

on **ARTHUB ASIA's**  
Collaborative Intelligence

**2007-2012**

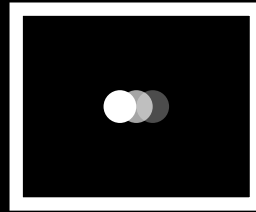
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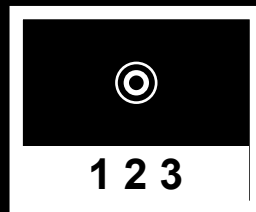
**THE**  
**MAKING**  
**OF**  
**MEETING**



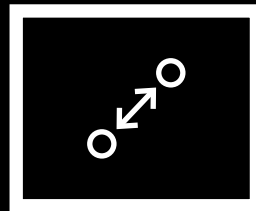
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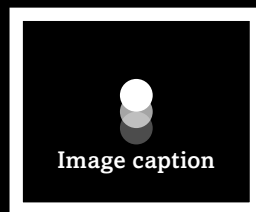
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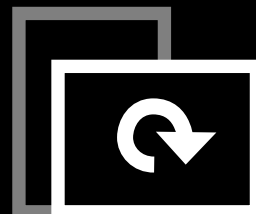
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**In August 2009, cultural practitioners from around Asia and their Arthub Asia-instigated, match-made peers from the rest of the world came together to discuss and reflect on the dynamic, ongoing echoes of the now-defunct Silk Road trading route and its multiple dimensions. As a four-day symposium, THE MAKING OF THE NEW SILK ROADS aimed to reassess the complex interconnections within Asia's cultural and artistic spectrum at the beginning of the 21st century.**

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**This book summarizes the concerns and thoughts the symposium participants shared, while reflecting on the performative format of meeting that the symposium aimed to be. By extension, it serves as a memento of what its initiator ARTHUB ASIA - a not-for-profit multi-disciplinary platform of curatorial and artistic experimentation - has achieved in its first five year of existence.**

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**The book appears in 4 chapters looking into the personalities, scenography, performance and documentation behind the alternative scheme of meeting that was put to the test in Bangkok and lies at the core of ARTHUB ASIA activities in Asia and world-wide.**

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—

**THE**  
**MAKING**  
**OF**  
**MEETING**

AN ARTIST WHO CANNOT SPEAK  
ENGLISH IS NO ARTIST









# Preface

Arthub Asia has positioned itself in a fragile yet important environment since its inception in 2007. It has not only thrived by participating in global knowledge flows and connected locality with the global picture, but also remained critical by simultaneously connecting and facilitating this locality within and to locality, from person to person, mind to mind, across Asia. In this capacity, Arthub Asia became a proxy, an experiment for local and global minds to connect freely and move wherever their imaginations and creative impulses take them, while at the same time pooling some degree of global authority on Asia's visual art spectrum. With his in mind, Arthub Asia has orchestrated collaboration through research, workshops, exhibitions, productions and publications.

As the culmination of a three year journey in partnership with the Prince Claus Fund, more than thirty prominent artists, curators, writers, academics, and other cultural practitioners from around Asia and their Arthub Asia-instigated, match-made peers from the rest of the world, gathered in Bangkok in august 2009 to discuss and reflect on the dynamic, ongoing echoes of the now-defunct trading route Silk Road and its multiple dimensions. A four-day symposium titled "The Making Of the New Silk Roads" aimed to reassess the complex interconnections within Asia's cultural and artistic spectrum at the beginning of the 21st century.

The name of the symposium carried in itself a kind of a tension and contradiction. Obviously, the "new" and the historical notion of Silk Road represent two very different realities. Instead of questioning the overarching title however, all participants had one goal in mind: to share and to provoke. Each member of Arthub Asia's extended network of trusted individuals agreed to be there and to use the gathering - to kick off, motivate, enable/disable, initiate, invent, imbed, support, engage in a dedicated platform of sheer intellec-

tual transaction, knowledge production, self-positioning and emotional exchange. What resulted was exactly this: recent research paths were shared and new patterns, potentially productive, charted without inhibition.

Following this significant meeting, this publication raises the following questions: how do we further the possibilities within our network and develop models that will carry cultural production into the next decades? If we are to choose, what are the aspects that we want to carry forward and leave behind? If we are shifting from a world where the key source of advantage was in protecting knowledge within a given set of knowledge stocks, into a world in which participation in knowledge flows becomes more valuable, then how can we effectively connect with more engaged and inspired partners who are creating, producing, renewing or possessing new knowledge?

Defne Ayas & Davide Quadrio  
*Co-directors, Arthub Asia*

January 2012





## WE ARE NOT PROFESSIONALS

### HAKAN TOPAL

“We are not professionals” but this does not mean that we are incompetent, unskilful or clumsy. It does not mean that we are hobbyists or ‘Sunday painters’. We are not professionals, because we are not in the business of packaging, distributing, selling, and buying. If being a pro is about making money in exchange for a product or a service, being an amateur is about passion in pursuit of pleasure.

Many artists have suggested that professionalized sex is comparable to professionalized art. The intersecting domains of a restricted economy [the economy of buying and selling] and a general economy [the economy of desire] outline an unworkable unity as an impossible marriage. It is an impossibility because, first, business wants to control and restrict any flows by subsuming it under market rules, while desire can only exist uninterrupted, freely flowing and undisciplined. Second, as opposed to a restricted economic order, in a general economy the more you spend the richer you get, the more you invest the less debt you own.

For example, a sex worker makes love

in exchange for money but s/he does not love for money. A lover is, on the contrary, a total amateur; capital does not signify anything as being in love is about sexual attraction, sensuality, and the sensibility of the other. One has to simply love in order to have love and no other condition is necessary to fulfil its requirements as there is no accumulation of love, it happens when it is spent. In this regard, when a sex worker loves, s/he has to give up earning money through the act of sex and become an amateur by rejecting his/her professionalism for a time.

A lover can be silly, outraged, confused, paralyzed, and obsessed. Conversely, a professional, an ideal type, has to conduct their work by specific rules of conduct, which are established according to the notion of a restricted economy defined externally by institutionalized frameworks. Professionalization requires specific subjectivation processes to accomplish the job’s requirements beyond just learning the secrets of the trade. This specific disciplining of the body functions as a performative repositioning according to institutional structures. Repetitive training aims to

transform the whole body. Once the body learns how to function, everything is exercised automatically. Professionalization is a total pursuit including how the words are uttered, discourses are developed and behavioural patterns are shaped. In short, a profession is an institutionalized practice, which produces forms and structures, therefore value.

Here I need to make a clear distinction: we should not confuse performativity with theatrical performance. Theatricality implies that there is a stage, back stage, an audience, an outside, and a real life beyond the visible. Stage analogy is based on the concept of a social sphere composed of visible/invisible and real/unreal. Contrary to these binary oppositions, professionalization aims for a complete overhauling of life, no hidden domain exists beyond the visible and the performative presence is reality. Becoming a pro is the process of constantly reformatting, reconditioning, and reshaping the body. A professional, such as a lawyer, doctor, fire fighter or architect is defined according to its rules of conduct in addition to social cultural dispositions associated to the job. The exceptions to jobs overall requirements can only exist as variations tolerated by the practice itself.

My aim here is not to discredit professionalism; there is nothing wrong with selling services. In one way or another we all have to work and are subjected to external power dynamics exercised

directly on our bodies. Our question needs to be specifically reformulated in regard to the constitutive potentials of the artistic field. The question is the most general one; is it still possible to seek a “line of escape”? From elementary school to university, from hospital to courthouse, from factory to prison, our bodies are disciplined by series of discursive configurations. If the total submission of life under a capitalist order is indicative of recent restructuring of societies, how can an alternative model work without being destined to failure? One can only hope that art has the potential to cut through pre-defined class dispositions and to raise diverse questions.

However, let's start once again, “we are not professionals”; this does not mean that we are naive. It is apparent that art plays a major role in the justification of the re-feudalization of society. Artists, curators and dealers position themselves so that they can engage with the wealthy and powerful few situated at the top of the food chain. Artists make appearances at art fairs and engage with their collectors. These events are staged by and for those who can collect, store, and benefit from this closed circuit. When collectors become part of the intellectual dialogue the nature of the production is subsumed under a capitalist re-valuation process. But our difficulty is not the artists who are selling out to this “system”. We have to understand that any attack on “selling artists” are made on relatively moral grounds, similar to society's disapproval of

sex workers. This kind of attack is weak and dilutes the real structural inequalities in societies. Limiting our argument only to the supply-side hides the real mechanisms of the whole construction of demand and supply as a system.

“We are not professionals” is a rejection of the models that are presented by the neo-liberal institutional system, in which education plays a big part in producing required mobile exploitable subjectivities. Many art programs produce artist/curator types who are mute, reserved and presentable radicals. Since these programs are considered and function more like launching pads for commercial enterprises, artists are becoming extremely cautious, politically correct and relatively well behaved.

In addition to the rejection of capitalist circulation and the re-evaluation process, we need to be aware of the fact that culture is increasingly dominated mostly by the Anglo-Saxon model of cultural institutions. In this regard, “An Artist Who Cannot Speak English Is No Artist”, a conceptual piece by Mladen Stilinović, highlights the art world’s inability to cope with a truly multi-cultural world. Stilinović asserts that in order to function in the contemporary art scene an artist must circulate within an international arena by utilizing commonly expected norms and when s/he fails to do so they are ignored. Stilinović’s critique is particularly poignant, as it also highlights the art world’s inability to see beyond a discursive articulation

of art. If an artist cannot speak English, they cannot apply to exhibitions, funding and correspond with curators and so on. Obviously artistic expression is not bound by the use of language but it is clear that the ability to function within institutional circles depends on this specific professional articulation. If an artist does not fit to “western standards”, s/he will not be recognized as an artist and this is why most non-western artists who work on an international level are actually educated within western educational systems.

Obviously there are many alternatives to conventional market-driven art fairs and establishments. Conferences, symposia and meetings are important parts of artistic intellectual exchange as they serve a vital role in establishing new connections, forming collaborations and developing new ideas. But when these meetings become another venue for self-promotion, the space for salient engagement is usually hijacked by descriptive Power Point presentations composed of endless installation shots. Alongside this, we usually listen to an artist speaking in English and justifying their work through various typical statements, mostly focusing on particularly personal experiences, etc. This attitude is the exact opposite of artistic practice because art requires giving up clichés, developing new approaches, and being experimental.

Generally speaking, art dwells on impossibilities and is an infinite oscillation between knowing, not knowing, under-



standing, not understanding, meaning and non-meaning. Its constitutive powers come from the playful and unpredictable character of this ambiguity. When Arthub Asia curators Defne Ayas and Davide Quadrio proposed a performative symposium, it was a call to rethink the possibility of creating a new form of engagement between different subjectivities situated all over the world. The outcome was for the most part refreshing and it was an active re-evaluation of current conditions in the Asian continent. Giving up dominant models of presentations, and rethinking the performative aspects of artistic engagement was aligned with the experimental nature of our practice.

The “performative symposium” provided a unique opportunity to develop distinctive forms of engagement with each other’s work, something that we are missing in conventional cultural institutions, art fairs and so on. Rethinking the exhibition space as an elementary school classroom asserted that we better have a stimulating connection with the world as students. A classroom setting implies a direct power relationship between the school (institution) and the learning subjects and it has its problems as a model for alternative engagement. However, in order to develop a democratic encounter with one another it constituted an alternative public space,

where the public could join and discuss the issues at hand.

The main issue addressed in the symposium was the possibility of “the making of the new silk roads”. Curators put this forward as a territorial statement by posing a series of questions prior to the conference, which suggested that we imagine a terrain characterized by the condition for new possibilities. In fact, on the one hand the lack of commercial support provides an opportunity as our expression is not regulated by capitalist circulation and professionalized articulations, and as artists this forces us to operate solely as public intellectuals. On the other hand, we are all aware of the fact that Asia is full of semi-democratic or dictatorial governments defined by strict national borders, in direct opposition to the semi-fluidity of the original silk roads, and we are living in conditions where, for the most part, expression is mediated and extreme power is exercised on citizens of the continent. In that respect “we are not professionals” is a declaration that we will proceed with our amateur desires and pursue our alternative interests. Instead of crying for commercial infrastructure and support, we need to activate alternative networks by utilizing given conditions strategically and efficiently.









## COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE

In the last few years, Arthub Asia has exploded, imploded, cracked open borders of artistic communication across Asia, created micro connections that not only open up to unexpected collaborations but also injected the doubt about “borders” as inevitable barriers for understanding, thus reached great degrees of heights as well as fragilities. Arthub has become a catapulted effect and the sum of all parts and partners in its impact, and as a genuine expression of Asia's realities; it certainly countered the values of rigidly defined curatorial systems. From its outset on, it aimed at becoming a productive merger of unstable variables at play in Asian art scene, and without the artists and independent thinkers who gathered at this symposium, this would not have been possible.

## Davide Quadrio

Davide Quadrio grew up in the suburbs of Milan, in a village close to Gallarate, a small industrial town in Northern Italy. It was a boring, shabby place not far from the Malpensa airport, at the centre of various scandals as a smuggling hub. Hard-working Catholics made the town into a notorious rightist conservative stronghold and the Lega Lombarda was founded here in the 80s. Davide's parents, however, occupied the opposite stretch of the political spectrum and raised him and his brother in a house where the doors were never locked and extremism was approached with great criticism.

At the age of 11, Davide started organizing independent student meetings to evaluate the school system or simply discuss problems in the class. School provided decent education, but in a conservative environment, and was populated by a strange mix of Catholics and rightist Bourgeoisie. He would soon get involved with a group of people from outside school and with them he initiated all kinds of art projects. Even though their interventions were often politically charged, and definitely of a critical nature, they did not serve as acts of rebellion but rather as a negotiation with the authorities and local community to provide them with a context for their creativity and criti-

cality. One year, they were invited to 'design' the crib in church. They decided not to use human figures but newspapers, from which they took sentences and images related to Catholic values. The priest eventually censored them.

Before moving to Venice to enter university, Davide had hardly left his hometown. He only spoke Italian, and decided to first take a 3-month crash course in English in London. At that time, leaving town was considered something highly exceptional, so the rumour went that he was addicted to drugs. Davide had developed a fascination for the history of (traditional) art in high school and at university embarked on a degree in East Asian art, with a focus on Indian and Chinese-Tibetan architecture, as well as, Chinese language, in Venice, a place immersed in art, both classical and contemporary.

In 1991, Davide arrived in Shanghai, whose major transformations were still to take place, to continue his studies in Chinese at Tongji University. There were three other European students and 200 Africans coming from different parts of their continent. This was only the first of a series of study trips to China. In 1993, he ended up in Lanzhou, a desolate city on the road to Tibet to

do research on the reconstruction of the Tibetan Labrang monastery after its demolition during the Cultural Revolution, the topic on which he eventually wrote his thesis.

Upon his return to Italy, Davide did his compulsory social service in Milan before making his (final) move to China, first with a university assignment and eventually he touched ground in with his own projects in Shanghai. In 1998, he founded BizArt, later joined by Chinese artist Xu Zhen, one of the very first non-profit art centres and artistic production platforms in China that would remain on the forefront of the Shanghai art scene for over ten years. One year later, Davide met the love of his life. He got married and two beautiful daughters were born.

Under BizArt's flag, Davide fundamentally rethought possible fund-

ing strategies for the arts without losing artistic integrity, and repeatedly anticipated the international art scene steaming to China often with unrealistic expectations, sometimes even with doubtful agenda's. Over and over again, he manoeuvred himself into the centre of debate in and on Chinese contemporary art, and on the role and responsibility, the threats and opportunities of international exchange schemes. He has done so not only in words, but also in action.

This has required perseverance, commitment, demanding survival strategies, but above all, true passion. Davide is never satisfied with simple answers and sees a burden as a hurdle to jump. Often chaotic, not always the biggest realist but above all, a real people-person and a pure family man.

## Agung Hujatnikajennong

Agung Hujatnika, a.k.a Agung Hujatnikajennong, was born in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia, in 1976. Tasikmalaya is one of the strongest bases for Islamic teaching in Java. Historically, various Islamic movements have shaped the city, including The Islamic Army of Indonesia (DI/TII) that fought for the realization of an Islamic state at the end of the 50s. Agung's parents are

both very religious. They often had no clue of what he was up to, especially when Agung decided to study art. They would only slowly start to understand what he was doing later on.

Agung literally lived through the diverse cultural patchwork that Indonesia represents, growing up in different parts of the country. The



first 15 years of his life he spent in Batang, Central Java, before moving to Tasikmalaya, his parents' hometown to enter high school. He relocated once again, this time to Bandung, to enter the Faculty of Art and Design of the Bandung Institute of Technology. He has been living in Bandung since, where he is currently writing his PhD. As a result, he speaks both Javanese and Sundanese, two entirely different local languages, linked to entirely different cultural systems.

Even though Agung worked as a practicing artist, he gradually expanded his artistic practice into a curatorial one. He currently focuses on teaching, writing and curating. Since 2001 Agung has been the curator of Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, a non-profit cultural centre in Band-

ung. He carried out curatorial residencies in Australia and Japan, and has lectured and curated shows in Indonesia and internationally. Among other shows he has curated are solo exhibitions of Indonesian contemporary artists, such as Agus Suwage, Handiwirman Saputra, Heri Dono, Tisna Sanjaya, and Jompet Kuswidananto. He curated the main exhibition of the 2009 Jakarta Biennale, "Fluid Zones". Agung has also worked closely with artist-run initiative, ruangrupa, including for the OK Video Festival (2003 and 2005), and recently "ruru and friends", a big survey show to commemorate their 10th anniversary (2010).

Agung is married and has two children. Home is where his family feels happy.

## Agung Kurniawan

Agung Kurniawan was born as the son of the director of a chocolate plantation in Jember, East Java, in 1968. In the sixties, Java's plantations formed the heartlands of Communism. Most of the workers were Communists, but higher ranked employees, including Agung's father, were Nationalists. In 1965, his hometown witnessed one of the bloodiest Communist member massacres in Java. A lot of people got murdered, which has been a taboo ever since.

Agung suspects his father was involved one way or another, but he never mentioned a word about it.

Growing up, Agung and his sisters and brothers often moved from city to city. His parents lived at the plantations located in the jungle; the children stayed in the closest city at a Catholic boarding school. He had a carefree youth, was pampered by several maids, enjoyed his time in school where he was the leader of the

pack, and shared a traditional love-hate relationship with his parents.

After he finished high school, Agung Kurniawan enrolled in the Faculty of Culture at the Government University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. As an archaeology student he was involved in a discussion group on art, politics and culture, which approached art as an alternative medium to share progressive thoughts. This discussion group planted the seeds for Agung's decision to eventually quit university and move on to art school. He did not finish his study at the Indonesian Institute for the Arts, but this would not let him from slowly but surely establishing himself as an artist.

Agung Kurniawan's artistic practice is mainly concerned with violence and oppression. He has a strong political awareness – he for example openly protested the Suharto regime. However, his work displays a wider interest into socio-cultural topics such as the automation of society, taboos, heritage, youth culture and sexuality, topics that he examines with a fierce criticality. He describes himself as an artist, curator and art provocateur.

Agung declares he has a tendency to be moody. His home alternates between his studio and his house; what drives him in life switches between love, and art.

## Alexander Ugay

Alexander Ugay belongs to a family of Kazakhstani-Koreans that were deported to Central Asia from the Far East in the 30s by Stalin's forces. He grew up in Kyzylorda, a small Soviet town in the South of Kazakhstan. After highschool, he studied in the St. Petersburg Nautical College, before graduating from Law School in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. His parents decided this for him.

During his studies, he founded the 'Bronepoezd' ('an armored train') collective with artist Roman Maskalev. That was 2000. The collective produces 'cinema-objects' in the

form of short film parables and performances, recorded on 16 mm film by old film cameras manufactured during the Soviet period. The whole process of development and montage is carried out manually, with an unpredictable film quality as a result. The most recent works of the collective deal with the actualization of the Soviet Union's inheritance carry a thin coating of 'new romanticism'.

Since 2002, Alexander Ugay lives in Almaty. He works in photography and video, and conducts different research projects, by himself, in partnership with the 'Bronepo-



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ezd' collective, or with other artists. Sometimes he organizes research expeditions, to the Aral Sea for example, where his family is originally from. When his family was living in Aralsk and the Aral Sea had not yet dried up, his grandfather was the captain of a ship. Therefore, he compiled video-novels about the Aral Sea and made 'holy performances' dedicated to the memory of his grandfather. His work has been exhibited around the globe, including

the Van Abbe Museum and the New Museum, as well as, the Venice and Istanbul Biennales.

Ugay is part of a generation of artists that like to work with new technology and cyber games, but he uses these technological tools in the context of his personal life and against the background of his own memory. He is a father of two children and feels at home everywhere, as long as there are steppes and rivers.

## Defne Ayas

Defne Ayas was conceived in Paris, born near Essen and raised in Istanbul. She's an only child of a family with roots in Thessaloniki and Crete. After having changed elementary school four times, she entered St. Georg Austrian gymnasium in Istanbul where Catholic nuns and priests hailing from an empire culture provided a comprehensive, eight-year long, all-German curriculum. The school was a hop away from anything Levantine, Genovese, Jewish, Byzantine in the city including towers, churches, temples, foreign-owned banks and hospitals. Quite ironically, it was also almost next to one of Istanbul's biggest brothels.

Defne was a popular gal in school, and most often the class president. She was the literary type, curious, always writing, dreaming, and an-

alyzing. Because of her family, she was always surrounded by intellectuals, journalists, theatre workers, publishers and painters. She practically grew up in the backstage of a newspaper, a children's theatre, a political party, as well as military resorts constantly observing how things were put together, and why. She wasn't the type to be easily impressed by the spectacle or headlines, but rather concerned with the driving dynamics behind curtains. The bootleg tapes of Laurie Anderson sold on the streets of Istanbul brought contemporary art for the first time on her radar.

At the age of 19, Defne left for the United States to study at the University of Pennsylvania to pursue the intellectual path of Benjamin Franklin, then that of Jefferson at the Uni-

versity of Virginia before tying it up at New York University, making the leap from political theory and foreign affairs to studio art and interactive communications. A writing seminar she took in her freshman year, in 1995 on Robert Mapplethorpe, Cindy Sherman, and Adrian Piper was her turning point and she realised that she had to move into the visual arts field. In 2003 she graduated from her masters and landed a job at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, in New York.

In 2005, Defne produced few video vignettes and had a moment as an artist with already loving and supporting patrons. She found herself happily swinging between her artistic and curatorial prospects. She had just caught the end of Marcia Tucker's revolutionary spirit at the New Museum and Dan Cameron's psychic ability for talent scouting; but also witnessed the painful transition to the new museum building. With a leap of faith, she joined Performa in 2005, New York's performance biennale, founded by her favourite art historian RoseLee Goldberg.

