

Press Release

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BTS INTRODUCES GLOBAL PUBLIC ART PROJECT: CONNECT, BTS

CONNECTING THE WORLDS OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND MUSIC WITH GLOBAL PROJECT: CONNECT, BTS

ANTONY GORMLEY, TOMÁS SARACENO, ANN VERONICA JANSSENS, JAKOB KUDSK STEENSEN AND YIYUN KANG AMONGST ARTISTS PARTICIPATING IN BERLIN, BUENOS AIRES, LONDON, NEW YORK AND SEOUL

CONNECT, BTS

BTS, the pioneering global superstars from Korea, today introduce **CONNECT, BTS**, a series of major art projects to go on show over the coming months in five cities on four continents, open free to the public. **CONNECT, BTS** crosses geographical borders in a series of projects by different curators who resonated with BTS' philosophy. It will be extensively documented online to reach a wide audience and officially launches on 14 January 2020.

In London, the Serpentine Galleries will present *Catharsis*, a new work by **Jakob Kudsk Steensen**, immersing audiences in a digital simulation of a re-imagined old-growth forest. Set up as a single continuous shot that moves from the watery underground roots to the viewpoint of the canopy, sunlight, wind, moving leaves and water all follow individual timelines and speeds, resulting in a simulated landscape where time takes new forms. This audio-visual work can be experienced at the Serpentine and anywhere around the world via a dedicated website catharsis.live. **14 January – 15 March 2020.**

Gropius Bau in Berlin will present *Rituals of Care*, a series of performance works by over 17 international artists including Jelili Atiku, boychild with Josh Johnson and Total Freedom, Cevdet Ereğ, Marcelo Evelin, Bill Fontana, Maria Hassabi, Mette Ingvarsen with Will Guthrie, Baba Murah and Candomblé Berlin, Antonija Livingstone and Nadia Lauro with Mich Cota, Kennis Hawkins and Stephen Thompson, among others. Curated by Stephanie Rosenthal and Noémie Solomon, the performance programme spans through experimental choreography, healing practices, sonic environments, moving landscapes, and collective gatherings. Together, these interdisciplinary works and practices explore the necessary conditions for coming together and tending to environments, to physical and spiritual worlds and to other beings. **15 January – 2 February 2020.**

The Argentinian artist **Tomás Saraceno** will present *Fly with Aerocene Pacha*. For the first time in history, a human being will float into the sky powered only by the sun and the air we breathe, without fossil fuels, solar panels, batteries or helium. A synthesis of art, science and environmental activism, *Aerocene Pacha* will launch in Salinas Grandes, Argentina's great salt lake. This work also stands in solidarity with the indigenous communities there, whose land has been despoiled by lithium mining. This ambitious project will set several world records for fully solar, human free flight. *Fly with Aerocene Pacha* on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/aerocene) and [online](http://aerocene.com). The resulting film will be shown in Buenos Aires until 22

March. **21 January – 22 March 2020.**

Zaha Hadid's Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), Seoul's newest and most iconic landmark, will be the location for two major public exhibitions: British-born artist **Ann Veronica Janssens** will create *Green, Yellow, Pink*, a mysterious disorienting sensory environment filled with a haze of coloured artificial mist, giving sculptural form to light. Korean artist **Yiyun Kang** will present *Beyond the Scene*, a digital environment on a large-scale, a reimagining of BTS' signature dance movements as seen through the techniques of projection mapping. **28 January – 20 March 2020.**

New York's Brooklyn Bridge Park Pier 3 will be the site of the creation of a vast 'drawing in space' by internationally acclaimed British artist **Antony Gormley**. *New York Clearing* (2020) is a single line made up of 18 kilometres of square aluminium tubing that loops and coils without beginning or end, turning itself into an environment for the viewer that counters the grid of modernism and the city with swooping lines of energy. **4 February – 27 March 2020.**

CONNECT, BTS has been developed by a group of international curators under the artistic direction of independent Korean curator, Daehyung Lee:

