 손기환, 손민지, 손상범, 손수민, 손정은, 손진우(1), 손진우(2), 손향기, 손현선, 손혜민, 송민섭, 송민정, 송민철, 송수빈, 송윤지, 송은영, 송지현, 송진희, 송호준, 송호섭, 송희정, 신동미, 신명진, 신미경, 신민주, 신보슬, 신봉철, 신석호, 신재민, 신지현, 신하순, 신하정, 신현정, 심소미, 심채선, 심현재, 써니킴, 안강현, 안경수, 안광휘, 안규철, 안기혁, 안데스, 안성석, 안소현, 안소희, 안유리, 안현숙(1), 안현숙(2), 안혜경, 양성운, 양아치, 양유연, 양윤화, 양이랑, 양정은, 양주혜, 양철모, 양혜규, 엄도현, 엄선영, 엄유정, 여다함, 연기백, 연미, 엄소진, 오다인, 오민, 오사라, 오석근, 오재우, 오형근, 옥정호, 옹혜련, 우아름, 우윤진, 우정수, 우주연, 우한나, 우현정, 원웅, 위영일, 유대수, 유도영, 유도하, 유록빛,

유성이, 유소라, 유영미, 유재인, 유지원, 유진아, 유현미, 유형주, 윤경희, 윤동구, 윤동희, 윤민화, 윤석만, 윤세영, 윤세화, 윤수희, 윤율리, 윤재민, 윤재희, 윤정선, 윤주경, 윤주성, 윤주희, 윤지선, 윤지영, 윤지원, 윤태준, 윤향로, 윤형민, 윤혜민, 음현정, 이 단, 이 불, 이강현, 이강훈, 이경, 이경은, 이기원, 이다, 이동주(1), 이동주(2), 이득선, 이로경, 이명억, 이문석, 이미경, 이미연, 이미지, 이민아, 이민정, 이민지, 이민혁, 이민휘, 이병재, 이복성, 이복순, 이부록, 이상명, 이상현, 이상홍, 이생강, 이서영, 이선애, 이섬, 이성준, 이성휘, 이성희, 이세준, 이세현, 이소, 이소림, 이소미, 이소요, 이솔, 이수경, 이수성, 이수정, 이수진, 이승린, 이승현, 이아람, 이영욱(1), 이영욱(2), 이영철, 이에림, 이용우, 이용재, 이운구, 이운규, 이원정, 이원호, 이윤희인, 이윤영, 이윤이, 이윤호, 이은솔, 이은영, 이은우, 이은정, 이은철, 이재각, 이재영, 이재욱, 이재원, 이재현, 이재희, 이정민, 이정우, 이정현, 이정훈, 이제, 이종구, 이주영(1), 이주영(2), 이주요, 이주형, 이준옥, 이지아, 이지양, 이지연, 이지용, 이지원, 이지윤, 이지은, 이지혜, 이진아, 이진화, 이초여름, 이충선, 이충렬, 이태호, 이토록, 이해민선, 이현, 이현정, 이형구, 이혜림, 이혜인, 이화평, 이효진, 이훈희, 이희욱, 이희인(1), 이희인(2), 이희재, 이희환, 임경용, 임대식, 임민영, 임민욱, 임성연, 임수식, 임수아, 임옥상, 임유정, 임은빈, 임정수, 임정희, 임홍순, 임희조, 자청, 장근희, 장다해, 장동낙, 장민승, 장성은, 장영주, 장재민, 장종관, 장지아, 장태호, 장현정, 장현준, 장혜진, 장혜진, 장효경, 전다화, 전미래, 전민주, 전상보, 전상준, 전석환, 전영신, 전지은, 전진경, 전진현, 전하영, 전효경, 정덕현, 정명우, 정서영, 정세학, 정수빈, 정승, 정아람, 정영두, 정용국, 정원철, 정윤석, 정윤하, 정은실, 정은영, 정재연, 정지수, 정지영, 정지욱, 정지현, 정직성, 정찬민, 정채나, 정채열, 정채현, 정태희, 정현, 정현아, 정혜주, 정휘윤, 정희승, 조대현, 조미형, 조민아, 조선령, 조성준, 조수원, 조습, 조여진, 조영주, 조용상, 조은비, 조은숙, 조은지(1), 조은지(2), 조익정, 조정연, 조정은, 조종성, 조지영, 조지은, 조해준, 조향미, 조현아, 주연, 주황, 지성은, 진나래, 진보라, 진상태, 진시우, 진철규, 진효선, 진훈, 진희웅, 차재민, 차지량, 채선미, 채영, 채유수, 채은영, 천근성, 최경주, 최고은, 최금수, 최라운, 최병수, 최빛나, 최석태, 최선영(1), 최선영(2), 최설, 최수연, 최수진, 최애경, 최연택, 최연하, 최영, 최영인, 최예원, 최원준, 최유은, 최윤, 최윤정, 최윤희, 최은지, 최재은, 최종익, 최지은, 최지혜, 최진욱, 최찬숙, 최창희, 최춘웅, 최태현, 최태훈, 태이, 하재웅, 한동빈, 한상호, 한석경, 한석경, 한선희, 한성우, 한성원, 한소은, 한숨(숨스페이스), 한영은, 한영희, 한예슬, 한윤아, 한주연, 한지인, 한진, 한행길, 한혜수, 함정식, 허나영, 허달용, 허민희, 허상범, 허수영, 허예슬, 허정인, 허진, 허호신, 현시원, 현옥비, 호경윤, 호상근, 홍경한, 홍광범, 홍남경, 홍성재, 홍송원, 홍영인, 홍이지, 홍이현숙, 홍정표, 홍정혜, 홍준호, 홍진원, 홍철기, 홍태림, 홍한나, 홍혜린, 홍혜인, 활광하, 황광용, 황기엽, 황도현, 황세준, 황승현, 황신혜, 황연주, 황인환, 황진숙, 황진이, 황혜기, 황효덕, 황희승, 흑표범,

Flo Makk, Karima Boudou, Min Ohrichar