Prior to this, Defne had worked in non-art related positions at a Washington-based private, non-profit grant-making organization called the National Endowment for Democracy that was created to "strengthen democratic institutions around the

world" and at a boutique digital-creative-cum-talent-management agency, which hatched itself on top of Andy Warhol's former factory at Union Square and specialized in idea incubation, venture capital and political fundraising for the Democrats.

After 7 years in New York, Defne jumped to the Netherlands for a six-month brush-up in European cultural politics via the Curatorial Training Program of De Appel, to then take off to Shanghai, China, where she is now partly based. Since 2007, she combines a director hat at Arthub Asia with her curator role for New York's Performa, which has allowed her to keep her taps on two continents at the same time. In January 2012, Defne was appointed the new director at Witte the With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam which she successfully combines with her previous roles.

It has taken Defne a colourful journey to arrive in a place where she could combine all of her artistic and political interests. But with Performa, Arthub Asia and most recently Witte the With, she's applying her wide bundle of experiences, from academic and curatorial strengths over devising strategies to activism and marketing, in one job.

Defne is married to a man, whose favourite artist is Francis Alÿs, and

who “understands more about art and artists on a conceptual level than many do, though he is not working in the art world”. She travelled all around the world with and without him but realized in the end that there

is nothing like the internal journey. “The best times are when you are completely aligned with your source, spin around your own core, and inspire yourself and others.”

## Els Silvrants-Barclay

Els Silvrants-Barclay was born in 1980 in a suburban town in Belgium, close to France. Her parents got divorced when she was 4. Her mother remarried a Scot when she was 12 who later adopted her (hence the double surname). Growing up, Els felt a bit out of context in middle-class suburbia and found refuge in the local art centre where a young visionary curator opened her world with a daring program of contemporary theatre and dance. She wanted to study Theatre at the university, but didn't quite think she would have a future with that, so she decided to study Chinese instead.

As a university student, Els travelled the world during the summer holidays as a tour leader and volunteer teacher, first in China and later on in Central Asia and the Middle East. Once back home, she spent more time writing and reviewing theatre and dance for the student newspaper than practicing her Chinese characters. This way she ended up working on artistic projects

well before she finished her Master's thesis. During this time, she developed a friendship with visual artist Jean Bernard Koeman with whom she later made a book called *Everything Beautiful is Far Away*. He urged her to go back to Asia and explore more than only the Belgian art scene, which she did in the summer of 2004. After 6 months of non-stop tourleading, Els ended up in Beijing where she was offered a job as the program coordinator of the Dashanzi International Art Festival, Beijing's first independent multidisciplinary art festival. She rented an apartment, bought a bike and mailed her parents to announce that she wasn't coming home soon.

After the festival, she started to develop her own projects. She freelanced as curator and artistic director, and eventually decided in 2006 to focus on the development of a platform for international artistic research in China. She founded Theatre in Motion (TIM) hosting residencies with international artists in China and organizing small-scale



curatorial projects with local festivals and organizations. She worked really hard during this time. There wasn't much of a personal life. But it was good. It was exciting.

In the winter of 2008, she fell in love. TIM was becoming more professional thanks to a bit of structural funding. But Els was starting to have second thoughts about her life in China. She found it increasingly hard to be in a place that changes quicker than herself. To never stop working. To spend all her energy in making things happening instead of actually doing them. So she decided to be more often in Europe again, to travel in between old and new worlds, to get married and have babies.

Chen Shuyu, a Chinese architect and curator, joined the TIM squad as its new artistic director and together with Els, they renamed TIM into the Institute for Provocation in 2010. Her daughter was born with complications; so moving back to China - that she had started to miss - wasn't an immediate option. She realized that once you move away, you never really come home again, but she took peace with it. And so Els decided to stay in Brussels and started to work part-time at the University of Antwerp, where she coordinates the Advanced Masters in Theatre Studies and teaches a course in Dance Theory. She also works with local artists in Belgium and is still closely involved in IFP. She's now expecting a second child.

## Gary-Ross Pastrana

Gary-Ross Pastrana was born in 1977 in the Philippines, where he still works and lives. Because his family is Roman Catholic, and he was born the day after the feast of the Holy Rosary, his aunts and grandparents insisted to name him Rosauero. His mother, however, absolutely wanted to name him Gary after the son of the comedian Jerry Lewis who had a musical career and a band called the Playboys. As a compromise, one of his more discerning aunts suggested to 'Americanize' Rosauero to Ross, and attach Gary to it. His father's only in-

put was the dash (-) in between the two names linking them together as one. He remained their only child.

Gary-Ross went to a number of different parochial schools, always close to where his family was living at the time. First in Tondo, Manila, a neighbourhood with a rough reputation, and later in Mandaluyong, a city (in) famous for its mental institution. He grew up with his grandmother. His parents married late, both worked full time jobs and were not used to having a child at home.



UPPER LEFT: DAVID COTTERRELL

UPPER RIGHT: DAVIDE QUADRIO

BOTTOM: HAKAN TOPAL, ARAHMAIANI,  
AGUNG HUJATNIKAJENNONG & TAY TONG



TOP: FELIX MADRAZO, MAX ZOLKWER & SHAHIDUL ALAM  
BOTTOM LEFT: ELS SILVRANTS-BARCLAY  
BOTTOM RIGHT: STEFAN RUSU & ALEXANDER UGAY



UPPER LEFT: HO TZU NYEN (FICTIONAL CHARACTER)  
UPPER RIGHT: KYONG PARK

BOTTOM LEFT: VERONICA SEKULES  
BOTTOM RIGHT: PIER LUIGI TAZZI



Unlike most Filipino's, Gary-Ross and his direct relatives have always lived in cities, and don't have a provincial home to go to during the holidays. As a result, he spent very little time in the province and never really travelled during his childhood. Up to this day, his parents have never left the Philippines or boarded an aircraft. Television supplies their view of the outside world.

In high school, Gary-Ross transferred to the Don Bosco Technical College where he acquired a practical skill set, which everyone thought would later lead him onto a career in engineering. But his amplifier casings looked more like architectural chicken coops and his drafting plates were more intuitive than precise. Pretty soon he felt more and more inclined to the arts.

Nonetheless, he gave in to his parents wish and started a study in engineering, but already after a semester he felt it was a waste of time and money. He quit and took a year off to work on his drawing skills before applying to the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts, for which these would be the only parameter to be accepted. He chose the painting major, not because he wanted to paint, but because the sculpture department was really dismal at the time, with hardly any students, absent professors and no equipment.

Gary-Ross Pastrana's practice deals with things broken apart, the sudden space between separated parts and the new realities that come into being when they are reassembled. He is also interested in words, the origin of words, crossword puzzles and word games. Intrigued by the fact that writers just need pen and paper to be productive, he tries to avoid being too dependent on tools, material and studio space, even though he builds sculptural installations that reveal his affinity with architecture and design. He goes to great lengths to realize his installations: he meticulously cuts up objects, transports them across the globe to diligently put them back together in a form that only vaguely resembles the original, exploring the mechanics of collage. He often integrates found objects and personal items to reference the simple acts of daily life.

Apart from his artistic practice, Gary-Ross also collaborates with his girlfriend-architect in a design and manufacturing studio specialized in the production of custom furniture, contemporary directional signage, exhibition design and sculpture. He co-founded the Future Prospect alternative art space in Cubao, Philippines, and is active as a curator.

Some people might find that he comes across as a nervous person,

but in fact he's just a little shy. He feels most comfortable in bathrooms. If he's in a nice bathroom, he's imme-

diately happy. He normally gets all his best ideas or works out the best solutions while taking a shower.

## Hakan Topal

Hakan Topal was born in Turkey in 1972. He grew up in Ankara in a new area with houses built by the locals. He remembers the large stretches of undeveloped land that surrounded the neighbourhood, and how he enjoyed the presence of this open, dry, steppe-like space as a child.

After high school, Hakan followed in his father's footsteps and embarked on a study in civil engineering. At the time, it was considered logical for a good student such as himself to become a doctor or an engineer. His emerging fascination with art from visiting galleries in Ankara during junior high, took a new turn during his engineering studies. Hakan got obsessively involved with photography, and found his way to the university's photography community. The group was passionate about art, constantly reading, discussing and sharing thoughts. They gave classes, organized exhibitions and published minor magazines.

As a self-managed anarchist student body, the group became more and more politically involved. First, in student politics as an advocate

for a student union, later on, also with respect to the nature of photography they started to question as too passive. Hakan increasingly felt the need to connect his activist and artistic practice. He staged his first performance in an exhibition space without having any specific knowledge of performance art. But that wouldn't last long. He started to research and read obsessively.

After his undergraduate studies in engineering, he started as a researcher at the Audio Visual Research and Production Centre, Middle East Technical University. With a group of artists and scholars they transformed the centre into an experimental media lab and art studio.

In 1999, he received a Masters' degree in gender and women studies. Even though life in Ankara might sound a bit boring, he really enjoyed his university life so far. He shared the misery of being stuck in the middle of Anatolia with a lot of like-minded people, and many of them are still close friends.

In 2000, he moved on to New York, where he has been living and working since, growing into a genuine multi-tasker. He is currently writing his Ph.D. in the Sociology department at the New School for Social Research, owns a design office specialized in information design and media production, and realizes exhibitions, performances, video projects and photo-essays both as an individual artist and as a core member of the xurban\_collective. This international collective, with members in Izmir, and New York City founded in 2000, realizes media projects and installations that examine and question contemporary politics, theory, and ideology.

Hakan Topal previously worked as new media projects manager of

the New Museum in New York and as technical director of the New Orleans biennale. Most recently, he was the guest editor of ArteEast Quarterly Journal and finished a documentary film project on a major late 18th-century Austro-Bavarian sculptor, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, commissioned by Neue Galerie New York.

He considers himself lucky to always have worked in those places where he really wanted to be. He is driven by a wide range of interests, and feels a constant urge to learn new things. He's passionate, a bit obsessive, and maybe a bit angry as well. He's honest, perhaps sometimes a bit too direct. Home is where he lives. As long as he has his laptop and his friends, Hakan is totally fine.

## Jiang Jun

Jiang Jun was born in an industrial city in Hubei Province in China. Even though he was born 5 years before the one child policy was launched in China, he has no siblings. His parents are engineers and worked in a tractor factory where Jun spent 15 years before going to a key high school in the city, 15 kilometers from the factory.

At the age of 18, Jiang Jun left Hubei for Shanghai where he received a bachelor degree from Tongji Uni-

versity. After that, he moved to Beijing to get a master from Tsinghua University and to work as a designer and architect for another 3 years. Eventually, he relocated to Guangzhou to take up a position as a teacher at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. It was around this time that he met his wife. She's originally from Chengdu, another city he would from then on often travel to. So far, Jun had gained a foothold in 5 of China's most important locations (central, east, north,



- A WAY IN -  
Seph Rodney

Throughout my life I have been intermittently mobile. I was born in Jamaica. I came of age in New York—specifically the Bronx, New York City. After that, I lived for some time in southern California, near Los Angeles. Now I live in London, and this may not be my final stopping place. In all this time, I've migrated occupations and vocations as well. I have been a hospital clerk, a poet, a photographer, a fencer, a teacher, a museum docent, salesperson, radio presenter, academic administrator, and periodically a student. In fact, I have used my studies to move from city to city, from occupation to occupation. And of all these professions and avocations, the one that seems to almost certainly be closing out now is the student role.

On the verge now of taking my doctorate degree, that aspect of my mobility feels like it is ending. Yet, another shift is beginning: I am starting to think about what I want my context to be—what a social, political, economic, meteorological, and cultural home for me should look like. So this moment feels both new, but is a repeating refrain: in each place I've lived, it has felt like I have stood somehow slightly outside it and tried to understand and articulate (if to no one else at least myself) what I've seen.

If one were to map my mobility, I suspect it would be more interesting to undertake this charting in terms of my vocations (not necessarily jobs) rather than only in terms of geographic movement. Both trajectories though, coincide: the movement from city to city, country to country

intertwines with the choices I made about what to do with my time and my curiosity.

When I was young I made a course towards, initially for rescue, later as a basis around which to fashion a professional life. Like a character in a redemption story, I first to came to art as a vagabond. Though my parents had escaped an economic poverty in Jamaica, I was raised in a kind of intellectual and emotional impoverishment. I felt that art saved me from this. As a boy my early experiences in museums and galleries in New York were so powerful, so staggering, I assumed that what saved me must absolutely have the power to save everyone else. I found in art the things I needed: engagement with a larger symbolic world, connection to others on the level of shared fascinations and ideas and not just ethnic characteristics or geopolitical origins. I found this in visual art. I found this in literature and poetry. Adopting the very American strategy of self-invention, I made myself into a poet by devouring all the books I could, by writing with a migrant's hunger to escape.

I knew by the time I was half-way through my undergraduate degree in New York I wanted to understand visual art through making it, not by standing on the outskirts, observing and taking notes. I suppose I am suspicious of strictly intellectual, abstracted knowledge. (Kantian ethics, for example, seems to me to be at root a projective mathematics that divides the universe into imagined domains and then constructs a gruelling philosophical argument to prove the domains have always existed.) My first experiences with art

made me feel I wanted to know with my own body how it is. So, moving to California, to art school at U.C. Irvine, I found out. I also found my own limitations, and I found that the corollary things that must be traded along with the work and ideas behind it do not interest me very much.

Now I am charting a course away from art—at least as seeing it as a place of redemption. I came to London, crossing the North American continent and the Atlantic Ocean to its east, to gain some distance in my perspective. I did. With this last bit of schooling here, I have begun to see how the social practice of visiting art museums is instrumentalised and what this instrumentalisation means. Pursuing the research for my thesis I discovered that governments are concerned with using museums (and other cultural institutions) to help rescue the poor and underprivileged that threaten to become 'socially excluded' (and have done so since the inception of the museum). Community groups want this as well, though perhaps for different reasons. Artists, museum professionals, think tank fellows, critics, gallerists, and visitors all use the practice of visiting (both as an embodied experience, or as an abstracted, discursive object) for various ends—not only the moment of delight, astonishing beauty, keen insight, or self-realization. The critical factors that I think shape the use and comprehension of the visit are the rise of a consumerist individual, the wane of legislative knowledge, the increase of social anxiety around status, the shrinking state, and ultimately the deficits in

the social domain.

I went to Bangkok, to the 'New Silk Road' conference to find another territory to write and think about. It was not one that I knew previously. What blooms along the cultural paths in Asia are different from what grows in my vicinity here. In Bangkok I was a storyteller, standing on the outskirts, watching and taking notes. I believe I left this off my list of professions at the beginning: storytelling. I do love to tell stories, to relate events and their significance. For me art very much lives there, on the interpreter's tongue. Still, I itch to get out of the discursive circle and see whether any of the knowledge gained may be usefully applied.

I have submitted my thesis, *Theorizing the Visit: An Analysis of Instrumentalist Perspectives on Museum Visiting*, to Birkbeck College and am now awaiting my viva. I have a tentative plan to begin to address the fundamental social deficits that I think cause the instrumentalisation of culture in the first place. Culture could be different. It could become a place of play: an arena of collective activity in which we work different muscles, where we exhaust ourselves to test our own limits, or to find where we are in space, as children do. Why culture is used to way it is now in the UK and the US has to do with the impoverishment of our collective social imagination, I think. Now, I am looking for a way out of that poverty, which oddly enough, ends up, in another sense, being a way in.

February 2011

south, west) and by the time he got his first official job, he had acquired a taste for travelling.

From 2001 to 2004, Jun travelled to over 100 cities in China, and set up an archive to sort out the data and information he collected. This archive, organized in keywords and themes, would eventually form the core content of the “Urban China” magazine that he founded in 2005. This way, his previous individual work evolved into an open, collective database and editorial platform to research China’s ongoing urbanization process.

During his 5 years as the magazine’s editor-in-chief, Jiang Jun travelled around the world to lecture and exhibit on the cutting-edge and highly influential research work of Urban China. This stirred his interest in modernization processes parallel to China’s in developing countries such as Russia, India, and in South America, Eastern Europe and Africa. In 2011, he quit his job with Urban China to focus on researching and visiting these alternative modernizations. Jiang Jun currently works as a research instructor in Moscow and is a visiting scholar at Oxford University for the “Rising Powers” project.

## Stefan Rusu

Stefan Rusu was born in 1964 in Kâietu, a small peasant village in the South of Moldova, a former Soviet socialist Republic created by the Soviets after World War II as a “political” project. Although they are ethnic Romanians, his family was forced to take on the Moldovan nationality. Only recently a law passed allowing people to decide individually about their nationality and distinguish this from their citizenship. Since 1992, Stefan carries both the Romanian and Moldovan citizenship.

At a very young age, Stefan moved to the North of Moldova where he

stayed with his grandmother until his parents took him to Chisinau, the country’s capital to go to school. His father was an architect, and his brother would later join him in that profession. Stefan and his sister are both artists. His father worked in an era that architecture – and art for that matter - wasn’t meant to create, but to represent and interpret ideological subjects.

During high school, Stefan Rusu started following art classes and upon graduation, he entered the Chisinau Art College. After 2 years of military service in the Soviet army

near Odessa (now Ukraine), Stefan continued his education at the St. Petersburg Art Academy. During this 5-year period, he witnessed a period of great turmoil with the Perestroika and Glasnost reforms in the USSR.

After the execution of Ceausescu in 1989, borders that had been closed for 45 years opened up, and inhabitants of Moldova were allowed to travel. Stefan moved to Bucharest, Romania, where he finished his study and eventually made his home base. His artistic and curatorial agenda remains to date closely connected to the processes and changes that occurred in the post-socialist societies before and after 1989—the effects of which are ongoing. Among his preoccupations are aspects of mass-manipulation techniques, political engineering strategies, and tactics of colonization and culturalization that culminated in some cases with the construction of artificial entities, as is the case of the Republic of Moldova.

From 2000 on, Stefan Rusu started to work on an international scale as an artist and curator. From 2005 to 2006, he attended the Curatorial Training Program of De Appel Art Centre in Amsterdam. For Stefan, this was extremely important as it provided him with a connection to

the international art market and allowed him to step out of the (local) context in Moldova and Romania. Meanwhile, he developed an interest in the Asian periphery located on other side of the Russian borders where similar processes as the ones he witnesses in the Caucasus take place: Mongolia, Siberia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. He recently set up a series of investigative artistic and curatorial projects in and on these peripheral regions, along with a continuous presence in his own region, that share an interest in the connections between political and cultural symbols and propaganda, their impact on the urban environment, and map out possible interferences between personal narratives, imported ideologies and cultural discourse.

Stefan combines writing, producing, creating and curating artistic projects, and this does sometimes require him to be schizophrenic, professionally speaking. He works both from Chisinau, Moldova and Bucharest, Romania, but he also travels often abroad for projects and residencies. He thinks of “home” as something temporary – simply as the place where he is present.

## Nikoloz (Nikusha) Chkhaidze

Nikoloz (Nikusha) Chkhaidze was born only 100 metres from the Black Sea, in Batumi, Georgia, a typical small port city that used to be beautiful and cosy before the government made it ugly. After a few years, he moved to Tbilisi, the capital city. The end of the 80s and the 90s, the period Nikusha grew up, was quite dramatic for Georgia. The collapse of the Soviet Union left the country in total chaos.

Nikusha attended one of the most compromising high schools in the city, plagued with criminality, but he learned a great deal from it. He had a good relationship with his parents, who did their best to keep him off the streets, which wasn't always easy. As a kid, he would often make his own toys. One day, he built a UFO out of an old radio. His mother suggested him study industrial design at the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, which he eventually did. He considered applying for the painting department, but his father – a painter himself – thought he was still too young and strongly advised against it.

Soon after entering the academy, he realized that it didn't amount to a lot. And he wasn't the only one coming to that conclusion. Together with a group of like-minded

students, mainly artists, Nikusha set up a student forum to push for changes in the system, in which they partially succeeded. At the same time, the group started organizing exhibitions, working diametrically different than they were taught, which led to the establishment of the 'Creatorea' collective. Without realizing it, Nikusha had become an artist.

One exhibition/performance entitled "The OTHER Caucasus" that Creatorea organized in an unused retail space in Tbilisi's slowly gentrifying old town was particularly memorable. Curator Lydia Matthews testifies: "Their absurd, playful and poignant gestures included Nikusha dressed in a bridal gown made from camouflage material, walking down a carpeted aisle only to be attacked by the symbolic hand of the church at a confessional. After a significant flogging, he stripped off his gown, marched naked to the centre of a majestic, illuminated bridge followed by hundreds of stunned and curious audience members, paused contemplatively and boldly "hopped" into the Mtkvari River below. In the darkness and quiet of night, this act of courage and symbolic cleansing (albeit into highly polluted waters!) spoke to Creatorea's urgent desire to re-baptize Georgian artistic

BOTTOM LEFT: HOWARD CHAN

BOTTOM RIGHT: AGUNG KURNIAWAN







UPPER LEFT: GARY-ROSS PASTRANA  
BOTTOM LEFT: JIANG JUN  
RIGHT: LINA SANEH





UPPER LEFT: SHAARBEK AMANKUL  
UPPER RIGHT: SAMAH HIJAWI  
BOTTOM: LE HUY HOANG & ZOE BUTT

practice in defiance of cultural and spiritual norms, and to do so within view of an international audience”.

His family and friends had a particular hard time with the radicalism of his work. Nikusha’s projects and performances often embrace physical risk as a means to shock his audience – and himself – out of generalized insensibility, as writer Nathaniel McBride puts it. They eventually accepted it knowing that he wasn’t going to give up.

Nikusha felt happiest during the period of the Soviet Union. He’s part of the generation that came of age when Georgia gradually incorporated into

the world system, which instigated a confusing struggle between post-Soviet leftovers, the constraints of traditional society and the harsh expectations of new socio-economical and political models imported at face value. His work very much reflects this. He explores the limits of his own physicality to put strong political metaphors into effect.

Nikusha obtained a postgraduate course at the Institute of Photography and New Media in Tbilisi in 2003, and moved to Berlin in 2008, the day after the war with Russia broke out. He is currently following the ‘Art in Context’ master program of the Berlin University of the Arts.

## Kyong Park

Kyong Park was born in the city of Chungmu, now called TongYeong, in South Korea in 1954. This former fishing town, commonly called Naples of Korea, lies on the eastern edge of the southern Korean coast famous for its thousands of islands, called Halyeo Sudo. The city was isolated, located on the very end of a small peninsula, accessible only by one road that meandered along the coast, offering amazing views of various natural landscapes and wildlife.

His family built a movie theatre in this city of 50.000 inhabitants, show-

ing mostly foreign films, particularly American, French and Italian. From these films, Kyong was ‘globalized’ from early on in his life. He felt like the twin brother to the little boy of the 1988 Italian film “Cinema Paradiso” watching movies almost every day. He even dressed like that boy as his mother made him similar Western style shorts with suspenders. But Kyong wanted to leave his little, pretty city and see the worlds that were within those films.