Daehyung Lee, Art Director, CONNECT, BTS (Korea and Buenos Aires)
Stephanie Rosenthal, Director, Gropius Bau (Berlin)
Noemie Solomon, Independent Curator, Gropius Bau (Berlin)
Ben Vickers, Chief Technology Officer, Serpentine Galleries (London)
Kay Watson, Digital Curator, Serpentine Galleries (London)
Thomas Arnold, Principal, Alta Art Production (New York)

"It is a great honour to participate in CONNECT, BTS with such renowned artists and curators from all over the world," said BTS. The band further added, "We speak different languages and come from multiple cultural backgrounds and have lived through unique life experiences. Contemporary art and music are also two different worlds. This project is especially meaningful to us because it truly represents diversity and creates a collective, positive message for the world that we value. Through this project, we hope to return the great amount of love and support from our fans, ARMY, and all audiences."

Art Director Daehyung Lee also commented, "The projects and contemporary artists assembled for CONNECT, BTS offer diverse responses to the world around us. With such powerful message and direction they have taken, BTS has become a global group worth noting among global contemporary artists. BTS' philosophy in the form of support for diversity, and love and care for the periphery is an important motif of the project. The significance of art, whether it consists of sound, sculpture, photography or another medium, is its innate potential to forge a relationship between artist, viewer, the immediate environment, and the atmosphere which encircles and extends far beyond. This project will encourage appreciation of diversities and establish ground for great new synergies to be born."

Audiences visiting the exhibitions will be able to access special artwork introduction videos recorded by BTS. These clips can be accessed via the CONNECT, BTS official website (www.connect-bts.com) by clicking on "Secret Docent".

#CONNECT_BTS

www.connect-bts.com

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For media access to downloadable images and video materials, go to: <https://bit.ly/2TjIwTz>

Notes to Editors:**About CONNECT, BTS**

CONNECT, BTS is a global initiative developed in collaboration with curators from five major cities—London, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Seoul and New York. The ultimate goal of the project is to connect individuals across the world as they reevaluate their present circumstances, attitudes, and potentialities. CONNECT, BTS draws motifs from parts of BTS' philosophy that center around diversity, love and care for the periphery. By connecting with 22 contemporary artists, BTS is creating the opportunity for a fruitful and democratic cross-pollination between the worlds of rarefied visual art and pop music. This project adds support for contemporary art to their practice, setting ground for great new synergies.

About BTS

BTS, an acronym of Bangtan Sonyeondan or "Beyond the Scene", is a South Korean boyband that has been capturing the hearts of millions of fans globally since their debut in June 2013. The members of BTS are RM, Jin, SUGA, j-hope, Jimin, V and Jung Kook. Gaining recognition from their authentic, self-produced music and top-notch performances to the way they interact with their fans, the band has established themselves as global superstars breaking countless world records. While imparting a positive influence through activities such as the LOVE MYSELF campaign and the UN 'Speak Yourself' speech, BTS has mobilized millions of fans across the world (named ARMY), topped prominent music charts, sold out worldwide tours including stadiums and has been named as one of TIME 100: The Most Influential People of 2019. The band has also been recognized with numerous prestigious awards like the Billboard Music Awards and American Music Awards.

Daehyung Lee

Daehyung Lee is the Director of Hzone. He has been on the jury for the Ars Electronica Festival's STARTS Prize since 2018 and served as the art director of Hyundai Motor Company for the last six years connecting Tate, LACMA, MMCA, and Bloomberg. He was the curator for the Korean Pavilion for Venice Biennale 2017 and artistic advisor to the interdisciplinary playground ZER01NE in 2018, and Korea Research Fellow in 2018 and 2019.

About the artists:

Jakob Kudsk Steensen (b.1987, Denmark)

Jakob Kudsk Steensen is a Danish artist concerned with how imagination, technology, and ecology intertwine. In a practice that emphasizes field work and collaboration, Kudsk Steensen develops virtual reality and video installations that invite viewers into new ecological realities.

Antony Gormley (b.1950, England)

Antony Gormley is widely acclaimed for his sculptures, installations and public artworks that investigate the relationship of the human body to space. His work has developed the potential opened up by sculpture since the 1960s through a critical engagement with both his own body and those of others in a way that confronts fundamental questions of where human beings stand in relation to nature and the cosmos. Gormley continually tries to identify the space of art as a place of becoming in which new behaviours, thoughts and feelings can arise.

