

Jeonnam International Sumuk Biennale 2025

Neighbors in Civilization: Somewhere Over the Yellow Sea

Aug 30 — Oct 31, 2025 | Mokpo Culture & Arts Center, Jeollanam-do, South Korea

Jeonnam International Sumuk Biennale is the only biennale in the world dedicated to exploring East Asian identity through the contemporary language of Sumuk (ink painting). Launched in 2018, the biennale takes place in the southwestern province of Jeollanam-do, Korea, and reimagines Sumuk, rooted in the aesthetics of East Asian brush and ink traditions, not as a static cultural heritage, but as a living, evolving medium for global artistic dialogue.

Rather than simply preserving tradition, the biennale invites artists from across the world to engage with Sumuk as a conceptual and material practice that resonates with questions of memory, place, temporality, and transformation. By bridging past and present, local and global, it aims to shape a new aesthetic discourse grounded in the cultural sensibilities of East Asia while speaking to the urgencies of the contemporary world.

Now in its fourth edition, the Jeonnam International Sumuk Biennale 2025 is the world's only biennale dedicated to exploring East Asian identity through the evolving language of Sumuk (ink painting). Since its inception in 2018, the Biennale has reimagined Sumuk not as a static cultural heritage but as a dynamic, living medium for global artistic dialogue.

The 2025 edition—Neighbors in Civilization: Somewhere over the Yellow Sea—turns its gaze to the maritime cultural networks of East Asia, particularly those shaped by the Yellow Sea. Traversing tradition and experimentation, philosophy and materiality, the Biennale weaves past and present into a multilayered exhibition unfolding across Korea's southern coastal region.

The 2025 edition of the Jeonnam International Sumuk Biennale reimagines East Asia not as a monolithic cultural block but as a fluid, multinuclear civilization—a network of distinct yet interconnected centers shaped by maritime exchange across the Yellow Sea.

Departing from land-based civilizational hierarchies, this theme foregrounds the sea as a site of movement, proximity, and mutual influence. Rather than seeking a singular axis of identity, it embraces plurality, hybridity, and co-existence as grounds for rethinking East Asia and the global contemporary. It asks not only what it means to consider “the West as the other,” but also how East Asia itself may be reconsidered—not as a singular cultural origin, but as a constellation of neighbors in motion.