In 1967, Kyong moved to the United States. It was a momentous time to enter Western civilization. The Bea-

tles appeared on the first live satellite broadcast, China tested its first hydrogen bomb, the first human-heart transplant was performed and the Concorde unveiled, while Che Guevara was executed and the Shah Pahlavi crowned in Iran. The anti-Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement reached its peak and contestations on democracy were thriving when he began his life in 'America,' in Flint, Michigan, a factory town seen through the film "Roger and Me" by Michael Moore. There, Kyong experienced the inglorious '9 to 5' working hours of the capitalist system, before he headed to study architecture at University of Michigan in the mid 1970s, where hippie culture rivalled with Berkeley, California. Kyong never went to a graduate school, as his anti-establishment thoughts took root and carried him into life long self-education through independent practices.

He moved to New York City in 1979, to the island of Manhattan that was portrayed as a maximum-security prison in the 1981 film "Escape from New York". In real life, it was a cheap place to live that gathered the people who did not fit into mainstream society. East Village, where he first settled, was filled with empty buildings and vacant lots, populated by the homeless and anarchists, highlighted with stolen, stripped and burned cars almost on every block. In 1982, Kyong founded StoreFront

for Art and Architecture, a non-profit exhibition space that made him into an organizer and a curator, in one of the first places where multi-disciplinary practices flourished.

But Kyong left StoreFront and New York in 1998. An experimental and independent space like StoreFront was simply devoured by the re-emergence of class system in American cities that authored the preferred real estates like Manhattan to the so-called 'Creative Class' and dislocated others to peripheral waste and service lands. To join the hopes and dreams of those who are being 'left out,' he moved into a ghetto in Detroit, the preeminent 'shrinking city' that is the poster child for the end of modernist ideals in the post-industrial America. There, Kyong headed up the International Center for Urban Ecology, running projects and workshops to bring forth new ideas on how to reconstruct Detroit into a smaller, different city. With the making of "Detroit: Making It Better For You" a video with a fictional narrative, Kyong started to make his own work instead of curating and presenting the works of others.

Then came the so-called 'war against terrorism.' Being against Bush doctrine, Kyong left the United States, along with "24260: The Fugitive House," an empty house that he cut up to move through ten cities in Western Europe from 2001 to 2008.

As one of the curators and artists of the Shrinking Cities Project in Berlin, he travelled throughout Europe, including Russia, investigating the urban landscape of controversial redevelopments that resulted from various neo-liberalist capitalizations of societies and cultures. Now fully nomadic, travelling to different cities on the average of once a week, he began to live and work in ex-Yugoslavia and the Western Balkan areas. Returning to the United States in 2007, taking on a professorship at the University of California San Diego, Kyong began the New Silk Roads project that took him to 18 different cities between Istanbul and Tokyo, thus far.

Living between the East and the West, Kyong Park has become a rootless individual who belongs to nowhere. He recognizes himself in ex-Yugoslavia, being stateless, like the Serbians whose passport and web identity remained in Yugoslavia long after that state ceased to exist. Having lived in South Korea for much of 2009 and 2010, as the artistic director and chief curator of Anyang Public Art Project 2010, his schizophrenic identity and locality has escalated. He remains in an hopeless search for a meaningful, complete and valued relation with a particular 'place,' or with a time, inside the societies and civilization that are being hollowed out through fleeting discourses and fragmented communications.

## Jompet aka Kuswidananto

Jompet was born and raised in Yogyakarta, a historical powerspot in Java that witnessed different periods of turmoil as result of its cultural and religious diversity. He grew up under Suharto's brutal dictatorship and was actively involved in the student revolutions that deposed him in 1998.

Jompet's grandparents are animistic, but his parents always sent him to Catholic schools. He sees himself as a mixture of different religious and spiritual beliefs – as a true child of his homecountry. His official

name, Augustinos Kusidawanto, reveals this: Kusidawanto is the name his parents chose for him, Augustinos stems from his Catholic education, while Jompet, his artist name, used to be the nickname his friends gave him.

He studied communication at the Faculty of Politics in Jogjakarta, but invested more in his creative impulses than in his academic career, and with success. Apart from joining a theatre group that would later grow out into Teater Garasi, Jompet also managed to become a real local

It was my first day in the new school. I was good in English, so the English classes were my best opportunity to impress in the co-ed class. The English teacher Mr. Buksh, asked us to write a description of a 'rainy day'. The general practice was to memorise the thick 'suggestion' books that were sold in the market. Everyone gave the same answer, word for word. The one who could regurgitate best, was judged the brightest student.

I was feeling lyrical, and wrote what I considered to be a fine piece. "Who wrote this" called out Mr. Buksh. I stood up proudly. Early recognition was a good sign. Mr. Buksh came up to me. Pulled my ear and loudly proclaimed "I don't want philosophers in my class."

It's a problem I've had with other teachers. My Bangla teacher loved the essay I'd written on the floods, where I'd invoked the waters to come and cleanse the land and our soul, to purify and bring harvest anew. At least this teacher praised me for my prose. But he did advise against ever submitting such an answer in the exams. He wanted me to pass.

The formulaic teaching extended to photography. The Ealing and Hampshire House Photographic Society had its meetings on Thursday nights at the Ealing Town Hall in London. They had print competitions on alternate weeks. Though I was new to the club, I had entered. My print was a portrait of a friend of mine. Mayur (which meant peacock) was from Gujrat. He was a handsome young man with rugged features. I'd deliberately photographed him against a blank sky. Those were my experimental days, and I was playing with line film. It was a harsh portrait, with few greys. There were a few out of

focus branches in the background, which I had bleached out. The competition was stiff, but I felt I was in with a chance. The judge, an elderly gentleman from a nearby town, solemnly walked past the prints. He stopped when he came to mine. Again I sniffed recognition. "Male portraits should never have white backgrounds," was his stern decree. I wasn't aware of Avedon or Penn. Neither obviously was Mr. Judge. I have since laboured on with my white backgrounds.

Not that I was averse to learning. Life was a great teacher, and far less judgmental. Having joined Liverpool University, I was enjoying the company of girls for the first time. The co-ed experiences of my childhood had been far more fleeting, with occasional flutters of the heart that had never been expressed.

Mary was a vivacious attractive Biochemistry student. She asked me if I wanted to go to a party. I was happy to go. The parties I'd been to back home had usually been birthday parties, so as a well brought up Bangladeshi, I took a birthday cake along. Mary did give the cake a strange look, but said nothing. It was a nurse's party. I had to pay 50 pence as an entrance fee. The strangeness of paying to go to a party was something I could deal with. Mary asked me if I'd dance. I said I couldn't. "Of course you can", she said, and helped me wiggle around. So I wiggled. She was popular, and had many friends at the party. "Why don't you dance with these girls and I'll catch you up," she said. "I can't do that," I exclaimed. "They are all dancing with their husbands." "They are not dancing with their husbands," Mary gently explained. I propped up the wall and watched. As the music changed, I saw the girl change their husbands. As the DJ moved to slow tracks, I saw them kissing different husbands. "Maybe they are not dancing with their husbands after all," I said to myself. I was learning.

- EMAIL INTERVIEW -

Zoe Butt

*(It is okay not to answer one or more of these questions if you feel uncomfortable doing so; you can also decide to focus more on the one than the other question because it's more relevant for you. the idea is to collect a bit of background information and a few personal anecdotes offering a glimpse of who you are and where you come from, apart from your artistic realizations.)*

- 1. Where and when were you born?** Newcastle, Australia
- 2. In what kind of place/social environment/historical context?** 1970s/80s White Australia
- 3. What nationality do you have? Your parents?** Australian nationality, Mum is Australian, Dad is Chinese (from Hong Kong)
- 4. Do you have siblings?** YES
- 5. What kind of education did you get?** Private
- 6. Did you stay your whole youth in the same place or did you move often? If yes, where to? Did this have an impact on you?**
- 7. How would you describe your youth? What kind of relationship did you have with your parents? Siblings? Classmates and friends?**
- 8. What did you study? Was this your own decision?** I studied art history and theory, majoring in post-colonial asian studies and yes it was my own decision
- 9. When did you come in contact with the arts for the first time?** When I was a kid, my Mum often took me to art galleries

**10. When did you decide to become an artist or art professional? Was there any project/exhibition/performance/person that had a specific impact on you?**

**What did your friends/family think of this?** I knew I wanted to know more about art and its history. I wanted to study it but I had no concrete idea how it would earn me a living. I started volunteering at my local regional art gallery as firstly a security person, but then moved up the ladder to education, then curatorial work.

**11. What kind of jobs did you do?** I've done all sorts, from managing video-lending stores to waitressing; from supermarket check-out person to security guard; from finance management to now being a curator and a writer.

**12. How would you describe your artistic practice? How do you work?** I work collaboratively with a focus on building artistic networks through art production – particularly within the field of contemporary Asian art.

**13. When did you fall in love for the first time? Are you married? Do you have children?**

**14. When were you the happiest in your life so far? When was the hardest time? What drives you in life?** Knowing I am constantly in a state of learning; I need to feel inspired in order to keep going and that is what working with artists does for me

**15. What kind of person are you? Where you do you feel at home?** When I'm surrounded by the people that love and challenge me

**16. What's your dream?** To be rich with influence to change the power structures that prevent talent from shining

rockstar at university. Unfortunately, his graduation also announced the end of this short-lived career.

Jompet, bound to take the next step, started working with graphics and experimental music. This led in 2001 to a performance on a visual art festival in Singapore, which launched him in the visual arts scene. He assisted the artists Arahmaiani and Agung Kurniawan, and worked with different documentary crews to further accumulate experience and knowledge, based on which he would eventually start to develop his own artistic practice.

What if an artist were to employ a historian's research strategy in the search for a 'third reality'? Jompet's work reflects on the complex, colo-

nial history of Indonesia and Java, and is the result of his long-standing research into the compendium of psychosomatic traces of a bloody past. This shows his earlier involvement with documentary making. His delicate multimedia installations, in which he often performs himself, not only bear the marks of his infatuation with theatre, but also bring himself at the centre, thus making his work highly personal. His installations, often site-specific, deliberately play with the notion of subversion. They tackle universally accepted opposites such as colonial versus post-colonial, conservative vs. modern, democracy vs. autocracy thereby constructing a 'new cultural paradigm'- creating a "grey space".

## Samah Hijawi

Samah Hijawi was born in Kuwait, and lives in Amman, the capital of Jordan. She studied Fine Arts, first in Lebanon and later in London. She doesn't really know what provoked her curiosity in art; she drew a lot as a child, and remembers visiting a few exhibitions and the Museum of Islamic Arts in Kuwait in the 80's, but she's not sure if that means anything. Her friends and family supported her choice for a career in the arts, but weren't sure if she would be able to make a living out of it.

She has worked in different organizations related to the arts, some commercial, others public, as a curator, a writer, lecturer, a scholar, a consultant/cultural manager, always in combination with her individual practice as an artist. She's currently involved in Makan, an independent art space run collectively in Amman, and often lectures and writes on contemporary art in the Arab World.

In her own work, Samah explores the issue of identity through histori-

cal, political, social and religious structures, and questions definitions of collective identity, memory and the notion of a 'sense of belonging'. She recently developed a particular interest in working in public space realizing projects that include partic-

ipatory and performative elements. As a young adult, Samah made a 'political' move to Jordan, but in fact she loves the idea of moving around in general. She can even claim a hotel room as her temporary home.

## Arahmaiani

Arahmaiani was raised in Bandung, West-Java by an Islamic scholar father and a Hindu-Buddhist mother in a family of 7 children. Her upbringing saw the coexistence of both convictions: whereas her father provided strict Islamic culture and instruction, her mother's family thought her Javanese dances, songs, legends and poetry.

During her youth, she witnessed the drastic reforms that the military government carried through, which modernized Indonesian life, but also brought more repression and installed an effective dictatorship. She felt close to her sisters, but often clashed with her brothers. She suspects that her critical stance towards male domination made them feel uncomfortable. Similarly, she struggled with her parents because of their very different philosophy of life.

Early on, in her art studies in Bandung, Arahmaiani developed a natural inclination towards ac-

tivism. Rather than creating 'nice surfaces', she wanted to engage in social processes, provoke thought and interfere in public debate. This put her entirely at odds with Indonesian art education that was still infatuated with the early days of Western modernism and therefore had nothing to do with the realities of the country. Initial street actions gave her the reputation of a rebel; she was sent to jail and suspended from school. Those years were formative to her conviction - and still much valid - she must articulate her thoughts loudly and sharply, so as to be heard and taken seriously.

After being kicked out of art school, Arahmaiani went out to sea. She first moved to Australia, and later to the Netherlands to continue her art education. Only when confronted with Western art and philosophy did she realize how different these were from her own. Arahmaiani feels it is necessary to first raise conflictive issues in search of a re-



alistic base for mutual interests and complementary features, and then to try for reciprocal acceptance.

Repression, injustice, violence, conformity, sell-out of the country to the West and other abuse during Suharto's military regime gave plenty of grounds for protest. Arahmaiani personally experienced the hardship of social injustice in a Third World country when she lived on the street for a shorter period. Her vehement criticism of capitalism is rooted in direct experience and observations; when, for example, she reflects on the fact that everything becomes an object of consumption - even culture and the arts - she comes to grip with the system itself.

A recurrent theme in her work is the situation of the woman. Following her principle of not concerning herself with anything outside of her own immediate realm of experience,

Arahmaiani is involved with questions of her own identity as a woman within a community that is ruled by men, as a female artist with a critical approach, as an Asian and Muslim in the international context of her many travels and stays abroad.

In addition, it is part of Arahmaiani's ethos as a female artist to use her public presence in order to attract attention to violence against women in general and to female discrimination in Indonesia's Islamic society in particular. A fundamental aspect of her criticism of the prevailing interpretation of Islam is that men derive their claim to sole authority in decision-making from it. She acts against religion as a rigid set of rules and defends her right to her own interpretation as an individual and as a woman. She is repeatedly faced with hostility when presenting her artistic work, because she uses a strategy of provocation in order to at least set off a process of reflection.

## Ho Tzu Nyen

Ho Tzu Nyen was born and raised in a typical middle-class family in Singapore: "post-colonial, pragmatic, capitalist", to put it in his own words. He grew up as the standard Singaporean pattern subscribed it, ending up in university. His academic studies, however, could not satisfy his thirst for

knowledge. Tzu, who would continue to step in and out of different universities and majors, chose to look out for his own education. This led him to art history and the work of Duchamp, to cultural studies and French post-structuralism, and most notably, to a recurrent obsession with Nietzsche. Mean-

time, he immersed himself in the movies of Godard, Fellini, Antonioni and Pasolini clearing the path to cinema.

In 2003, Tzu set out to make his first short film. "Every Name in History is I" narrates the story of a pre-colonial founder of Singapore, shot in an installation of 20 paintings. The project travelled the world as a film, an installation and lecture performance, and already bore the marks of the practice that he would develop in the following years.

Tzu's projects usually start as an excuse to research a particular object or subject. They, however, mostly end up as attempts to exorcise his obsessions, in order to find new ones. They move in between filmmaking, painting, performance and writing, and investigate the forms, methods and languages of art, the relationship between the still, the painted and the moving image, and

the construction of history. Tzu's films and audiovisual work, that often form the core of his other artistic projects, attempt to expose the apparatus of cinema by mixing different genres, by creating highly artificial sets, or by making cameras, crew and lighting a key part of the action.

Ever since the release of his first film, Ho Tzu Nyen's work has been picked up internationally, with screenings, presentations and exhibitions in major museums, festivals and biennales. His first feature film, "Here", was selected for the Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009.

And then. He was only 17 when she looked at him that way. Seems only yesterday. He was only fooling around, but she stole his heart away. Love changes, changes everything.

## Veronica Sekules

Veronica Sekules was born in England, but her father was Austrian Jewish and her mother German Protestant. Both of them rejected their origins in wanting to assimilate into their adopted country, so she grew up understanding fragments of another way of life and language while being immersed in native English culture. Her mixed origins are

increasingly both confusing and important to her. She likes to play with her identity and feel both part of everywhere and nowhere in particular. The fact that she is both a joiner and an observer has deeply affected her entire life to the extent that multi-tasking is one of her great skills. So now Veronica is a curator, and an educator, a cook and a gar-

dener, a medievalist and a modernist, a writer and a mother. She lives in the country and the town. She is part of the art world and the farm. Veronica worked for many years at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts whose hybrid nature as an art gallery within a university, a centre for world art and antiquities as well as a place for exhibiting contemporary art, situated at the eastern edge of England, at the eastern edge of Norwich and at the eastern edge of the University campus, has admirably suited her preference for liminal and complex situations. She began as a curator, but being increasingly fascinated by interactions between people and things

and by the power of art to influence and change people's attitudes and even major aspects of their lives, she turned more to active programming and running large creative learning and research projects.

Her latest project is called The Culture of the Countryside and it is using the resources of the museum to discover and create connections between social organisation, art and heritage in the rural environment. Veronica Sekules is also one of three editors for a new journal called World Art, which she hopes will increasingly become a forum for creative and academic practices all over the world.

## Ark Fongsmut

Ark Fongsmut lives and works in Bangkok, Thailand. He received his MA in Fine Art Administration and Curatorship from Goldsmiths College, London, and his MA and BA in Political Science from Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. He has been a curator at Bangkok University Gallery, Bangkok since 2000 and has produced various exhibitions and projects, including the annual Brand New Project and Artist Residency Programme. With insight and experience in the field of contemporary

Thai photography, Ark was appointed chief curator of the 2004 and 2006 Month of Photography–Bangkok, a major international photography exhibition, and was co-curator of the first International Singapore Photography Festival 2008. One of the more vocal contributors to critical writings on contemporary Thai art, Ark has published numerous exhibition catalogues and books, including Art Now, Esquire (Thai Edition), MARS, and East Bridge, an online Korean art magazine.



NIKOLoz (NIKUSHA) CHKHAIDZE



TOP: ARK FONGSMUT & PRATCHAYA PHINTHONG  
BOTTOM: SEPH RODNEY



UPPER LEFT: ONNO DIRKER  
UPPER RIGHT: DEFNE AYAS



## David Cotterrell

David Cotterrell lives and works in London. He is an installation artist working across varied media, including: video, audio, interactive media, artificial intelligence, device control, and hybrid technology. His work exhibits political, social, and behavioral analyses of the environments and contexts, which he and his work inhabit. Over the last ten years, his work has been extensively commissioned and exhibited in North America, Europe and the Far East, in gallery spaces, museums and

within the public. Recent exhibitions include: Eastern Standard: Western Artists in China at MASS MoCA, Massachusetts, War and Medicine at the Wellcome Collection, London and Map Games at the Today Museum of Modern Art, Beijing and Birmingham City Art Gallery. David is Professor of Fine Arts at Sheffield Hallam University, and has been a consultant to strategic masterplans, cultural, and public art policy meetings for urban regeneration, healthcare and growth areas.

## Howard Chan

Howard Chan works as a curator and a cultural programmer in Hong Kong. Chan has been concerned with art worker-public interface and exhibition as a strategy in public sphere. In 2002, he co-founded and chairs the Community Museum Project, a curatorial/research collective that aims at reviewing and promoting the culture and practice of everyday life, as well as nurturing a creative public platform. Chan has been active in promoting a community-

driven art scene in Hong Kong and overseas. In 1998, he co-founded 1aspace, a non-profit-making visual art organization and exhibit venue. He was an initiator of IN-BETWEEN art space network, and is currently an organizing committee member of an inter-Asian artist mobility network. As an organizer, he coordinated Festival of Vision: Berlin in Hong Kong in 2000 and Re:Wanchai – Hong Kong International Artists' Workshop in 2005.

## Mu Qian

Mu Qian is made in China, and lives in China. He is a senior culture

and arts writer, and an ethnomusicologist. His works include articles



about lives of Catholic Tibetans and Chinese Muslims' haj pilgrimage. He is a Co-founder and Director of Pentatonic Workshop, an independent NPO working in the areas of art, culture, education, and community. Accomplishments include producing over 10 programs of folk music and dance, such as "Kazakh Diaspora Tales" and "Soul of Dolan". He graduated with a Master of Arts in Ethnomusicology, China Conservatory of Music, Beijing, in June 2005. He translated Alan P. Merriam's *Anthropology of Music* and co-translated *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History* (edited by Stephen Blum) into Chinese.

Travelling is one of the most important things in his life, as it enables him to find out how different cultures work. His work focuses on bridging traditional and contemporary arts with an anthropological angle. One example is "The Disappearing Shamans", a project to document the remaining shamanistic culture in China, and to find out the possibility of using shamanism as an inspiration for art works as well as disclosing the relationship between religion and arts in a broader sense. In this project he is trying to combine anthropological fieldwork with artistic creation, outcomes including a film and a conceptual music CD album.

## Onno Dirker

For Onno Dirker, a sense of place lies at the heart of his work. Any landscape is formed by a myriad of layers, whether cultural or economic, physical or metaphysical. His approach is phenomenological.

In 2003, he formed Atelier Veldwerk with the artist Rudy J. Luijters. Atelier Veldwerk works on projects that relate to the design of public space in its broadest sense.

Listing, analysing and illustrating reality in a new context is the keynote in their work; they may then make interventions but cultural analysis can also be an objective in itself. Whatever the case, art is always the frame of reference. Their method is that of 'the unfocused gaze', that is, doing research from a cultural perspective without establishing criteria or guidelines beforehand.

## Lina Saneh

Lina Saneh, born in Beirut in 1966, is a theatre maker and actress. She

studied theatre at the Lebanese university in Beirut, and the Sorbonne in Paris. She has acted in and written and directed several plays. She made her first video in 2006. In her earlier works, Saneh focused on the physical theatre in an attempt to produce a body imprinted by the war. She questioned the socio-political conflicts and contradictions in the middle-east region and the traces that they marked on our bodies.

Today, Saneh spotlights over the nature and role of acts on stage, asking

about the role which might be carried out by body language in a virtual world marked by the idealization of the physical body. From this point, she develops installations, performances and video works that interrogate the status of our citizenship and our position in public spaces, in an attempt to create a new political parole. Currently, she is an assistant professor at the Institut d'Etudes Scéniques et Audio-Visuelles at the Saint-Joseph University in Beirut and at the Saint-Esprit University in Kaslic.

## Rahraw Omarzad

Rahraw Omarzad, born in 1964 in Kabul, Afghanistan, is the director of the Center for Contemporary Art Afghanistan (CCAA). He also lectures at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Kabul University and works as the editor-in-chief of the Gahnama-e-Hunar art magazine.

As a student at Kabul University, Omarzad studied drawing and painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts and began a career of teaching and lecturing shortly after his graduation. Omarzad has remained close to his roots in the arts and education, working as a lecturer in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was in Pakistan, where he found a group of like-minded expatriate Afghans devoted to dialogue and improvement

of the arts, that he conceived of the publication Gahnama-e-Hunar.

The first issue appeared in 2000 with a circulation of 1200 copies. The magazine has proved a breakthrough publication in the Afghan arts scene. Early issues focused on painting, sculpture and calligraphy and later, at the request of readers, expanded to cover film, theatre and music. Today, Gahnama-e-Hunar publishes discussions on new curricula and other necessary changes for Afghanistan's art schools, alongside reports on the growth of the nation's cultural life, the reopening of the National Gallery, the search for national art treasures that have gone missing and the restoration of Afghan cultural heritage. International institutions and organi-

zations now support the magazine.