Tomás Saraceno (b.1973, Argentina)

Multidisciplinary artist Tomás Saraceno's floating sculptures and interactive installations propose new, sustainable ways of inhabiting the environment. The artist develops engaging proposals and models that invite viewers to conceptualize innovative means of human and environmental coexistence.

Ann Veronica Janssens (b.1956, UK/Brussels)

Ann Veronica Janssens explores the sensory experience of reality, suggesting that all perception is fragile at best. By investigating the properties of space, light, radiant colour, and translucent or reflective surfaces, Janssens destabilizes and disrupts ideas about materiality.

Yiyun Kang (b.1982, Korea)

Yiyun Kang explores the intersection of art, technology, and experience, generating immersive projection-mapped environments. The moving images of her installed works explore a symbiotic relationship between hybrid imagery, spatial narrative, and space unexplored by conventional screens.

Artists participating in the project *Rituals of Care* at Gropius Bau, Berlin: **Jelili Atiku, boychild** with **Josh Johnson** and **Total Freedom**, **Pan Daijing**, **Cevdet Ereğ**, **Marcelo Evelin**, **Bill Fontana**, **Maria Hassabi**, **Mette Ingvartsen** with **Will Guthrie**, **Baba Murah** and **Candomblé Berlin**, **Antonija Livingstone** and **Nadia Lauro** with **Mich Cota**, **Kennis Hawkins**, **Stephen Thompson** and others.

CONNECT, BTS: Five Cities, Twenty-Two Artists

Curatorial Statement, Daehyung Lee

CONNECT, BTS is an international initiative developed in collaboration with curators from five major cities—London, Berlin, New York, Buenos Aires, and Seoul. The ultimate goal of the project is to connect individuals across the world as they reevaluate their present circumstances, attitudes, and potentialities. By allying themselves with contemporary artists, BTS is creating the opportunity for a fruitful and democratic cross-pollination between the worlds of rarefied visual art and pop music, thereby promoting more innovative and effective approaches to social justice and well-being.

What connects BTS with their artist counterparts in this global collaboration? The definition of empathy encompasses not only identification with another person; it also describes an imaginative and intuitive approach to objects or works of art, discovering in them attitudes or inclinations present or nascent in oneself. The group of contemporary artists assembled for this project offer diverse responses to the world around us. The extraordinary significance of art, whether it consists of sound, sculpture, photography or another medium, is its innate potential to forge a relationship between artist, viewer, the immediate environment, and the atmosphere which encircles and extends far beyond all of them, back into the past and onwards into the future: a resonant, connective experience. The works of art are strikingly different, yet they share with each other, and with BTS, a deliberate porousness, and a realization of the possibility of seeing the world differently.

Argentinian artist Tomás Saraceno, for example, envisions interdisciplinary art and communal living projects that have an ethical and sustainable relationship to the future. Often involving scientists and activists, Saraceno's oeuvre could be interpreted as a kind of ongoing research informed simultaneously by the worlds of art, architecture, natural sciences, astrophysics, and engineering; his floating sculptures, community works and interactive installations suggest new, sustainable ways of inhabiting and sensing the environment. *Fly with Aerocene Pacha* is an open-source community project to create an aerosolar sculpture. Filled only with air, the sculpture floats thanks to the sun warming its interior without the use of helium, hydrogen, solar panels, batteries or burners. Flying for the first time without a tether, *Fly with Aerocene Pacha* can take humans on a free journey, buoyed only by the influence of sun and wind. The project description makes clear its ambitions and the extent of its vision: "Aerocene seeks to open up the imagination towards an emergent cloudscape, un-tethering a new era of planetary attunement, restoring the thermodynamic balance of the Earth, free from borders, free from fossil fuels." As such, *Fly with Aerocene Pacha* is as utopian in impulse as BTS's attempt to change entrenched attitudes on a global scale; viewed in the context of a saturated world, both reach in different ways for an experience of blithe detachment—a sense of floating above it all, sublime in its freedom from dependence on existing structures.