In addition to his work as an editor, Omarzad continues to create his own video art and photography. Focused

on themes of evolution, change and renewal in Afghanistan, his work has been heavily influenced by local street culture and urban exchanges in his native Kabul.

## Shaarbek Amankul

Shaarbek Amankul was born and raised in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, in 1959, where he currently lives. In his twenties, Shaarbek was very ambitious, and very romantic. He travelled around to search for adventure and what he called inspiration and self-perfection. He spent two years in the army in Turkmenistan. He was restless and wanted to leave several times, but the desert frightened him. After coming back to Bishkek, his father, a famous musician, expected his son to follow in his footsteps. But Amankul didn't want to devote his life to music. He moved to Osh and began his work as an artist.

He holds art and history degrees from Kyrgyz State College of Arts and the Kyrgyz National University. A member of the Kyrgyz Re-

public Union of Artists, he has long promoted global networking and has participated in several educational programs and residencies abroad including the House of Art Foundation USSR (Latvia), the Vermont Studio Center (2005, USA). Additionally, he has participated in numerous symposiums and exhibitions throughout Central Asia, and Europe such as the 2nd Singapore Biennale (2008), Kunsthalle Munich Lothringer (2009), OK Center for Contemporary Art, Linz, Austria (2009), Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (SCAF), Sydney, Australia, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia (2009). In addition to his own art and curatorial endeavours, Amankul is currently the director of the B'Art: Bishkek Art Center in Kyrgyzstan.

## Pratchaya Phinthong

Pratchaya Phinthong was born in 1974 and lives and works in Bangkok, Thailand. He creates situations as an invitation made to the visitor to share

an experience with him. His projects (without any specific or pre-defined forms) suggest a crack in which the spectators are invited to fill the gaps.

He builds a set, a fiction, or a process to test perceptions. He proposes his audience a story with multiple path; a trip down memory lane combined with subjective perceptions.

The gallery space becomes a free area. Pratchaya explores the dynamic area in between different re-

alities underlining a space and the distances that separate them: two geographical points, two societies and two economic systems. He approaches these distances in a very literal fashion, and exploring the mechanism of displacement by undertaking long travels to produce his work.

## Le Huy Hoang

Le Huy Hoang, born in 1967 in Hanoi, Vietnam, is a painter, performer and installation artist. Hoang is a Khmer / Vietnamese whose work has been greatly influenced by his personal and family memory of cultural difference and the hardships

endured during the Vietnam War and the control of the Khmer Rouge. Hoang graduated in 2003 from the Hanoi University of Fine Art and he currently lives and works in Hanoi. His work has also been exhibited in Hanoi, Phnom Penh, and Milan.

## SuperSudaca: Max Zolkwer & Felix Madrazo

SuperSudaca, a name taken from the combination of meanings of “over the top” and the usually pejorative term of “sudaca” used to identify South American immigrants in Spain, was casually founded in 2001 by a group of young Latin American architects that met and studied at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam. Having been brought up on architectural examples of Europe and the USA they suddenly realized that they were pretty much ignorant of what was happening in their neighbor-

ing countries and could learn much more from each other. Since then, they have been working towards creating a Pan-American platform for exchanging ideas and generating knowledge.

SuperSudaca is about embracing a common ground while defying prejudice in the process. As such, it involves a healthy dose of humor and an optimistic yet critical attitude which translates itself into innovative actions. The various projects, workshops, publications and

research that have been produced by SuperSudaca deal with concrete social, cultural and economic developments, such as migration, tourism, housing, centralization and globalization that have an impact on architecture and urban planning in the various contexts of the Caribbean and Latin America. The eleven founding members of SuperSudaca network are based in eight different countries.



ĐỀN NÀY CHEN VƯỢT  
THI KHI DO TAY NGAY  
MỞ 6-1996 LẬP ĐỀ  
QUÂN DŨNG MỸ CUNG  
NGUYỄN VĂN BÍCH ĐŨ  
ĐŨNG CẢM ƠI ĐŨ ĐŨ  
LÀN HỮA TAY KẾ THŨ  
HỮA ĐŨ ĐŨ YOUNG  
KẾ THŨ CŨNG CHŨN  
THŨ ĐŨ ĐŨ VŨ ĐŨ  
LẬP HỮA CHŨN THŨ  
LẬP HỮA ĐŨ ĐŨ

流利的英语 让中国之声

ish. Make the voice of widely heard

eam.









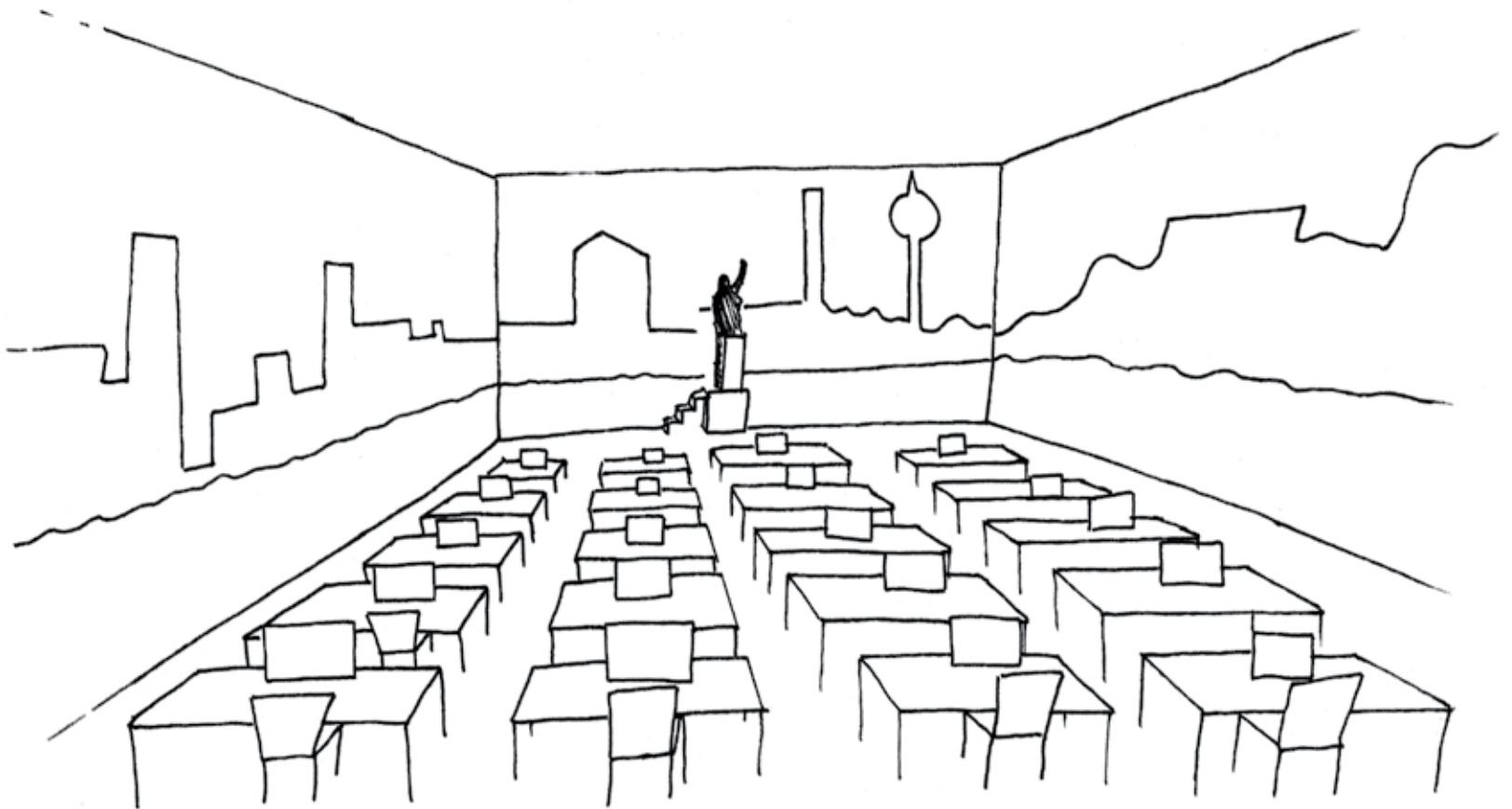




## A PLACE TO MEET

The architectural theme of “back to school” certainly created an intimate space, while somehow remaining both nostalgic and at the same time totalitarian (all chairs and desks were orthogonally spread in the space, a stage was located in front of them for presentations). Visitors occupied a line of hard seats at the entrance and at the back of the “classroom.” At the beginning of the symposium, a stage was offered as place for experimentation, in order to challenge the limitation of such “Stalinian” design. This block of unidentified architectural space, neutral and yet open, was a monolith in the classroom: a memento, an allegory of constrictions and limits to be disrupted. It was the place to, as Arahmaiani printed on her T-shirt, “Stop Masturbating and Join the Revolution!”

## BACK TO SCHOOL







# Back to school

FELIX MANDRAZO AND MAX ZOLKWER

**Davide Quadrio [DQ]: How did you conceive the space for the 3 days symposium and what did you want to convey with the design?**

Supersudaca [s]: The space was conceived during several sessions together with Arthub Asia to make it a perfect place for what was in mind for the "performance/symposium". We came out with several plots, some of them playing with the idea of a beautiful space that could celebrate intimacy and individuality: one prototype looked like several "alcoves", almost like a labyrinth made out of gigantic grass walls, where the individuals/organizations could appropriate the space with presentations/performances/artworks. Another solution presented several spaces in a continuum, similar to a tunnel, ideally describing the physicality of the Silk Roads. Finally, we decided together that the solution of the classroom, with a hierarchical, uncomfortable, and some how unexpected, top down grid structure would be the best place to "play with the minds" of the participants included. We wanted a certain level of provocation to "cause" a sense of rebellion in the participants and consequently

push them to change the conditions of the space...and play with it.

**DQ: This classroom was somehow rooted in the typical orthodoxy of the classroom with a nostalgia of a forgotten past symbolized by the old chairs and desks of Thai schools. What do you think was the effect of the participants of such a setting?**

s: As just said, we hoped that this setting would be orthodox and "classic" enough to make the participants to immediately go against this strict structure. However, it took them a day to really start playing with the space, changing it and use it as an on-going tool to communicate, not only to the general public, who was invited as "parental" observers of the classroom, but also to create new areas of expression, islands of performative moments or "geographical" dissent.

**DQ: How were other elements integrated in this structure? Stefan Rusu for instance?**

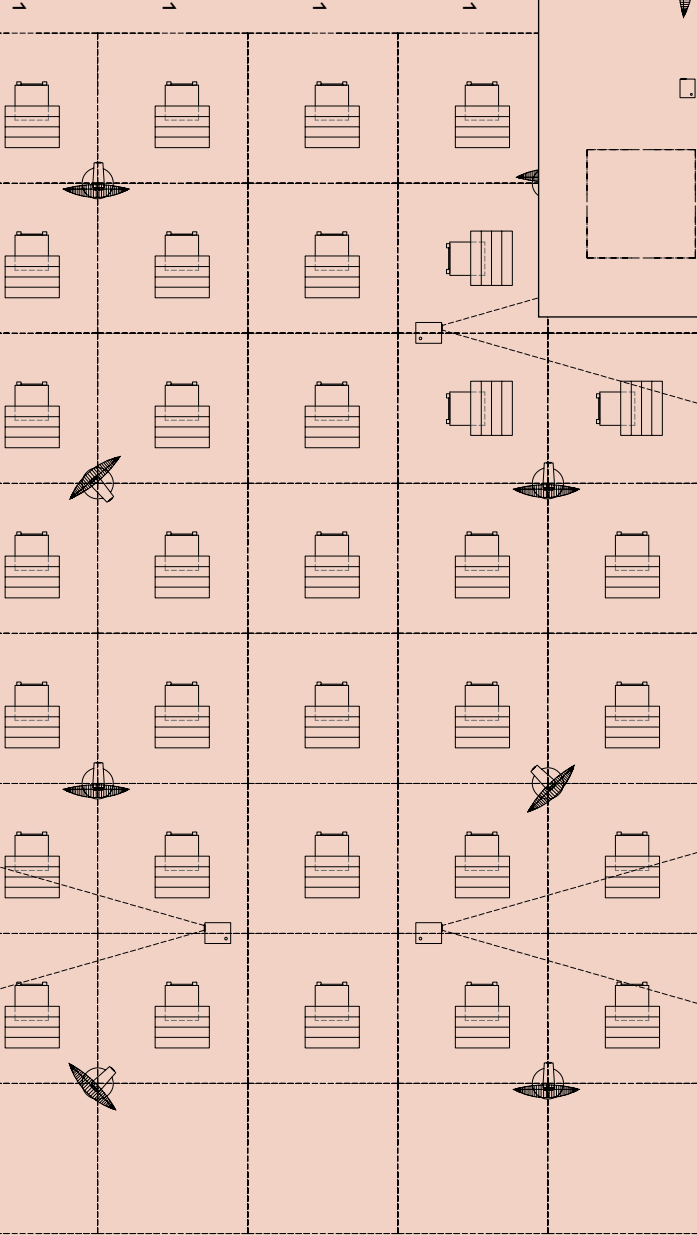
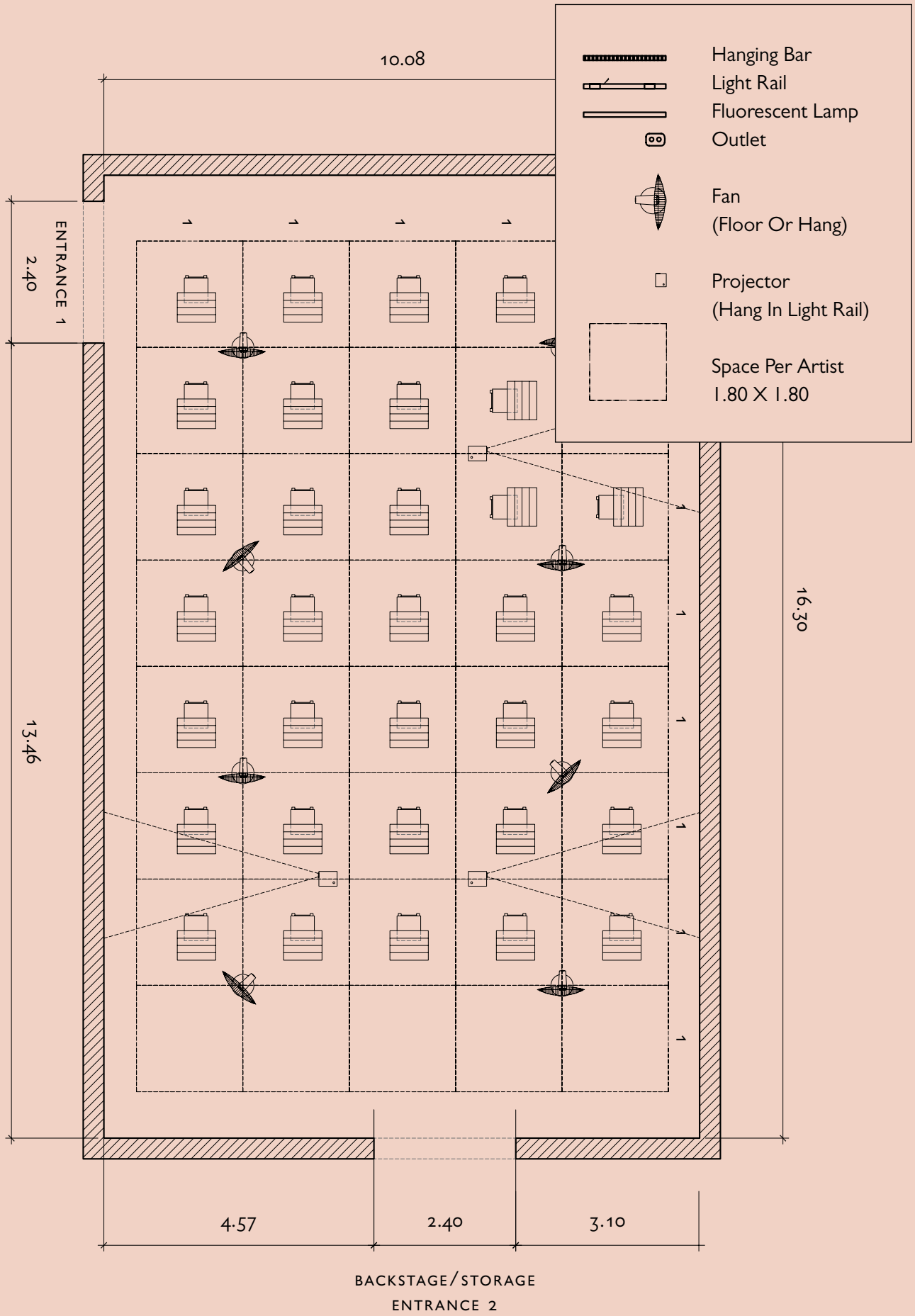
s: To structure the space as a classroom allowed us to integrate ele-

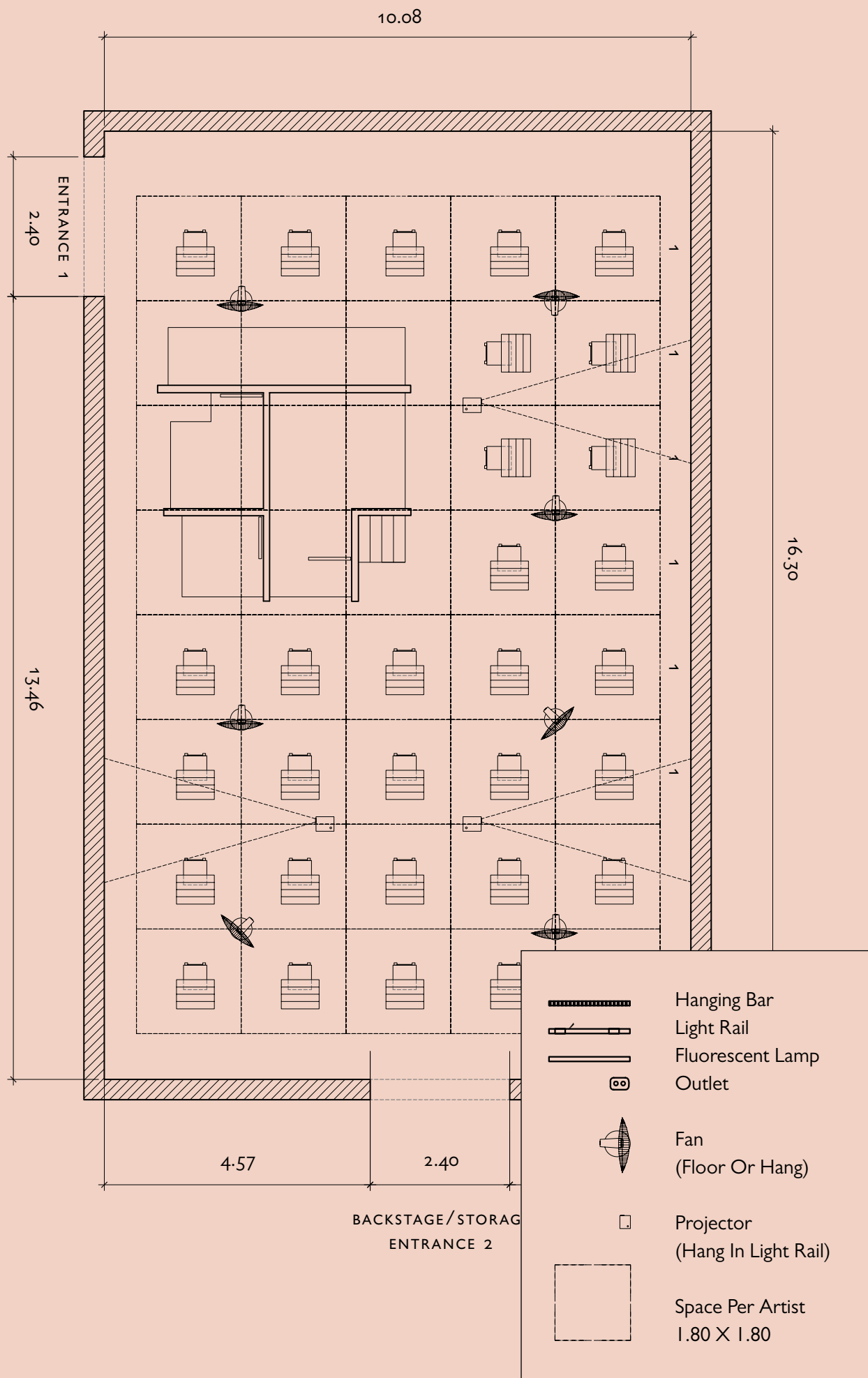


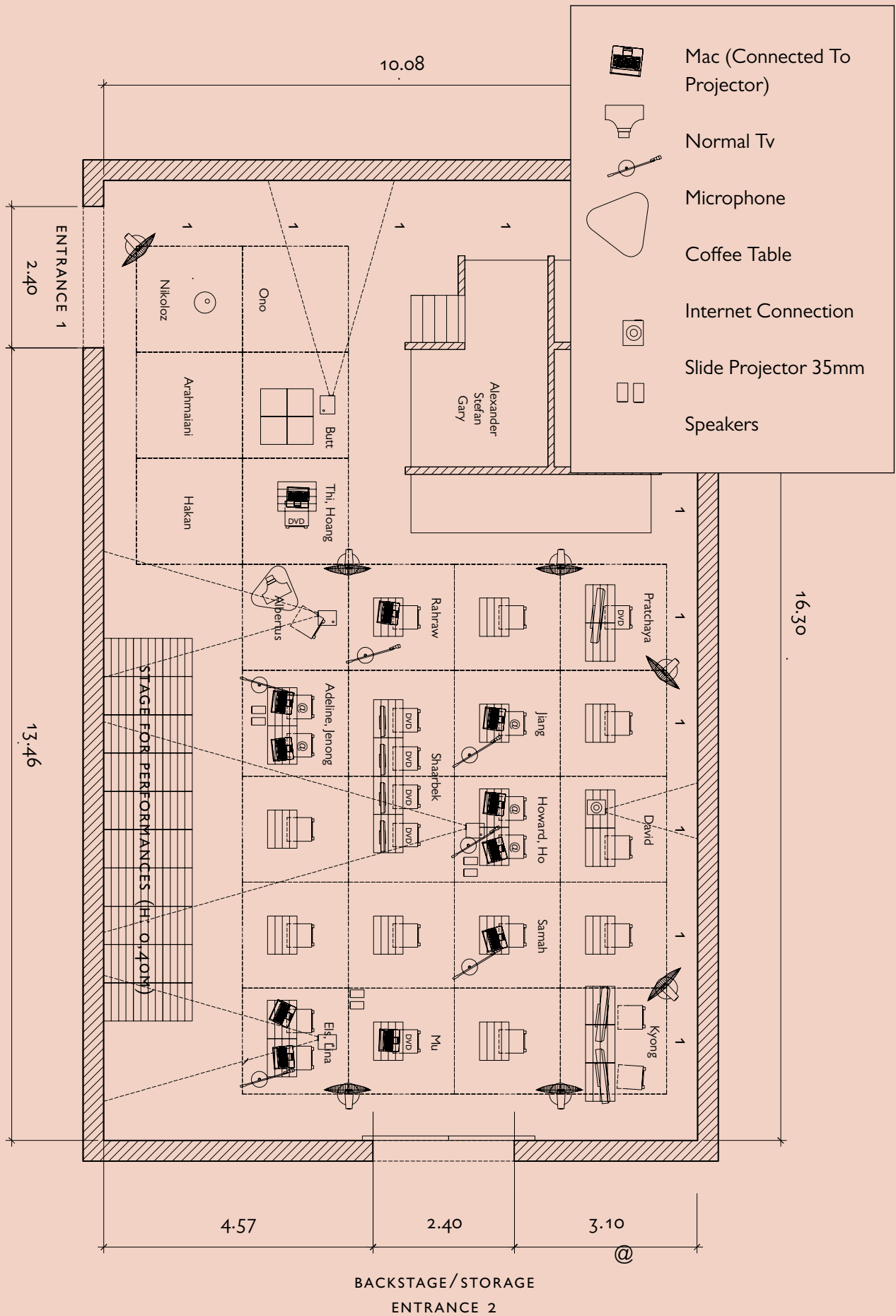
ments that the participants wanted to present inside the three day symposium. Yet, the example of Stefan Rusu and Alexander Nicolai is one of those that put the project to the test of its limits. The "sample" of a Russian/communist apartment model occupied a full third of the space and it was constructed as a symbol of the continuum of the socialist presence throughout the Silk Road's contemporaneity from Lithuania to China. The space was also activated by on-going presentations and actions by Gary Ross Pastrana for instance, or by Samah Hijavi or again by Arahmaiani. Desks and walls were used to create the base for installations, monitor stands or combined to create a "platform" for several presentations: the case of Jompert's performance where the desks were combined to make a dj cum video projections' support, or for the video monitors for Sharbek's installation. Progressively, the desks were transformed in places out of the "remains" of the activities and performances that had just happened, changed and re-changed by the progressive actions.

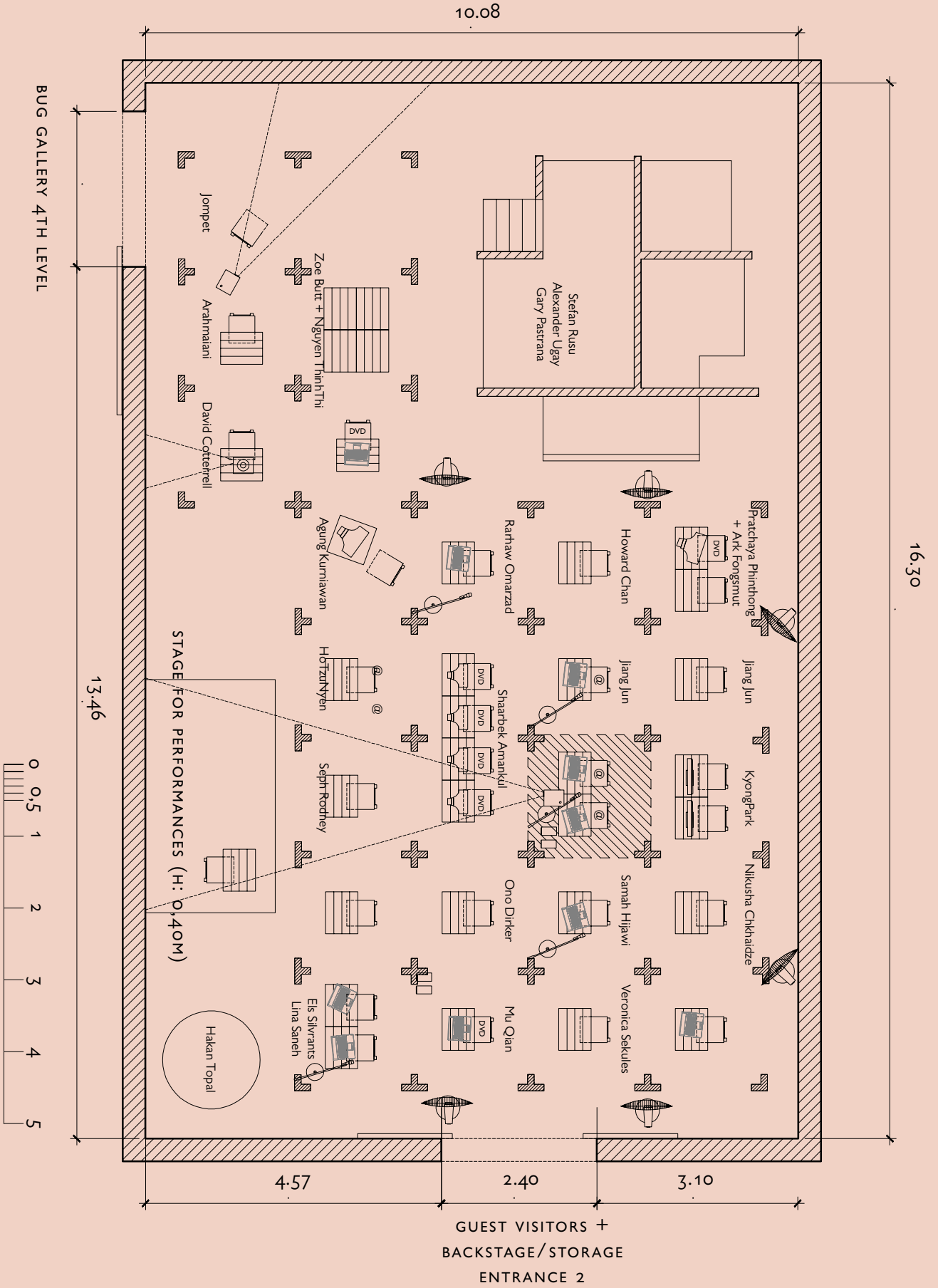
**DQ: Are you satisfied with the result and what do you think could be improved/changed?**

s: The space created a bubble of uneasiness, but also showed how we people are incredibly easy to be conditioned by a structure and how difficult it is to "rebel" to a given format. We are quite happy about what came out and how the participants at the end "used" it, played with it and changed it. The project would not have been completed without the contribution of authentic school desks and chairs. For that among other things, we need to thank the great team of the Supernormal which for three days were able to constantly follow our directions and constantly "activate" the space with new elements, changing on the spot objects and the disposition of the desks, monitors, microphones, projectors and more. A great thanks as well to the film crew guided by Ho Tzu Nyen who constantly activated the space, filming it, using it as a stage for an undercurrent drama of ecstatic love... We look forward to another set design challenge like this one!





























Art is not M  
The history of Art in the 20th century

Small, dark rectangular objects arranged in a horizontal line on the wall.













**Subject:** pdf reunion ficticia  
**From:** Felix Madrazo (felixmadrazo@yahoo.com)  
**To:** davide@arthubasia.org;  
**Cc:** maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org;  
**Date:** Wed, 24 Jun 2009 16:31:30

davide!  
 better luck next time?  
 we send you here our first sketches...  
 please feel free to interpret them and  
 comment..... abrazos  
 felix + max

---

**Subject:** Re:BKK Symposium Art Handler,  
 Supernormal for Superdaca :)  
**From:** Felix Madrazo (felixmadrazo@yahoo.com)  
**To:** davide@arthubasia.org; monvilai@yahoo.  
 com;  
**Cc:** maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org; sprnormal@  
 gmail.com; ark.f@bu.ac.th;  
**Date:** Thu, 30 Jul 2009 15:42:48

dadou we did the mission and we met  
 for shanghai, can we try later today or  
 tomorrow? max? davide?

---

**From:** Davide Quadrio (Arthub Asia) <davide@  
 arthubasia.org>  
**To:** Monvilai Rojanatanti <monvilai@yahoo.  
 com>  
**Cc:** felixmadrazo@yahoo.com; maxzolkwer@  
 supersudaca.org; sprnormal@gmail.com;  
 Ark <ark.f@bu.ac.th>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 29, 2009 10:35:04 PM  
**Subject:** Re: BKK Symposium Art Handler,  
 Supernormal for Superdaca :)

should we try the impossible and have a  
 chat on skype soon?  
 xxx

---

**Subject:** fire  
**From:** Felix Madrazo (felixmadrazo@yahoo.com)  
**To:** davide@arthubasia.org; monvilai@yahoo.  
 com;  
**Cc:** maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org;  
**Date:** Wed, 05 Aug 2009 22:56:55

dadou!  
 ying,

we started the real layout in the space,

**Warning:**

this is not a real proposal yet, but  
 gives us an idea of the scale of the  
 elements

**Instead:**

we are starting to get a grip of the  
 space with a spatial grid. The school  
 layout and order should be also arranged  
 by your suggestions of where people fit  
 better (please comment)

**the matrix:**

the matrix is based on a grid of 1.80 x  
 1.80, here a table, a chair (which can  
 orientate freely) + a bonus for each  
 artist (a coffee table, a plinth, an  
 exhibition shelf, a TV, etc...)

**crossings:**

at the crossing of 4 squares we are  
 proposing to have the electrical  
 distributor for 4 - 6 artist, this point  
 can also be emphasized by the tall fans.

**in the air:**

the projectors (3 at this moment) are  
 hanging from the light rail in the roof.

**stage/plinth:**

we need to think of a stage (and its  
 backstage in the entrance 2)

**issue:**

flat space as you can see is big, maybe  
 even problematic (guess that is the  
 idea!), it will affect the space a lot  
 .... but perhaps they are open to leave  
 it as stage at the back? that would save  
 a lot of space, but then it will not  
 perform as originally thought? please  
 comment....

for this we send you a second file  
 without it so you see the difference  
 without it.

**warming up**

we are warming up now, and we have this  
 drawing in proper format to work.

so please shot before it is too late....!

thai visa: ready  
 chinese: tomorrow  
 abrazos  
 felix & max

---

**Subject:** Re: fire - QUESTIONS  
**From:** Felix Madrazo (felixmadrazo@yahoo.com)  
**To:** maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org;  
**Date:** Thu, 06 Aug 2009 14:15:28

creo que hay que mostrar otros  
 escenarios donde se despeje el centro.  
 voy a hacerlos hoy pero tambien quiero  
 que el opine, veamos...  
 lo de china esta muy bueno, deberiamos  
 saber que ruta llevan esos productos,

(en referencia a la ruta de la seda) no crees?  
abrax

max zolkwer <maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org>  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 9, 2009 6:01:04 PM  
**Subject:** Re: fire

-----  
**From:** max zolkwer <maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org>  
**To:** Felix Madrazo <felixmadrazo@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 5, 2009 11:07:53 PM  
**Subject:** Re: fire - QUESTIONS

felix,  
como acomodamos a los veedores externos? dadou dijo que deberian poder entrar 20 personas mas, no? quizas haya uqe hacer una grilla un poco mas apretada y poner unas filas de asientos pegados en un costado..... que te parece? (ya se que queda mas feo el dibujo...)

----- Original Message -----

**From:** Felix Madrazo  
**To:** Davide Quadrio ; Monvilai Rojanatanti \_ arthub  
**Cc:** Max Zolkwer  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 05, 2009 5:56 PM  
**Subject:** fire

dadou!  
ying,

we started the real layout in the space,

**Warning:**  
this is not a real proposal yet, but gives us an idea of the scale of the elements

dear supersudaca...any more renderings on the installations? we need to move on this soon. Please let us know...you are living to china this coming week...can we talk on tue and have the drawings before that date?  
xxx

-----  
**Subject:** that's all for now...  
**From:** Felix Madrazo (felixmadrazo@yahoo.com)  
**To:** davide@arthubasia.org;  
**Cc:** maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org; monvilai@yahoo.com;  
**Date:** Thu, 13 Aug 2009 22:42:53

davide,

i've been waiting to see you without sucess i am sending you here the latest layout with the following remarks, i hope u like it

1. the entrance: it should remain a relax entrance, maybe a standing fan (that actually gives air to corridor) 'welcomes' you

2. flat space the first thing you see is flat space, it takes a big chunk but its ok since the more compress the other area the better i think. how it is rotated depends on artist choice (or yours)

3. the classroom remains in concept the same but it allows changes, its more like a montesori classroom at the end! so you will see that some artist take 2 spaces or 4 desks, others add extra stuff like albertus. one projects to the back (the one of course with the slide projector)

4. the standing fans remain very crucial for atmosphere, authority (somebody is watching and noding!) and mark also subtle boundaries

5. the projectors, i am placing 4 in the ceiling, (we need a stair in the space for last minute changes) 2 are closer to the wall and one for big screening in the back, check power to see if they can make the distance. the cable connections

-----  
**Subject:** Re: fire  
**From:** Felix Madrazo (felixmadrazo@yahoo.com)  
**To:** davide@arthubasia.org;  
**Cc:** maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org;  
**Date:** Mon, 10 Aug 2009 02:09:16

DADOU!  
one favor:  
please send photos of the place, i have the video but can not find any photos (did you send me photos?)  
yes let's talk tuesday! what time? night europe is ok for me  
abrazo

-----  
**From:** Davide Quadrio (Arthub Asia) <davide@arthubasia.org>  
**To:** Monvilai Rojanatanti <monvilai@yahoo.com>  
**Cc:** Felix Madrazo <felixmadrazo@yahoo.com>;

for the projectors remains to be solved, especially since we have to share the projectors between artist.

6. i wish that the space does not change too much actually, so no crazy scenarios moving tables all over, too much mess with cables etc. prefer to keep it more disciplined, but its your call

7. stage: a scenario made of wood pallets, we could fetch them once we are there also, same for coffee table and fans

8. the walls could be dark grey with one big white rectangle marking the projector area. i don't know if this is too much money or work, but i'm sure will help to make the space a bit dry and more suitable for performances....

9. keep ignoring backstage situation, please help here, is there a room behind the door?

10. as i showed you the sketch i could make the layout in 3d, though i don't now if makes sense, its quite clear to me the idea

11. of course since i did not know who to place next to who i took the liberty, please but really please comment, por favore!

12. that's all for now...

---

**Subject:** black cross version  
**From:** Felix Madrazo (felixmadrazo@yahoo.com)  
**To:** davide@arthubasia.org; auu312@gmail.com;  
**Cc:** maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org; defne.ayas@gmail.com;  
**Date:** Thu, 27 Aug 2009 08:23:31

dadou + auu + defne

we put the crosses in black, looks better we think ok....ok?

felix+max

---

**Subject:** Re: Thank you  
**From:** Felix Madrazo (felixmadrazo@yahoo.com)  
**To:** samahhijawi@gmail.com; linasaneh@hotmail.com; defne.ayas@gmail.com; davide@arthubasia.org; ark.f@bu.ac.th; alexanderugay@mail.ru; david@cotterrell.com; els@theatreinmotion.org; grpastrana@gmail.com; tzulogy@gmail.com; howardchan@netvigator.com; arahmaiani@gmail.com; sirius1999@gmail.com; kdpark@ucsd.edu; musicqian@hotmail.com; nikushac@gmail.com; onno@dirker.nl;  
**Cc:** prachya\_phinthong@hotmail.com; r\_omarzad@yahoo.com; bishkekartcenter@gmail.com; suheborator@gmail.com; imam@xurban.net; zoembutt@gmail.com; zoe@longmarchspace.com; sephr@earthlink.net; vsekules@googlemail.com; maxzolkwer@supersudaca.org; j.elzein@princeclausfund.nl; phoebe@aTahae.Noerthge.rhllaknd; taytong@theatreworks.org.sg; monvilai@yahoo.com; shahidull@gmail.com; surasi\_bkk@hotmail.com; jennongnong@yahoo.com;  
**Date:** Wed, 09 Sep 2009 14:56:06

dear all!

after back to school well...back to reality!

for a moment no jokes, we enjoy your presentations and the atmosphere and specially for being only few days we felt quite engaged with many of you. (plus we felt we took a lot from your criticism, special thanks for that!)

we expect to meet you again soon, hopefully for longer period! thank you Davide (dadou!) and Defne for your incredibly skilled host expertise (the pool was perfect!) thank you to supernormal for making the school (and the flat space) possible!

as supersudaca we want to offer you our connections in different countries in case you pass by in the future.

best wishes and hugs from  
 felix + max

Chat History with **Monvilai R.** | it's  
**very bad sound (#monvilai/\$felixmadra**  
**zo;e3761ea0006df5eb)**

Created on 2009-08-04 11:29:14.

2009-08-04

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-----
Felix Madrazo:          10:43:57  Felix Madrazo:          10:46:02
it's very bad sound          lets chat ok?
-----
Felix Madrazo:          10:44:03  Monvilai R.:            10:46:05
ok                             I dont' hear you
-----
Monvilai R.:            10:44:51  Monvilai R.:            10:46:11
felix                          in Skype?
-----
Monvilai R.:            10:44:56  Felix Madrazo:          10:46:15
ARE you there/                yes
-----
Felix Madrazo:          10:45:00  Monvilai R.:            10:46:30
i am here                     we have only that file
-----
Felix Madrazo:          10:45:05  Monvilai R.:            10:47:06
sound is not working          wait a second
-----
Monvilai R.:            10:45:06  Felix Madrazo:          10:47:08
accept my call                basically i need pictures
                               then of those doors, i need
                               to know what davide wants
Felix Madrazo:          10:45:24  for the storage space,
i already answered            since i don't see a 'space'
-----
Monvilai R.:            10:45:30  Monvilai R.:            10:47:27
then you call me              I will ask about it
-----
Felix Madrazo:          10:45:33
ok

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REPORTES

REPORTES DE GESTIÓN  
VARIANA LA

Informe de  
del







## PERFORMATIVE SYMPOSIUM

Presented in the form of a series of newly commissioned works including installations, lecture-performances, TV shows, radio interviews and publications, this collaborative symposium has put a special emphasis on process-oriented, and research-, dialogue-based artistic positions across Asia. Through the means of commissioning new responses, establishing dialogue, and enabling an alternative live context for investigation of dynamic cultural issues by its very own very actors, New Silk Roads was committed to inspiring new forms of artistic and aesthetic experiments in China and rest of Asia. The symposium also aimed to re-examine the contested idea of the cultural encounter with the “other,” and to turn these peer-to-peer encounters into a generator of new impulses for the analysis of complex historical processes within the cultural systems in Asia.

# September Something

AGUNG KURNIAWAN

How to touch upon traumatic and frightening pasts despite our refusal to see them? When memories are too sad, too scary, too raw, Kurniawan converts vivid, stark materials into the fictional, the false face of an image, a video, a documentary. Does fiction add a surface which is softer and more comfortable than something more tangible? Can it be a way to trick us into remembering?

As the inaugural speaker of the symposium, Agung Kurniawan presented his September Something project

in which he attempted to confront the generation of the “New Regime” (now in their early 30s) in Java with the Communist massacres that took place in the country in 1965. This generation, comfortably living in the cocoon of state propaganda and indulging in the comforts that the economic boom of the late 80s has brought them, hardly knows anything about these traumatic events. How to explain what happened to a generation that is unaware? Or in other words: how to oppose this mass amnesia?

# Flat Space

STEFAN RUSU WITH ALEXANDER UGAY

How can we challenge the rigid functionality of a private space? The Flat Space project by Stefan Rusu proposed to do so by stripping down private space and exposing to view what it represents. The Flat space design replicates the archetype apartment space that socialist society standards created within the urban landscapes of several former Soviet cities (where they remain till today a strong visual element) carrying idealist functionality and aes-

thetics. Rusu used a hollowed out version of a typical habitat to look through to the new, modern, individualist concerns of social status by a population of workers wanting a private space in the city, against a perhaps contradictory relation to the ultimate uniformity of these cities’ urban planning schemes.

The Flat Space installation was inserted in the symposium’s scenography as a “zone of hospitality” to

be available for interventions during the symposium. Gary Pastrana, Iani Arahmaiani and Samah Hijawi used it as a platform for a performative or artistic action. Moreover, Rusu used the Flat Space to show two video works of the Kazakh artist Alexander Ugay who shares Rusu's interest in the current state of post-Soviet societies.

Ugay's first video "Break" tells the story of a street cleaner searching his conscience and contemplating the

possibility of an uprising while taking a break on the streets of Almaty. The video consists of recorded outdoor sound incorporated in an animation and is a comment on Albert Camus' text on the condition of the worker in contemporary society. The second video "Waltz" takes the form of a manual, and instructs the viewer about manipulation techniques through an animation of old socialist propaganda drawings, pointing out how totalitarian propaganda machines make use of human nostalgia.

## Golden Aldan

STEFAN RUSU

Stefan Rusu also showed a work-in-progress of "Golden Aldan" – a video installation resulting from a workshop and exploratory trip to one of the most remote regions of the Russian Federation: the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The installation is part of ongoing research on the massive and unprecedented mine explorations that private companies are conducting in Sakha, populated by the native population (Evenky and Yakuty) of Eastern Siberia. The local and federal authorities granted private companies unlimited access to explore the natural resources (gold, diamonds, gas, petrol) of the area where the natives have been settled

for centuries, hunting and herding reindeer.

The 2-channel film includes interviews with the local clan leader and shows night footage of the mining activities mixed with archival material (photos, found footage films) from the ethnographic museum of Aldan, a local town. The film describes the struggle of the local population with the growing intrusion of new technologies, linked to the exploration of gold (for which chemical substances such as cyanide are extensively used). Before 1990, the Soviet regime prohibited the private possession of reindeer, and forced the natives to herd their animals strictly in the context of

IS FICTION A SKIN THAT IS  
SOFTER, COOLER, AND MORE  
COMFORTABLE THAN THE  
TOUCH? CAN IT BE A WAY TO  
TRICK US INTO REMEMBERING?



state owned “colhoz” located in limited areas. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Republic of Sakha received semi-independent status and the natives were allowed to hunt and keep open farms

in extended areas without borders. However, the gold mining industry now affects a wide region, including the natural paths of the reindeer, and is estimated as a significant ecological threat.

## Central Asia Project UK+CA

ALEXANDER UGAY

What possibilities are there for understandings and misunderstandings in meeting the other --especially when the other is encountered across the East/West divide? What are the critical appreciations of the other's place of origin that surface through an exchange of others? Alexander Ugay reflected on his experiences with the Central Asian Project UK+CA that he participated in from 2003 to 2008, dedicated to forging new links between the art communities in Central Asia and the UK through artists' residencies, cultural exchanges and exhibitions.

The UK+CA project produced a DVD archive of video and film work of the artists involved, on view on 3 computers in the symposium space. During his talk, Alexander Ugay also screened his documentary film “One Day “, granting us an intimate insight into an indigenous ceremony of Kazakh women who cook, eat, sing and dance—a performance that is lively and animated, yet broken by the camera's view, allowing glimpses of what is in essence a culturally coded performance, which is only partially visible and partially understood.