In contrast, the work of British artist Anthony Gormley mines the core of human existence, turning sculpture into a critical exploration of the body not as an object, but as a site of accumulated experience through which all human beings can begin to question, understand, and reframe their relationship to others, nature, and the cosmos. "When it comes to the body," Gormley has said, "any notion of 'me' or 'mine' is simply an inaccurate reflection of the fact that we are all part of bigger systems, the truth of which we will never know." Gormley's monumental sculpture *New York Clearing* is a single line made of 18 kilometers of metal tubing that loops and coils, turning itself into an environment that elicits the participation of viewers who in turn become essential to the realization of the work. Our perception of the world and ourselves is radically defamiliarized and reconfigured by this piece; lying somewhere between an object and a drawing, Gormley's sculpture involves the

viewer physically in its disruptive dynamic.

Focused keenly on the relationship between mankind and nature, Danish artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen describes his primary interest in terms of “how we psychologically and emotionally relate to the climate.” Kudsk Steensen’s complex practice explores the intersection of imagination, technology and ecology through immersive virtual reality ecosystems and mixed reality installations that bridge the physical and digital worlds. His research-based projects enlist the collaboration of NGOs, scientists, and local practitioners to collect data on the natural world. *Catharsis* is a virtual rendition of an old-growth forest in which the sun, leaves, water, and mists follow individual timescales. The work is based on field work undertaken by the artist and sound engineer Matt McCorkle, who capture 3D textures and sounds in North American forests. Through immersive installations such as this, Kudsk Steensen creates an environment through which viewers can redefine their relationship to nature.

Where Kudsk Steensen responds to the natural world against a backdrop of anthropogenic climate change, British-born artist Ann Veronica Janssens focuses on the synthetic interplay between light, space, and radiant color—particularly as this unfolds on translucent and reflective surfaces. Through diverse play with the properties of matter, such as fluidity, refraction, glossiness, she aims to reveal the unreliability of our sensory apparatus as well as the arbitrariness of our temporal-spatial anchor points. Janssens’ approach creates an experience of fragility, doubt, and loss of control that opens viewers to a philosophical inquiry on the body’s ability to operate as a conduit to truth and knowledge. Despite this, the effects of her work—which uses only simple materials—go beyond a purely cognitive process of analysis. They also trigger affective and complex psychological responses, generating revelation from states of wonder and disorientation.

Rituals of Care, curated by Stephanie Rosenthal and Noémie Solomon, is a powerful testimony to diversity and multiculturalism, raising questions about agency in the contemporary moment. The exhibition focuses on reconfiguring relations between human beings and other creatures, taking in both the physical and spiritual worlds through choreography. The exhibition program features a wide-ranging group of artists including Jelili Atiku, boychild with Josh Johnson and Total Freedom, Pan Daijing, Cevdet Erek, Marcelo Evelin, Bill Fontana, Maria Hassabi, Mette Ingvartsen with Will Guthrie, Baba Murah and Candomblé Berlin, Antonija Livingstone and Nadia Lauro with Mich Cota, Kennis Hawkins and Stephen Thompson. These artists’ performances will present visceral bodily experiences capable of conveying what is unseen and incommunicable through images or verbal language. Both individually and as a group, their work explores the human body as a site for political struggle and as a mode of being and responding to the world with an emphasis on fluidity, experimentation, sensuality, and togetherness.

The work of these and the other artists collaborating on this project together with BTS convenes on an aim to uncover forms and values with universal relevance. Explicitly through their participation and implicitly through discrete works of art and music, they share a desire to transcend the specificities of time and place in the hopes of advancing humanity towards a more just and harmonious society.

Through their pioneering music, which has opened up a space for self-expression and confidence for an audience of millions worldwide, BTS has created a movement. Their ability to speak meaningfully to people of different cultural backgrounds, social classes, ethnicities, genders, and identities speaks in turn to modern art’s long-standing goal to transcend imagined boundaries, breaking through, creating new expressive space. Picture a concert with thousands of fans moving in unison, each in their own world yet part of a collective experience. Amplified across five cities, riding the momentum of the group’s following, creative effort gains new publics, new dimensions, on which we might be borne along into a new era. It will be quite a ride.