## China & Mongolia: Twin Pre-modernities on the East End of the Silk Road

JIANG JUN

Jiang Jun presented a detailed examination of the development of the pre-modern East, based on the two distinct civilizations that have

determined it: the agricultural Han Chinese and the nomadic Mongolians . He traced visual evidence of the many conquests and invasions

between one and the other throughout history, such as emblems, photographs, paintings, relics and insignia, in order to point out distinctions that are in his opinion not only historical, but also struc-

tural. He then used the differences between the two as a blueprint to map out Asia's current dialectic response to Western modernity and the overwhelming effects of globalization. (*see II, page 188*)

## This Does Not Mean Anything to Me/You Are Not and Artist / Where Are the Arabs?

SAMAH HIJAWI

During her first intervention, Samah Hijawi used videos produced for the symposium to question the structures and systems that have contributed and continue to contribute to the development of the visual arts in Jordan. "This Does Not Mean Anything to Me" and "You Are Not an Artist" are participatory works created in two institutions that 'educate' the public's understanding of visual art in Jordan: the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts and The University of Jordan Student Affairs building.

During a second intervention, Samah performed "Where Are the Arabs?" -- a performance of speech that investigates the Arab identity and the public perception to the notion of Arab Unity. It attempts to mimic the presenta-

[1.] This work was also performed in public space in Ramallah with the

Palestine Art School in 2009, and invited for participation in Disorien-

tion of a speech performed by figures of (political) authority. The live performance of the work in public space was participatory in that people from the audience were invited to take to the podium and microphone and present the speech themselves. This allowed them to contemplate their history and reflect on their connection to it, and how it is formulated in their present-day contexts. The work was first performed as an intervention in different public spaces in Amman<sup>1</sup> and was simultaneously reworked into a video performance imitating a live television broadcast, shown on TVs in cafes and restaurants around Amman.

Although not directly made clear to the audience, the speech was made tation II in Abu Dhabi where the artist was refused permission to per- form in public space.

up from different speeches that were presented throughout the Arab World between 1958<sup>2</sup> and 1961 by the former president of Egypt, Gamal Abdul Nasser.<sup>3</sup> Nasser was an instigator and advocate for the United Arab Republic, and he remains an icon in relation to the United Arab Republic project. While Nasser is never directly mentioned, the use of his speeches is a metaphoric reference to an iconic figure that resonates strongly in contemporary Arab consciousness and its utopian and glorious past.

Simultaneously, the work is also an indirect commentary on the use of the Arabic language. The work meditates on the concept of repetition in the reiteration of ideas throughout the length of the speech. Repetition is used in the Arabic language to emphasize and project conviction; in this speech it is used to generate

boredom, thus reversing its functionality.

As an intervention, the work reacts to the spaces of the locale. Samah originally didn't plan to perform the piece for the symposium, but saw an opportunity to connect it to Stefan Rusu's Flat Space installation presented as "a design that replicates the apartment space created by socialist society standards within urban landscapes of several East European cities, carrying an idealist functionality and aesthetics". The Flat Space's references to socialism, as well as the physical structure of the balcony overlooking the symposium participants called for an appropriation and an intervention with the words of the 'glorious past of the United Arab Republic. (*see IV, page 198*)

## New Silk Roads

KYONG PARK

Can diverse and convoluted processes such as transnational migration, the rise of supranational economic and legal institutions, evolution of extraterritorial zones and the social and spatial effects of globaliza-

tion be understood visually? Kyong Park effectively showed us the impossibility of the symposium's aim to decode an entire region's artistic practice. He demonstrated this by showing the impossibility of decod-

[2.] 1958 was also the year of the inauguration of the United Arab Republic. In reality, the unity was short-lived and was realized

through similar laws between Egypt and Syria, and briefly with Iraq. [3.] Gamal Abdel Nasser was the second President of Egypt

from 1954 until his death in 1970. He led the bloodless coup that toppled the monarchy of King Farouk and heralded a new period

of modernization and socialist reform in Egypt together with the advancement of pan-Arab nationalism. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

- WHERE ARE THE ARABS? -  
by Samah Hijawi (2009)

We are gathered here to celebrate the anniversary of unity and the birth of United Arab Republic. What we celebrate today is not merely the birth of Unity, nor the birth of a great nation solely, but the birth of willpower. Unity was simply the expression with which this willpower chose to express itself.

The reality, my brothers, is that Unity was simply a popular demand that gained its freedom and rid itself from all traces of foreign control. It continued to pave its path, and declared this to its rulers; the proof of this is that freedom was only achieved after a long struggle that set out from the very beginning to the very end to acquiring freedom. This was willpower. The willpower, your willpower my brothers, was the result of freedom, as there is no willpower without freedom.

This Republic, my brothers, that has risen amidst the Arab Nation to lift the flag of independence, as independence is the first step we take towards solidarity, so there is a unity and a union.

Unity, my brothers, is the means that Arabs everywhere saw towards independence and freedom. Solidarity was the path that Arabs, in every Arab country, found to safeguard independence, to protect it from those looking greedily towards us, and protect it from the oppressors.

We are the soldiers of Arab Nationalism and we have a duty, a great duty, an important duty to protect our nationalism, which has been targeted by our enemies for years, as

our parents and grandparents have protected it in the past.

Our ancestors have protected our nationalism against attack and assault, against exploit and foreign control, against plots and segregation. They were able to safeguard our nationalism and pass it onto us. We were born in this generation to see our Arab nationalism enduring, which we owe to those of our parents who fought, and our grandparents who martyred.

Today, my brothers, we have the same duty; we must safeguard our nationalism against its enemies. And there are many against Arab Nationalism, plotting and conspiring against us, there are those who wish to destroy our nationalism.

My brothers

Praise be to God, praise be to God, praise be to God who united us in truth, as the calling that has united us is one of truth. The call for Arab Nationalism unites us here today after many years of struggling and fighting, the call for Arab Nationalism that brings together faithful hearts and pure souls is a call for Truth.

The call that brought us here today is a call from God, and you are this call's soldiers, we are all soldiers for this call, all the Arab Nations are soldiers for this call. With these hearts, with these souls, with this faith and with the help of God, your call will triumph, the call of Arab Nationalism. These souls this faith, and this spirit cannot but triumph, because this call -as I said - is a call from God, otherwise these hearts, and these thousands upon thousands of people would not have agreed to it, and united towards it in every Arab country.

- BODY PARTS -  
by Lina Saneh

"I've always wanted to be cremated after my death. But cremation is forbidden in Lebanon, for religious reasons. Earth to earth, say all the monotheistic religions. Well, sort of. The formulation may vary a little from one religion to the other but the idea is the same, the forbidden identical. But I'm absolutely set on being cremated, my mind is made up, I'm not wavering. As a result, I ended up wasting a lot of time and energy trying to find a solution to my problem. [...] I have long thought of the best way to evade religious law as ratified by state law."<sup>1</sup>

One day, Lina Saneh heard that in hospitals, when they excise organs or amputate limbs from a body due to certain diseases, they dispose of them by incineration. It rang in her ears. It occurred to her that this could be a possible solution to her problem. That is, she could submit herself to a series of operations in order to have parts of her body removed. The organs and limbs removed during these operations would then be cremated: thus she would try to conquer as much of the terrain of her body as she could, leaving as little as possible to be buried once she died.

She thought long, and developed this project, and was on the point of starting its execution, when a lawyer friend of Lina's told her that operations of ablation cannot be carried out without a valid medical reason. That is because the issue falls under the jurisdiction of what is called 'medical ethics', which maintains that it is forbidden to amputate any organ that is not ill. Even if the patient demands it. It is illegal to conduct experiments on the body or

members of a being...

And this is how Lina Saneh was forced to change strategy. Based on famous artists' examples having breached this kind of laws, she decided to change her plans, and to turn them into an art project.

Some artists have already signed different parts of her body, among them:

**Orlan:** the forehead

**The Otholith Group:** the heart

**Critical Art Ensemble:** chromosome set 23

**Jalal Toufic:** Lina Saneh's often repeated exclamation *ayrî fik* when she addresses her husband

**Walid Raad:** the gesture of Lina Saneh that accompanies her kisses, when she flicks her hair away from her face with that quick left/right jerk of the head

**Lamia Joreige:** the mouth

**Joana Hadjithomas:** the blood

**Jacko Restikian:** the wind in between her curly hair

**Mireille Astore:** the nabrat in Lina's voice

**Eyad Houssami:** the voice

**Emilie Berteau:** the water in Lina's body

**Lina H.:** the left ear

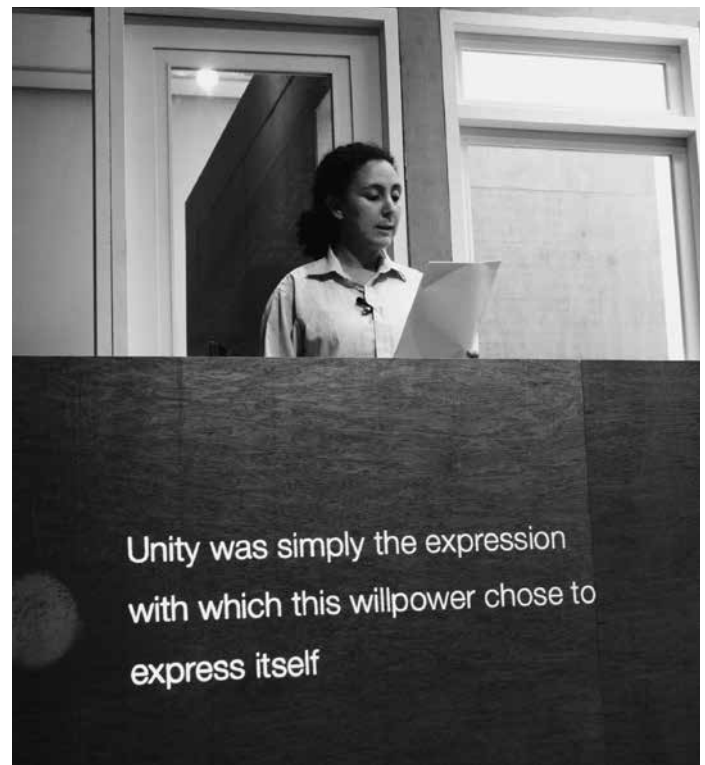
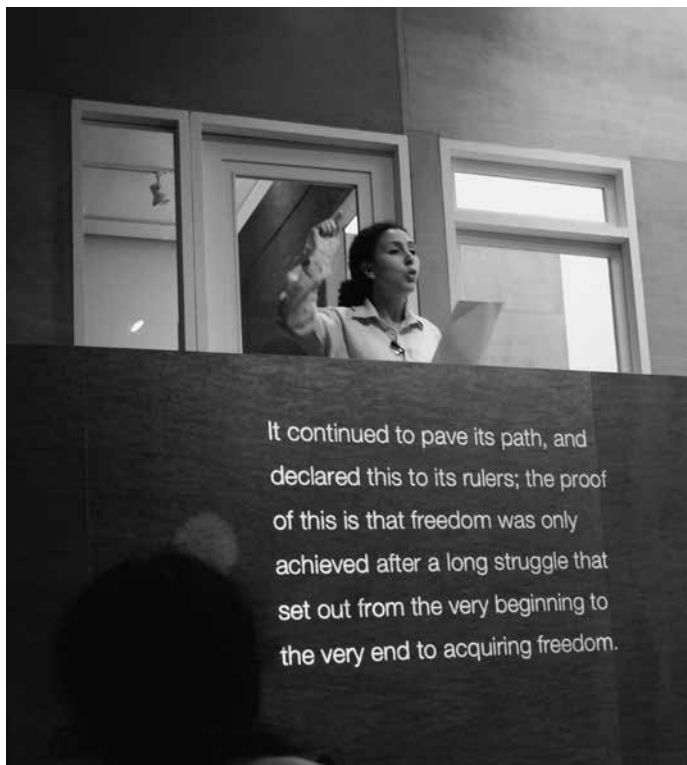
**Ala' Younis:** the iris

If you are an artist and interested in this project and would like to sign a new part of Lina Saneh's body and transform it into a work of art, contact her on: **bodypartsignature@gmail.com**

If you are an art collector and would like to buy a piece of art from Lina Saneh's body/collection, please visit her on line gallery: **www.linasaneh-body-p-arts.com**, and then contact her on: **bodypartgallery@gmail.com**

[1] Excerpts from Appendice, a performance by Lina Saneh





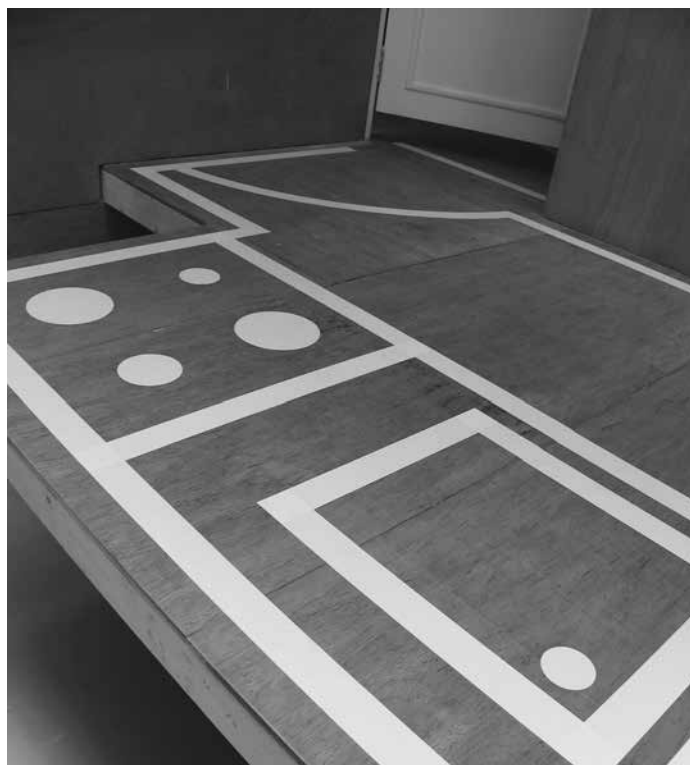














ing a regional ecology in a series of ever more refined maps that are so dense in information that they are essentially unreadable.

Kyong Park's New Silk Roads (NSR) project provided the backdrop of this contribution. NSR is a multi-faceted urban research project in which Kyong explored the nascent urban conditions emerging in rapidly expanding and transforming Asian cities and regions. Through what he calls Nomadic Practice, Kyong conducted a series of sequenced expeditions through 18 transitional regions and cities between Istanbul and Tokyo, documenting encounters with people and landscape through photography, video, and audio/video interviews of local and international experts.

The project is an examination of the territorial conditions that construct the interconnected system of

the contemporary Asian landscape. Approaching urban cities as ecology of built systems, structures and institutions, the research presents alternative understandings of urban research and theory through artistic practice. It embraces informal and emergent structures of the city to show that the multiplicity of urban processes and actors exceed single-minded domination of city construction by architects or planners.

Kyong Park translated his research into a visual language in an attempt to represent the complexity of the connections themselves. Through spatial and network mappings, time-based and data-driven visualizations, and dynamic constructions of information in visual, graphic form, New Silk Roads rendered information gathered through research into a visual expression of complex systems of contemporary Asia.

## Concretescape, Softcity

HAKAN TOPAL

In the contemporary world, why is there such urgency to redevelop, to renovate? What is being renovated and where does it occur and at whose behest? Is it the very scale of urban projects that fascinates us, or is it a persistent desire for a utopia?

During the last decade, enormous urban projects permanently changed the cityscapes around the world, but does this hide a rejection of what already is there? While Veronica Sekules read a revised version of Friedrich Engels' *The Condi-*

- CONCRETESCAPE, SOFTCITY -  
By Hakan Topal, August 2009  
Presented by Veronica Sekules

**Condition of the Working Class in England  
Thailand: "The Great Towns" By Friedrich Engels, 1844-2009**

- By Friedrich Engels, 1844-2009

A town, such as ~~London~~ Bangkok, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing. This colossal centralisation, this heaping together of ~~two and a half~~ 11 millions of human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of this ~~two and a half millions~~ 11 a hundredfold; has raised ~~London~~ Bangkok to the one of the commercial capitals of the world, created the giant docks and assembled the thousand vessels that continually cover the ~~Thames~~ Chao Phraya. I know nothing more imposing than the view which the ~~Thames~~ Chao Phraya offers during the ascent from the sea to ~~London Bridge~~. The masses of buildings, the wharves on both sides, especially from ~~Woolwich up~~ wards, the countless ships along both shores, crowding ever closer and closer together, until, at last, only a narrow passage remains in the middle of the river, a ~~passage through which hundreds of steamers shoot by one another~~; all this is so vast, so impressive, that a man cannot collect himself, but is lost in the marvel of ~~England's~~ Thailand's greatness before he sets foot upon ~~English~~ Thai soil.

What is true of ~~London~~ Bangkok, is true of ~~Manchester~~ Istanbul, ~~Birmingham~~ Mumbai, ~~Leeds~~ Lagos, is true of all great towns. Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one

shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together.

Since capital, the direct or indirect control of the means of subsistence and production, is the weapon with which this social warfare is carried on, it is clear that all the disadvantages of such a state must fall upon the poor. For him no man has the slightest concern. Cast into the whirlpool, he must struggle through as well as he can. If he is so happy as to find work, i.e., if the bourgeoisie does him the favour to enrich itself by means of him, wages await him which scarcely suffice to keep body and soul together; if he can get no work he may steal, if he is not afraid of the police, or starve, in which case the police will take care that he does so in a quiet and inoffensive manner. During my residence in ~~England~~ Thailand, I don't know how many at least ~~twenty or thirty?~~ persons have died of simple starvation under the most revolting circumstances, and a jury has rarely been found possessed of the courage to speak the plain truth in the matter. Let the testimony of the witnesses be never so clear and unequivocal, the bourgeoisie, from which the jury is selected, always finds some backdoor through which to escape the frightful verdict, death from ~~starvation~~ poverty. The bourgeoisie dare not speak the truth in these cases, for it would speak its own condemnation. But indirectly, far more than directly, many have died of ~~starvation~~ poverty, where long-continued want of proper nourishment has called forth fatal illness, when it has produced such debility that causes which might otherwise have remained inoperative brought on severe illness and death. The ~~English~~ Thai working-men call this "social murder", and accuse our whole society of perpetrating this crime perpetually. Are they wrong?

Every great city has one or more slums,

where the working-class is crowded together. True, poverty often dwells in hidden alleys close to the palaces of the rich; but, in general, a separate territory has been assigned to it, where, removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle along as it can. These slums are pretty equally arranged in all the great towns of Thailand, the worst houses in the worst quarters of the towns; usually one- or two-storied cottages in long rows, perhaps with cellars used as dwellings, almost always irregularly built.

These ~~houses~~ dwellings of one, two, sometimes three or four rooms and with or without a kitchen form, throughout ~~England~~ Thailand, some parts of London Bangkok excepted, the general dwellings of the working-class. The streets are generally unpaved, rough, dirty, filled with vegetable and animal refuse, without sewers or gutters, but supplied with foul, stagnant pools instead. Moreover, ventilation is impeded by the bad, confused method of building of the whole quarter, and since many human beings here live crowded into a small space, the atmosphere that prevails in these working-men's quarters may readily be imagined. ~~Further, the streets serve as drying grounds in fine weather; lines are stretched across from house to house, and hung with wet clothing.~~

To sum up briefly the facts thus far cited. The great towns are chiefly inhabited by working-people, since in the best case there is one bourgeois for two workers, often for three, here and there for four; these workers have no property whatsoever of their own, and live wholly upon wages, which usually go from hand to mouth. Society, composed wholly of atoms, does not trouble itself about them; leaves them to care for themselves and their fami-

lies, yet supplies them no means of doing this in an efficient and permanent manner. Every working-man, even the best, is therefore constantly exposed to loss of work and food, that is to death by ~~starvation poverty, and many perish in this way.~~ The dwellings of the workers are everywhere badly planned, badly built, and kept in the worst condition, badly ventilated, damp, and unwholesome. The inhabitants are confined to the smallest possible space, and at least one family usually sleeps in each room. The interior arrangement of the dwellings is poverty-stricken in various degrees, down to the utter absence of even the most necessary furniture. The clothing of the workers, too, is generally scanty, and that of great multitudes is in rags. ~~The food is, in general, bad; often almost unfit for use, and in many cases, at least at times, insufficient in quantity, so that, in extreme cases, death by starvation results.~~ Thus the working-class of the great cities offers a graduated scale of conditions in life, in the best cases a temporarily endurable existence for hard work and good wages, good and endurable, that is, from the worker's standpoint; in the worst cases, bitter want, reaching even homelessness and death by starvation. The average is much nearer the worst case than the best. And this series does not fall into fixed classes, so that one can say, this fraction of the working-class is well off, has always been so, and remains so. If that is the case here and there, if single branches of work have in general an advantage over others, yet the condition of the workers in each branch is subject to such great fluctuations that a single working-man may be so placed as to pass through the whole range from comparative comfort to the extremist need, even to ~~death by starvation~~, while almost every ~~English~~ Thai working-man can tell a tale of marked changes of fortune.



tion of the Working Class in England adapted to the Asian context, Hakan Topal created a landscape utilizing Portland cement around her, critically to evaluate current artistic strategies and to examine concepts of 'fascination' and 'distaste'.

Topal's performance operated at several levels: as a compelling physical action, as historical analysis, as a critical, conceptual piece, and as a topical commentary on art history. It was concerned with 'unbuilding'

and with refuting construction. In working against the substance of architectural modernity, Topal was also recanting its knowledge, disavowing its claims. We are reminded that modernists like Le Corbusier at one point dreamt the great modernist dream: that we could build ourselves out of dystopia and into utopia and that we could tame the unruly life of the street. In many modernist places, Topal reminds us, we have only managed to build ourselves into a corner.

## Instant Future

ELS SILVRANTS-BARCLAY

"The transience of life and the passing of time are inevitable, thus the objective of both idealist and materialist alike should break into the present moment." (Hu Fang, writer, quotes the Book of Changes)

Instant Future is a research project that Els Silvrants-Barclay initiated with curator-architect Chen Shuyu with invited artists and theorists. The research culminated in a series of performances and installations in 2008 and 2009. During the symposium, Els gave a short introduction to the theoretical framework behind the research.

Instant Future draws upon two seem-

ingly contradictory realities in China: an understanding of a future that is hardly granted any existence in traditional Chinese thought, in a country where the biggest "futurist" project seems to be finding its form. On billboards and in government campaigns, future appears as one of the leading narratives. Spectacular simulations and futurist imagery portray an image of the Chinese future that may never see the light, but plays an important role as propaganda in the here and now – as a kind of instant future.

However, some of the spectacular imagery actually does become reality. In recent years, China has witnessed the construction of megal-

maniac real estate projects – villa parks in the desert, European-style towns, malls and castles, entire new cities – rendered in real-life.

It is exactly on these borderlines between real fake and fake real, between imagery and its reality that Instant Future operates. It provides

artists and theorists with a framework to develop artistic science fictions, reproducing existing and creating new mediated images that, along with public interventions, reflect on the power of the rendered image as an important capitalist and nationalist tool in China, and beyond.

## Stop Masturbating and Join the Revolution!

ARAHMAIANI

Together with a Singaporean artist, Iani, Arahmaiani initiated an ongoing community art project in 2007 called the Flag Project for which they have been collaborating with young artists/activists/students for a series of interventions. The project is concerned with the problem of systems of control that are manifest in different forms and on different levels in the Asian region. It takes the simple act of stitching together a flag, fixing it to a pole and collec-

tively waving with the aim of instigating a political sensibility. The intervention draws to a close when a startling collection of flags is left behind, like evidentiary statements.

During the symposium, Arahmaiani both presented and demonstrated the Flag Project. She elaborated on the roots of her community-based activism, and invited all the participants to be part of a new episode of the project. (*see V, page 202*)

## Conversation with Democracy

NIKOLOZ (NIKUSHA) CHKHAIDZE

This performance involved the artist and a water cannon. He tried to walk towards the cannon while its jet of water violently pushed him

back, pounding and bruising his body until he was engulfed by sheer exhaustion. With this action - an individual, ineffective gesture

against control – Nika showed that politics always put the body at risk, whether present or not. He also demonstrated that power (and the power of knowledge) is everywhere, and is sometimes measured by the didactic, propulsive, unidirectional flows we have inherited, but do not have to accept.

Nika's performance was inspired by the November 2007 demonstrations

in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia: the first political demonstrations for which Georgia's "democratic" government used water cannons against protestors. The water cannons and the trucks on which they were mounted had both been imported from the European Union. The government thus seemed to have introduced, along with the institutions and practices of Western democracy, its methods of repression as well.

## Travelling through History and Cultures: Xinjiang and Its Inspiration for Art

MU QIAN

What are the remnants of Shamanistic practices in Xinjiang, China's most Western province? Can they be traced and acknowledged from the dense practices of several cultures in a complicated region? A dervish who has been living naked in chains for 25 years, the Buwi religious women singers, a holy Mazar of Is-

lamic saints who stand by a group of grottoes with Buddhist frescoes are just a few cases that Mu Qian has researched with his Pentatonic Workshop over the past years. During his presentation, he provided us an insight in this ongoing work through video documentation and music recordings.

## Period

SHAARBEEK AMANKUL

After a short introductory talk on the situation of contemporary art in

the Kyrgyz Republic after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Shaarbek







Amankul presented 4 of his video works devoted to the theme of shamanism and revolution. “Duba” and “Sham” (2007) both show a shamanistic purification ritual. In almost anthropological fashion, Shaarbek explores the power of informal medicine and traditional

rituality in times of social upheaval and drastic change. In “Vatan” and “We Need to Live” (2007) he juxtaposes images of riots, massacres and demonstrations with every-day scenes, showing the absurdity of human action and the extravagant diversity of life.

## Museum as a Method: Visualizing the Community

HOWARD CHAN

Chan’s work in the Community Museum Project (CMP) turns the current flow of information back upon itself by refocusing on the methodologies and interlocking concepts of the museum, of visual research and social curating, to not only make the public audience, but also participants.

In his presentation, he placed cultural preservation of every-day rituals in

the contexts of both community self-awareness and curatorial strategy, explaining why the knowledge produced from within needs to be preserved. His museum of the streets enables self-recognition and analysis to become part of the process of forming a collective memory, thus instigating a new understanding of how a museum can function in the development of communities and their histories.

## Syncretise!

AGUNG HUJATNIKAJENNONG + JOMPET A.K.A KUSWIDANANTO

Agung Hujatnikajennong presented slides and an arresting video introducing the artistic practice of a young artist from Yogyakarta, Jompeta a.k.a Kuswidananto. Both Agung and Jompeta are intrigued by the encounter of Indonesian society with technology.

Jompeta’s installations, built out of recycled electronic equipment, share a historical and a sociological dimension. They reflect his ongoing research on the Javanese colonial era, when the Dutch introduced machines to the peasant’s lives.

IN YET ANOTHER CONTESTED,  
EMBATTLED REGION OF  
THE WORLD HOW DOES  
THE PRODUCTION OF  
ART CHANGE WITH EACH  
POLITICAL REGIME, EACH NEW  
ECONOMIC ALLIANCE, EACH  
SUCCESSIVE SOCIAL SHIFT?



Next to the screening of a video showing a hybridized ritual of a dancer flowing through a factory to bless machines, Jompet set-up an installation in the symposium classroom titled “Java Machine” and performed a live action in it. In this particular work, that is an orchestration of moving image, three-dimensional objects, sound and performance, Jompet explores the boundaries between reality and illusion, material and immaterial; between form and image, mechanics and magic; and

finally between Javanese and non-Javanese. The objects take the form of ‘ghost soldiers’ for which Jompet uses the uniform of Yogyakarta’s Sultanese Royal soldiers or bregada (adapted from the Dutch word Brigade) to question the notion of ‘Java-ness’ reflected in the details of the uniform. The uniform combines Western with traditional Javanese elements, and thus represents the kind of syncretism that has served as the survival mechanism for Javanese culture until now.

## Memory talks and walks: Long March Project - Ho Chi Minh Trail

ZOE BUTT WITH ERIN GLEESON + RATTANA VANDY + NGUYEN TRINH THI + LE HUY HOANG

Zoe Butt presented three artistic projects from Vietnam and Cambodia as part of the Long March Project - Ho Chi Minh Trail. The project was an ambitious undertaking, attempting to renegotiate the cultural memory of this historical trail through the voices of those who had lived through the event, thus examining issues of nationhood and citizenship, constructed memory, historical consciousness and much more.

The symposium participants were invited to write their own responses to a questionnaire inspired by the Chinese concept of ‘Tianxia’ (a con-

cept that orders the world in a set of divine principles) as part of a project by Cambodian photographer Rattana Vandy and curator Erin Gleeson. Nguyen Trinh Thi, an artist and filmmaker from Vietnam screened “Chronicle of a Tape Recorded Over”, a newly commissioned work marking the artist's re-tracing of Le Huy Hoang's father's journey as a soldier during the Vietnam War. Le Huy Hoang subsequently performed a personal and deeply troubling story using a belt and a red felt-tipped marker referencing the history of division and oppression in Vietnamese history. (*see III, page 197*)

## Chronicle of a Tape Recorded Over

NGUYEN TRINH THI

Using “exquisite corpse,” a method by which stories and images are randomly assembled as a process of selection and response, Nguyen Trinh Thi conducted a journey over the Vietnam War’s infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail with fellow artist Le Huy Hoang. Tracing Hoang’s father’s

wartime footsteps along the northern section of this trail, they asked local villagers to contribute their experiences along this route, which the filmmaker merged into a unique tale of reality and fiction in her search for an alternate image of what has become a national narrative.

## Tianxia Survey

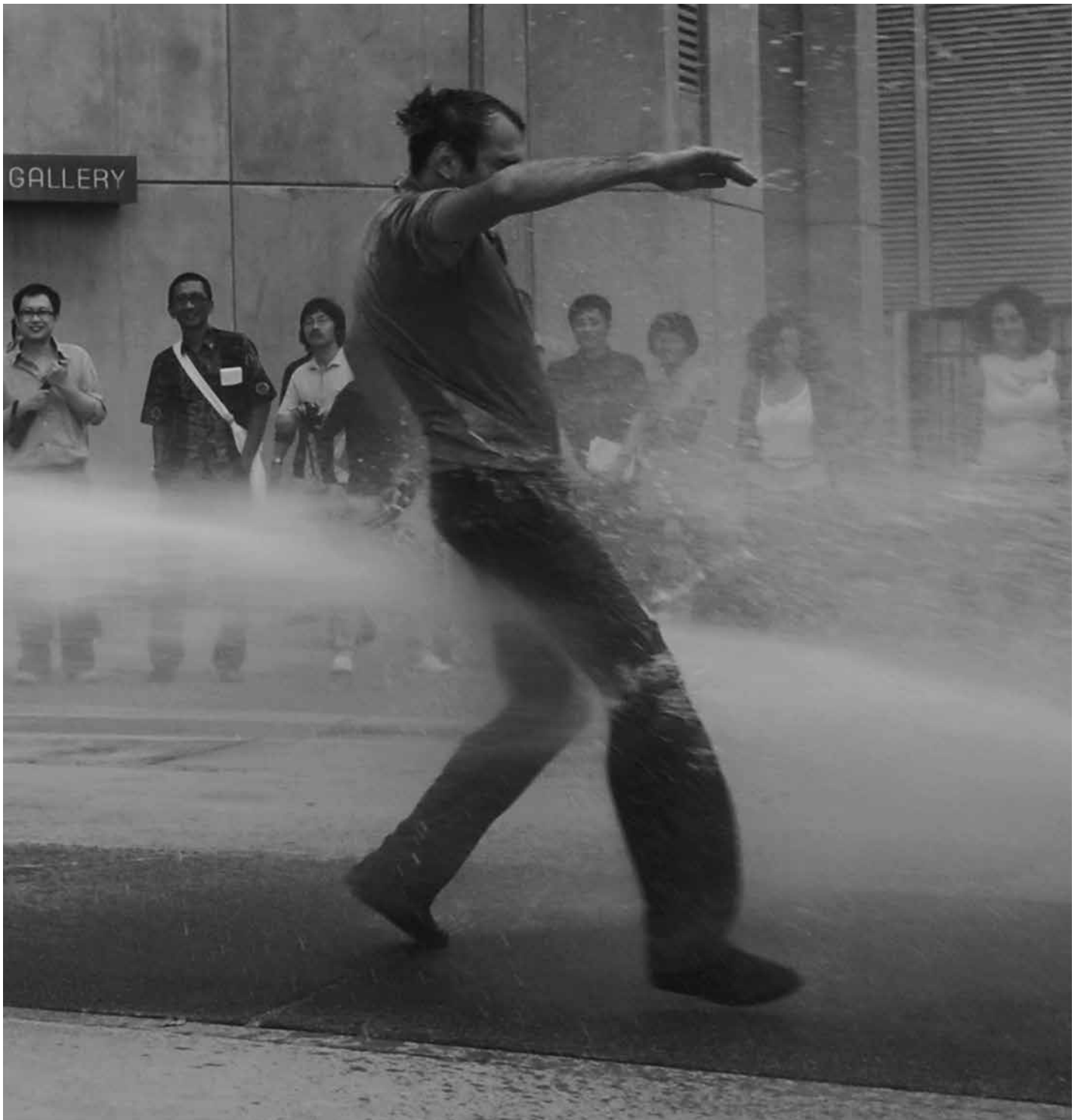
ERIN GLEESON + RATTANA VANDY

In August 2009, Erin Gleeson and Rattana Vandy began a series of interviews in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where they both live and work. These interviews were conducted in response to the ‘Ho Chi Minh Trail’ project, initiated by the Long March Project in Beijing. Within this artistic and educational project, ideas of nationhood, historical consciousness, stigmas of cultural stereotypes and much more, were challenged in order to examine the present day influence of shared histories between China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

The ‘Tianxia’ survey was developed after a month-long discursive residency, organized by the Long March

Project in July 2009 where a select group of artists, curators and scholars from all over Asia gathered at the Long March Space in Beijing to share critical views of the complex cultural history shared between the communities that exist along the historic Ho Chi Minh Trail. This revealed an expansive and overlapping set of influences and narratives, and provoked discussion on politics, nationalism and ideology that was particularly insightful in the context of personal, cultural or spiritual perspectives. The ancient Chinese concept of universality or connectivity, ‘Tianxia’ (all under heaven), became a recurring vehicle to move beyond the stereotypes of





















“TIANXIA SURVEY” REFERS  
TO AN IDEA THAT THE TERM  
‘NATIONALISM’ SHOULD BE  
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OTHER.

territorial nationalism and concepts of ‘otherness’.

“Tianxia Survey” refers to an idea that the term ‘nationalism’ should be interpreted more subtly than as a variation of patriotism which invokes a sense of self and

other. The Tianxia survey calls for a more holistic application of nationalism in which two elements of society are taken into account: one described by the concepts of cultural, personal, or spiritual, and another related to the civic, political, or material.

## The Red Road

LE HUY HOANG

Le Huy Hoang stepped on an empty wooden stage of 10-15 meters long and 4-5 meters wide carrying a simple plastic belt (the kind used by Vietnamese soldiers) and holding a two-sided red marker. He unbuckled the belt and used it as a ruler to draw a straight line along the whole length of the stage with the thin side of the red marker. Afterwards, he switched to the thicker side of the marker, now holding it in his left hand, while taking the belt as a lash in his right hand. He started to draw over the thin red line with his unstable left hand. Each time his marker

strayed from the original line, his right hand whipped his left with a lash. With the whipping of the belt becoming more and more intense, the raw sound of the belt beating the skin and the wood became unbearably louder.

This performance, evoking a passage in his personal history, attempted to elucidate the experiential consequence of controlling boundary and border during political conflict, drawing attention to the physical and emotional hurt endured by countless silent victims.

## Untitled

GARY ROSS PASTRANA WITH SUPERNORMAL

What kind of crushed and stitched-up bodies are created in the reworking of culture? What is the potential influence of an outsider who doesn’t

know the codes of what we consider ours? When we take cultural objects apart and reconstruct them in the secret places of our tiny rooms, have

we begun a revolution? Are the only objects that can be made these days the ones that are in fact remade?

Taking the remaking of culture as a literal reconstruction of objects, Pastrana undertook a two-day performative action with two chairs representing two radically different cultures, one clearly from the East and another from the West. Togeth-

er with the Supernormal group who acted as performers, he engaged in a painfully slow, piece-by-piece deconstruction of these chairs, transferring their sawn and hacked off parts through a small hole in the wall of Stefan Rusu's Flat Space to "the other side", where he reconstructed another object, manifestly different in aesthetic, utility and meaning.

## Censorship and Individuality in Afghanistan

RAHRAW OMARZAD

In yet another contested, embattled region of the world how does the production of art change with each political regime, each new economic alliance, each successive social shift? Rahraw Omarzad presented, through slides and video, an interior perspective on the changing situation of the arts in Afghanistan. Omarzad sought to historicize the contexts and contents of the work

produced in the region during various epochs: the time of communism, the Mujahidin, the Taliban, and after the Taliban. He showed how a new movement of women in the visual arts has emerged and examined the forms of media that are beginning to grow alongside this movement, including an art magazine, and a recently inaugurated arts organization.

## This is Not a Fairytale

ARK FONGSMUT WITH PRATCHAYA PHINTHONG

What does Žižek mean when he says that "reality" and "social reality" are being formulated by the superimposition of illusion in our

exchange of information, and that this imposition seems to hinder and extort our ability to verify 'real' information and circumstances?

In answer, Ark Fongsmut, with Pratchaya Phinthong, will restage Rehearsal No. 1-2008, first enacted at the SEA Art Festival in 2008.

Aware that globalization breeds indiscriminate information that travels across geographical, linguistic,

and ethnic barriers, bringing along its own reality of entangled truth and fiction; they will not discover or reveal truth, but create it—the role that still essentially cannot escape making our experience, in some sense, real.

## Body pArts project/Appendice

LINA SANEH

In “Appendice”, Lina Saneh performed a kind of retelling of her Body pArts project. Through exaggeration and absurdity, she presented her own body as the terrain on which a cultural war is fought, with the stakes being either individual or collective ownership, of that body. By way of escaping her cultural police force, she devised a way to get rid of the body, piece by piece, until there is nothing left over which to fight.

In Lina Saneh’s Body pArts project she first transforms her body into a collection of art pieces. She invites artists from Lebanon and the entire world, as well as any person interested in or concerned with art, to sign a part of her body. There are no restrictions on choices or divisions of the body parts, however no changes to the parts are allowed. Artists must choose and define the part they wish to sign without any alterations to the nature of the part.

For the purpose of this collaboration, a small text is required, related to the piece the artist wishes to sign. This text will be published on the Body pArts website, along with the signature and the chosen piece. Once the artist signs the body part (that then consequently becomes an art piece) Lina will cordially accept it as a donation or present. The artist at stake will have no rights over this piece unless Lina decides to sell it to a gallery, a museum or a collector. In that case, his/her shares will constitute 65% of the total fee paid for the work.

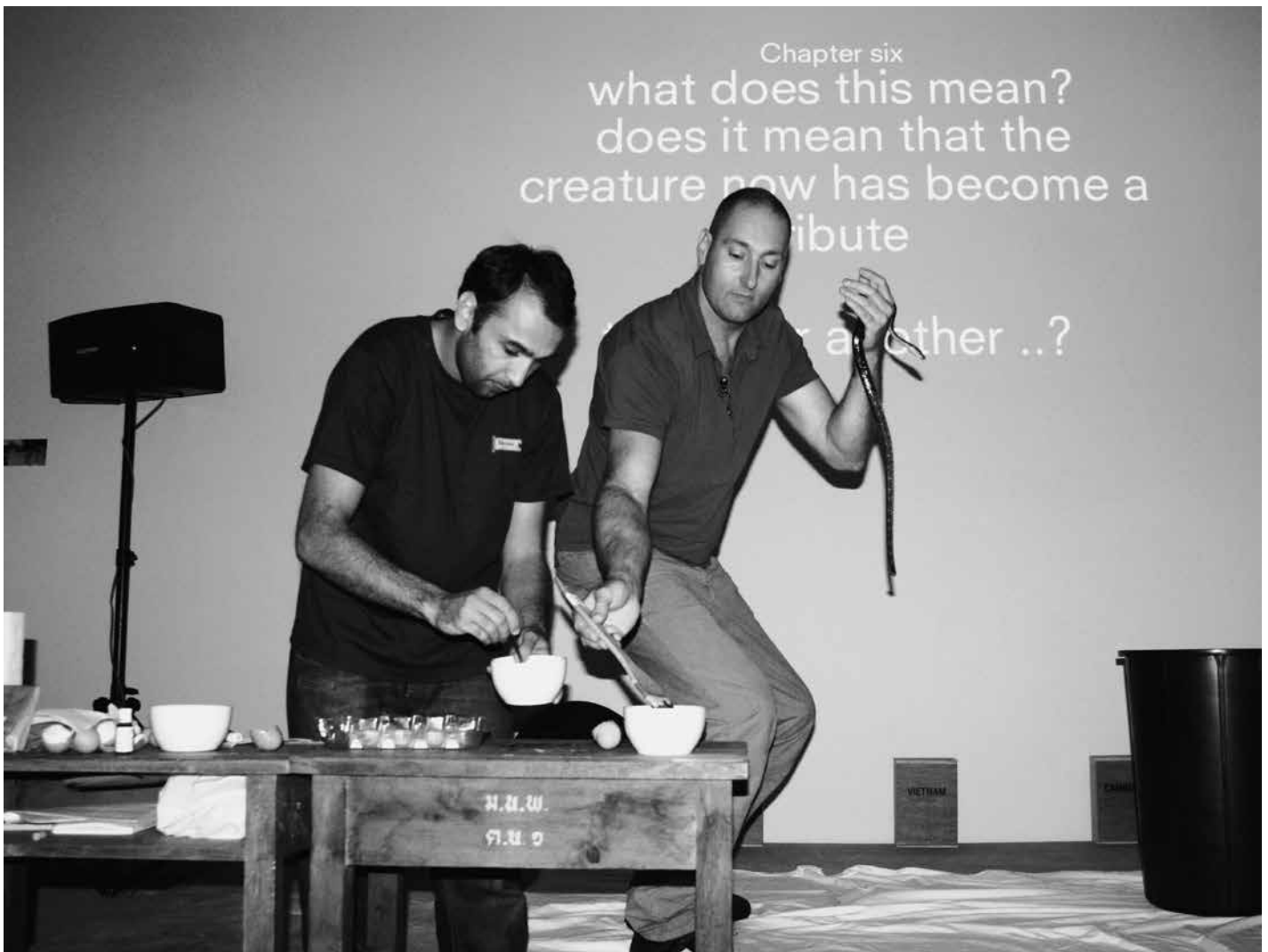
As parts of her body get signed, the Lina Saneh Body pArts Gallery presents her body/collection-of-art-pieces to galleries, museums, and collectors, who might be interested to buy them. The only condition is that they will not receive these artworks/parts-of-her-body until she dies, at which point her body will be























cut up and each piece sent to its new owners. The latter are then free to exhibit them or refrain from doing so. They are also free to sell them to any interested party, gallery or private collector (this is moreover allowed in her lifetime), however the

new owners are contractually bound to preserve them from any deterioration, or otherwise to burn them. The ashes can then be exhibited or else sold again as pieces of art, or even disposed of, with no one being bound to keep them any longer.

## Unquestioned

VERONICA SEKULES

Taking up the theme of the classroom but subverting both its hierarchy as space and as cultural phenomenon, Veronica Sekules presented a collaborative exercise for all the artists and presenters of the symposium. Participants were asked to help to rearrange the room to form a long table down its centre. It was then draped in a simulated silk cloth formed of white plastic picnic tablecloths on which she had written a series of questions, one for each number of the partici-

pants, and which reflected questions that had arisen in the previous days. Everyone who cared to participate wrote their answers and then some individuals were invited to perform them silently in a series of charades, to make a further play on layers of meaning and interpretation for the benefit of those who had not taken part. Under the guise of a playful interlude, Sekules spurred on the speakers to articulate and perform some of the unspoken themes of the symposium.

## Cina Tu Madre/Trojan Horse

SUPERSUDACA – MAX ZOLKWER AND FELIX MADRAZO

Just before the symposium, Arthub invited Max and Felix to speed-visit Shanghai for five days. They developed a reverse research strategy by first of all tracing down the Chinese goods, architecture and people in their hometown to shape a tourist-

to-do-list of myths and clichés as the basis of a fast, short and superficial investigation.

During the symposium, they shared their observations for the first time. This brought about a lively discus-

- 'WHAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED?' OR 'AS LONG AS IT LASTS!' -  
*Script for a play in two acts by Onno Dirker*

## ACT ONE:

'WHAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED?'

-

- [VOICE 1] we are here, with only this clue "the making of  
 new roads"  
 we are dropped in a classroom, with its furni-  
 ture and simple decoration, tables in rows, side by  
 side  
 we are disposed, displayed in a class, uncomfort-  
 able and unpleasant, we sit down and behave
- [VOICE 2] watching successively slide by slide, slide,  
 slide, slice-images, as long as it lasts  
 the other presenters  
 drifting thoughts  
 minds working, cognition start  
 I was thinking: who is going to control these  
 roads?
- [VOICE 3] directions and cultural logistics  
 freight, equal to weight
- [VOICE 4] we saw a flag, a horseman and wolves from Mongolia  
 white for peace and black for war  
 then a wolf and a deer married  
 their offspring became the invaders of China  
 so we were told  
 yesterday
- [VOICE 5] passing by  
 she said: wait!  
 we all got to make our roads
- [VOICE 6] we made it fake to make it real
- [VOICE 7] we are running out of time  
 when things develop so fast  
 there is no time to think about the future  
 the future becomes now, an actual action
- [VOICE 8] he smashed his red line on stage  
 using his belt as a leading string  
 I realized that this action is enough  
 to achieve the impossible  
 for today.  
 today I'll board the "today" ship  
 without colours

ACT TWO:  
'AS LONG AS IT LASTS!'

-

- - - - ON STAGE, A TABLE, MAKING EGGS TEMPERA, AN ASSISTANT HELPS - - - -

[VOICE 1]           this is an egg  
                      it's also a construction  
                      an idea  
                      the future, I remember  
  
                      to make a colour, an egg is a component  
                      I need it  
                      perhaps to paint a non colour, white or black  
                      perhaps to paint a wolf  
                      or a man  
  
                      in a pink suit  
                      or a red

- - - - - - - ASSISTANT BRINGS A SNAKE IN A CLOSED BASKET - - - - - - -

                      I am searching for a symbol  
                      to bring it into the picture of the making of  
the silk roads  
                      I thought of a Garuda, the image brought by  
neighbors  
                      but I want a Cobra instead! The emblem of a King  
                      could I get one? here? the Naga  
                      mighty and dangerous  
                      and play with the protector of your homes  
  
                      look, do not worry I'm an expert, I know how  
to handle it

- - - - TAKES THE SNAKE OUT OF THE BASKET AND PAINTS IT WITH A BRUSH - - - -

                      I paint this Cobra pink  
                      picture it!  
                      I painted this Cobra black  
                      picture it!  
  
                      the creature wants to adopt a tangible form, it  
wants to become a tribute,  
                      but what does it transmit?  
                      It is behaviour, it is patterns, it is strength  
  
                      it is a coil  
                      it is a sign  
                      a sign that, while it has been coloured,  
becomes the 'Cobra'

sion on the exoticisms and projections that unavoidably occur to and in-between the different cultures connected by the (new) silk roads.

## 'What needs to be addressed?' or 'As long as it lasts!' – a play in two acts /The Cultural Agenda of Baghdad

ONNO DIRKER

Onno Dirker took a symbol that appeared to have cultural meaning and fancifully and naively asked how that meaning could be reconstituted by changing the symbol—with a coat of paint.

Later that day, Onno also elaborated on the project “The Cultural Diary of Baghdad” that he developed with

Rudy Luijters (with whom he initiated Atelier Veldwerk). The project consists of a series of ‘diaries’ that each chart a period in the cultural life of the city. The diaries, that are hard to compile, open up the endurance and determination of the Iraqi’s to maintain their cultural engagement to both a Western and Middle Eastern audience.

## Postcards from Herrick

DAVID COTTERRELL

If we struggle to understand what our gaze encounters, how will that struggle be inhibited by the frames through which we see? If we imagine seeing as a contest, always blocking out as much as it takes in, then what do we lose in giving up on that struggle? When the view is already framed for us do we turn then into passive recipients of a

manu-factured/mediated product? Can the looking in an unrecognized space make us more cognizant of what is at risk in the process of looking?

In his presentation, David Cotterrell compared the vast horizons of contested landscapes with the narrow frames that restrict views from the

military camp in Afghanistan where he resided twice since the outbreak of the war. These narrow frames of view are typically from behind armour and barriers and restrict one to generalized assumptions and uninformed politics. As an “embedded” artist he testified about the intimate contact he developed with the soldiers wounded in battles, using the technological aid of high definition

video to take us into the detailed perspective that renders the viewer both informed and responsible for this new information. The work struggles with the inherent contradictions of this knowledge: the majesty of the environment, the degradation of the conflict, the constant precariousness of life, the lengths through which so many go to preserve it. (*see I, page 189*)

## I.

## POSTCARDS FROM HERRICK

by *David Cotterrell*

After returning from Afghanistan for the second time in mid-2008, I was asked on a variety of occasions to offer an ‘independent observer’s view’ of the trauma of front-line field hospitals, the ecological impact of conflict, and the role of NGOs in construction and master planning in transitional environments (amongst other subjects on which I am under-qualified to offer expert analyses). After the novelty of my experiences had been exposed, documented and discussed, a few journalists, exhibition visitors, and event audience members asked me to try to explain how a tangential and aberrant experience such as that offered to ‘War Artists’ can be reconciled with a longer-term practice as an artist.

With no great confidence, but with some intuitive feeling, I exclaimed that I had recognised a few parallels. I tend to talk without notes at public events with the inevitable result of periodically stumbling upon latent ideas and learning on-the-hoof a little about the subject that I am attempting to navigate. I had realised as I tried to recount my journey in a chronological narrative, prompted by my projected photographs and the memory of my scribbled diary, that one of the most profound experiences of advancing forward through the military supply-lines was of a gradual disengagement with any perceivable macro-picture of context.

In November 2007, as I travelled from Brize Norton (in rural Oxfordshire) to the Commando base at Sangin (in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan) my view shifted from a TV, newspaper and Internet informed assumption of global understanding to an increasingly narrow perspective. I last saw television news on 1 November; I had printed out Internet-sourced maps of Helmand, bought a Lonely Planet guide to Afghanistan, and attended regional military briefings in Yorkshire. I read a copy of *The Guardian* and then loaded all my worldly camera gear into an army-surplus Bergen and entered the military environment.

When I arrived in Kandahar 24 hours later, I was taken to Regional Command South (RCSouth) where I was guided through maps of the war as understood in the provinces with which the British were principally engaged (Kandahar and Helmand). Mention was made of Kabul in passing (as I had expressed an interest in visiting the city), but it did not appear on the maps and charts posted in the walls of the pre-fabricated hut. I quickly progressed to the desert base of Camp Bastion (this time by the smaller Hercules transport plane) and was there to be acclimatised to my principal new home, 201 Field Hospital. At ‘Prayers’ (the morning intelligence briefing) in the tented Hospital Management Cell, our context was unveiled. An annotated and detailed chart covered the table surrounded by senior officers. As well as the familiar battlefields of Kajaki and Sangin, it had the names of places that I had not seen on any of my printed maps, ‘Bryce’, ‘Delhi’, ‘Dwyer’ and ‘Inkerman’. The map was centred on our current location and displayed concentric circles emanating from the hospital. No miles were marked—distances were now measured in Chinook flight-times.

As the briefings progressed, I was amazed by the detail. Suicide bombers tailing convoys were described, the location and probability of attacks over the following 12 hours were declared. However, the world beyond 40-minute helicopter flight-time was no longer referenced. The last broadcast news that I had seen included alarming reports of the possible descent of Pakistan into civil unrest and even the potential for martial law being declared. Pakistan was now close. We heard rumours of problems as the milk supply at breakfast had dried up due to repeated Taliban ambushes on the supply convoys crossing the border.

I decided to try to find a newspaper. Post did come to Bastion – it had to compete for space with ammunition, medical supplies, reinforcements, and military equipment, but it was a recognised priority and would be regularly delivered by the same route that I had been deployed to theatre. But there was a delay, the newspapers all predated 1 November and merely offered additional commentary on the stories that I had read prior to my arrival.

Two weeks later the papers had begun to address the date of my departure, but I had been unsettled by the claustrophobia of Bastion and the death and injury witnessed at the hospital. I could no longer wait and begged passage on a Chinook helicopter, first to Lash-Kagar and then onwards to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Sangin. While Lash-Kagar had offered the welcome opportunity to discuss the abstraction of the political challenges to governance and progression with Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) officials, Sangin was a forward base and occupied contested territory in the poppy-growing area. 40 Commando's 'Bravo' Company and a mortar team from the Coldstream Guards populated it.

Once again my ambiguous status and rank enabled me to attend intelligence briefings and even shuras with local Afghan leaders. The shift in awareness was striking. The briefings still lasted for nearly an hour but the scope had now been reduced. The horizon was no longer 40 minutes flight-time but measured by the range of foot patrols. We now knew the names of the Taliban commanders who were camped on the hills around us and were even aware of rumours of rivalries and intrigue amongst them. Within a couple of kilometres we had a vivid detailed mental picture. The rest of the world, Kabul and even Kandahar was now abstracted beyond comprehension.

I remained in Sangin until the end of November, stranded as the helicopters were diverted to support the attack on Musa-Kala. I had to wait until my return to the UK to read news more current than the date of my departure a month earlier. I discovered that Pakistan had not yet descended into chaos after all and only one of the soldiers that I had witnessed being injured had made it into the press-released history of the conflict.

The lens shows us too much, flattening perception and reducing the impact of all information to a common level. We survey and summarise instead of empathising and engaging. Photographic composition offers us a perceived hierarchy of characters and events. We are guided to the dominant

narratives through the editing of footage. The digestion of media does not readily support concentration on the more mundane sub-plots hidden beyond the camera's depth of field and edited out of the limited time frame of the bulletin.

Unsurprisingly a short journey such as this results in a feeling of dislocation and disorientation. The uneasy relation between first-hand experience and mediated understanding appears fragmented and false.

When required then to contribute to the canon of mediated knowledge and demonstrate an understanding of truth to a wider audience a clear choice becomes apparent: to offer a contribution with the vocabulary of received secondary experience or to possibly disappoint with a less dramatic view based on my own observations. Perhaps in my case a focus on the dramatic and catastrophic impact of violence on the human-body would have been possible and appropriate. This aspect of war was vividly documented in the photographic and written record of my time in the desert operating theatres of Afghanistan. However, while this is the imagery, which I recognised as representative in my research prior to submitting an expression of interest to engage with this project, it no longer appeared congruent with the way in which my haunting memories of this short time were framed. The images behind my eyelids were of gore and despair, but the traumatic nature of the memories was not rooted in the inherent shock of these images. The distance that I was feeling from my colleagues, friends and family on my return to England was due to a memory of the calm, silent and slow experience of isolation, disorientation, and uncertainty, which I had perceived to pervade the open-ended narratives that begin at the moment of injury. The press images of guns being fired, the protest images of bloody injuries, and the smug ironies of contemporary art statements all failed to offer a form of fellowship with my private demons. They seemed to focus on digestible if unpalatable ideas. Images in the public domain offer satisfaction by reinforcing our sentence-long analyses of conflict, whether jingoistic 'support our troops or 'down with Bush', the images, works

of art, and news items supported unspoken single line captions and could be adopted by disparate audiences.

I chose to deliberately make work that failed to satisfy the desire for drama (either as guilty pleasure or oppositional exposé). The work was to focus on the mundane and ambiguous experiences that remain un-newsworthy: the frozen, interminable, night-time evacuation flights, the uncertain waiting for casualties, the abstraction of trauma through codified military terminology, and the administrative burden of death and injury. It was interesting that when unveiled, my responses naturally bemused some of the commentators. While weary war correspondents, serving soldiers, recent casualties, veteran doctors and nurses seemed to empathise with the material that I introduced to the public domain, there was a palpable sense of disappointment from the art journalists who had visited the work, seeking a satisfying and definitive response.

Writing in *Art Monthly*, Michael Corris appeared to lament the restraint with which the work addressed (or denied) the emotive potential of the traumatic first-hand experience. Having had the opportunity to read my diary extracts reprinted in *The Guardian*, he was aware of the material that was potentially available for synthesis into statements for art world consumption. Yet the work presented offered nothing but a bleak and uneventful representation of the period before and after the politically sensitive and personally devastating experience of military injury.

The parallels with my existing practice, identified while cathartically recounting my journey through the casualty chain of Afghanistan in front of a London audience, were not derived from the extremity of experience, a political critique or a relation to process. The congruity that I felt with a longer-term practice was with an acknowledgement of the consistency of fragmentation between personal and collective narratives. The illusion of linear history has been well explored through the insightful writings of Christopher Hill, who in his re-examination of the records of the English Civil

War, acknowledged that a national history could only ever be an illusionary approximation superimposed across disparate local experiences. What I found in Afghanistan was that in order to immerse oneself in the reality of an experience previously perceived from a macro-view, rather than finding a clearer understanding, the collapse of the authority of the summary analysis is experienced. The reduction of contextual peripheral vision appeared directly proportional to the increasingly vivid primary experience of conflict. The dramas and rationales for policies, campaigns and battles fragmented to become visible only as contradictory, arbitrary incidents. As empathy was gained with individuals, faith in the ability of history or politics to transmit the rationale for (or the reality of) suffering appeared to dissolve.

This contradiction of the macro and first-person view is something that I had previously assumed to pervade all experience of politics, urbanisation, and domestic life. I had even developed work to explore the abstraction of planning and urban analyses. Yet, while recognising that summary slogans are unlikely to represent my personal experience of love, life or bereavement, I had still naïvely consumed the illusionary, comforting, iconic summaries of external abstracted experience offered through broadcast and print media. Although we have all experienced the collapse of prejudice when confronted with the complexity of personal experience, I had unconsciously allowed and accepted a digestible critical response to aspects of life, which I had previously been confident never to have to directly challenge or test.

The Kino-Eye has an internal logic, but like the rules of perspective in two-dimensional drawing, does not provide a record of reality or perception, merely an alternate construct of reality. The lens alone cannot offer us a window onto an alternate experience as it promises, but instead offers a shared experience of a virtual world created by the lens. Our focus is led and guided to perceive a hierarchy of events and experiences, which might have been lost or at least reduced, through the mechanical time-base of the original



footage.

For me it was striking that within a single geographic location, the mode of arrival and symbolic references to community allegiance provided a robust and limiting set of parameters defining the nature and scope of my observational position. On my second visit to Afghanistan, I travelled free from military escort to the north of the country and unlike higher-value NGO personnel was able to travel relatively autonomously on foot and by taxi through civilian areas. The contrast in the view is enormous. Of course Helmand and the Panjshir cannot be easily compared – Afghanistan is a tribal and fragmented country with radically different levels of risk evident across its geography. However common elements were visible, in the nature of perimeters and boundaries installed to protect varying communities from the threats posed by one another.

There are two specific frameworks that remain pertinent for me. The limitation of perspective achieved through the vehicles and structures developed to protect fragile bodies from ordinance and the proliferation of artificial barriers to divide landscapes and communities. It was interesting to compare the vast horizons of contested landscapes with the narrow frames that serve to restrict views during conflict. It became striking to me that during my second trip to Afghanistan my peripheral vision was struggling to comprehend the majesty of the environment. During my first visit, the frames that contained the view frequently became the dominant experience. I became fascinated by the templates, which visually contained and defined perception of environments, where communities view each other from behind armour and barriers.

One of the most profound realisations of my visits to Afghanistan was that despite media-induced familiarity with the aesthetics and contextual references, I had failed to remind myself that the gradual assumption of knowledge gained from exposure to synthesised reality rarely prepares – or insulates – the viewer for the inevitable contradiction between mediated and primary participation. I had been reminded of a conversation with

my grandfather during my childhood, that war was mainly boredom, punctuated with brief periods of intensity. However, I had not understood that the undocumented intervals between dramatic events were also dominant and emotionally charged experiences.

When I returned to the UK, I began to feel that the fictionalisation of a recorded event might actually offer a greater focus on the reality of the moment. I was reminded of what we must instinctively feel as artists: that rather than remain satisfied with a synthetic alternative, we need to intervene and challenge our media to attempt to regain the initial experience. By accepting the impossibility of providing an objective macro-view and by considering the limitations of the documentary witness, perhaps we can compensate for the inherent error of the Kino-Eye, its false narratives, and its great illusion of truth.

## II.

### NEW SILK ROAD: THE FATE OF THE OLD CONTINENT

*by Jiang Jun*

#### **World History of the Desert Merchants**

We understand the Silk Road as a link between the two ends of the Eurasian continent. They, however, saw the Silk Road as a clustered network of trade routes in between different civilizations, with the Islamic World, or the Middle East (named by the euro-centric colonialists later) as its centre.

As one of the largest agricultural civilizations with a self-centred worldview, China saw itself as a civilized centre surrounded by barbarism. This 'barbarism' had developed itself as an oasis civilization, which consisted of a network of cities imbedded inside the desert with water sources as nodes. The desert had forced merchants to develop the skills to bring substance to their infertile lands, and develop a trading network for which Allah granted them an exclusive franchise.

As the main interlock between the different conti-

nents happened to be desert, the oasis civilization – dominated by a commodity economy instead of an economy built on natural resources – linked the dispersive production centres together. Desert was the centre of centres in the pre-modern world. World history was dictated by the history of the Middle East, and narrated by the desert merchants.

### **Climatic Geography of Religions**

The Islamic trading network expanded itself from the crossroads of the Middle East to almost all the merciless topographies – desert, grassland, mountains and sea. Their merciless nature was not only at the expense of pre-globalization, but also what kept civilizations diversified. Traders became translators. They made it possible for civilizations to learn from each other from remote distances, avoiding complete isolation.

The Silk Road, as the most remote and profitable trading network, was famous for its penetration of the natural blockades of the Eurasian continent. The road was so long that it could easily be disconnected by local powers – those who controlled the Silk Road would control the profit of the trade. The history of the Silk Road witnessed the conquest of its different segments by different empires, each of them pursuing their own geopolitics and thus determining the rise and fall and revival of the Silk Road trading cities.

The Mongolian empire was the only one that at one point monopolized the Silk Road as a domestic highway, allowing Marco Polo to make his legendary travel to China. However, this grand unification was of short duration. When the empire fell apart, almost each part was assimilated by a local culture and its religion – the Yuan Empire implemented Confucianism in China, the Golden Horde turned to the Orthodox Eastern Church in the north of the Caucasus, and Il Khanate installed Islam as state religion. The diversity of the great religions could not be wiped out, but were preserved by the diversified climate and geography on the Eurasian Continent.

In China, Confucianism is deeply rooted in the agricultural economy, defined by its monsoon climate and river geography. In the Middle East, the Islamic religion founded by a merchant, proved effective in unifying the scattered oasis society for commercial and/or military use. Both religions thus consolidated the local society into an integrated community. Climate and geography, or heaven and earth for Chinese, are the initial conditions of history, and predestined the fate of the old continent.

### **Self-Globalization**

The history of China would be entirely different if we could reformat the natural blockade, or relocate the mountains and rivers in-between the two ends of the old continent. Most ancient civilizations originated in or near the Middle East – the Egyptian Civilization, the Tigris-Euphrates Valley Civilization, the Aegean Civilization, and the Indus Valley Civilization – but they all disappeared in the end. Compared to the Far East, the Middle East was far better connected by water to Africa, Central Asia, Europe or India. This not only guaranteed more cultural and technological exchange, but also more frequent military conquests. China was the only civilization that monopolized 2 of the top 10 great rivers in the world, which supported China's irrigated agriculture for thousands of years. This geographical unification had been preserved in a relatively isolated condition surrounded by natural blockades such as sea, desert and plateau. The Great Wall was the only man-made barrier, which indicated the geographical extreme the agricultural civilization could develop to seclude China from the rest of the world. Within this 'Walled State' or a macro-scale gated community, China was able to sustain a self-sufficient economy and a relatively stable society.

If we say the Middle East had set up a global network with itself as the centre, we can say China that had set up a self-globalization in the Far East and called itself the centre (Zhong Guo literally means Central Empire or Middle Kingdom). As China was so satisfied with the plenteousness it received from the heaven and earth, its local phi-

losophies and religions were mainly concerned with life on earth. For many centuries, China kept a trade surplus on the Silk Road because of this self-sufficiency on a pre-industrial level. Westerners got almost nothing to reverse the balance until they found opium. When the trade balance on the Silk Road was reversed, the balance of self-globalization was broke. This explained why Chinese took the humiliating Opium War as the start of its modern history.

Although natural barriers were no longer insurmountable ever since the industrial revolution, the natural conditions for self-sufficiency had been inherited when the Communist Party founded the People's Republic of China in 1949. This was why the discovery of the Daqing oilfield in the 1950s had been valued as such a historical moment. China was able to carry on its independent industrial revolution during the Cold War when both sides of the Cold War blockaded all the Silk Roads. In 1990s, China's accelerated industrialization and urbanization triggered another thirst for oil. Given the fact that the Strait of Malacca, or the gate of the Maritime Silk Road, was conquered by the United States, China started to plan alternative passages to diversify its energy importation. Pipelines from Caspian Sea through Kazakhstan to China have renewed the old Silk Road. New ones are also being constructed from Iran-Pakistan and from the Indian Ocean-Burma to China. A series of new cities are expected to be built along these new Silk Roads of energy.

Although China's oil trade plays an increasingly important role in international oil trade, this importance is not yet fully reflected in the benchmark crude oil prices, which results in China's passive acceptance to the international oil price dominated by Europe and America. As China is expanding its domestic demand to reduce its dependence on exportation, it also tries to integrate its domestic oil market system so as to improve its oil pricing power in the international world. Globalization will be one counter-balanced by the new self-globalization of China.

### **Late Industrial Revolution**

The Silk Road connected the two civilizations that had both attained the most advanced pre-industrial level before the industrial revolution. However, both civilizations were confronted with the same puzzle: why can't their pre-industrial development reach the critical point of (turning into) an industrial revolution?

There are three conditions needed to instigate an industrial revolution: 1. a system encouraging scientific and technological inventions; 2. a society in drastic expansion that provides the demand needed to push productivity and finally 3. the availability of coal and iron. For China, it seems clear: the harsh geographic conditions around its territory, as well as the psychology of favouring stability deeply-rooted in its agricultural society, provided little impetus for drastic expansion. The Confucian civil government encouraged cultural sustainability instead of sci-tech innovations. However, the Middle East seemed to meet most of these conditions, especially at the golden time of the 7th/8th century when the Arabs expanded the Islamic empire and its trading network. The Grand Expansion stimulated unprecedented sci-tech communication crossing the three continents, while their military conquests significantly accelerated heavy industry production, and created enough space for the surplus population. The only condition it couldn't meet was the presence of coal. The shortage of coal in the Middle East area had created a bottleneck of energy in the evolution towards the industrial revolution compounded with iron and coal. Ironically, the Middle East became the biggest centre of energy production centuries later, but oil is a much more sophisticated energy that can hardly be used without the basis of Industrial Revolution. The black gold was predestined to be exploited by those foreigners who had succeeded in industrialization.

### **Unification of Oil Sovereignty**

Modernization started with the Industrial Revolution, together with colonization and world wars. In search of more raw materials and market, the industrialization of Western Europe had resulted

in the colonization of the world, including the network of the Silk Road. The fragmented warring states pattern in Western Europe was copied to the colonies, including China in the Far East and Ottoman Turkey in the Middle East. Although both civilizations had a long grand unified history, their destinies in post-war time were different. China got almost reunified to a continental country (apart from Taiwan), but the Middle East was split into pieces when Ottoman Turkey collapsed. Conflicts among the colonialist powers were going on as conflicts among the Middle Eastern countries.

Let's look into the differences of the two civilizations for an explanation of their different fates. The grand unification of both civilizations was based on their strong economic models - natural economy in the agricultural civilization of China, and commodity economy in the oasis civilization of the Middle East. Colonization and world wars didn't break up China's agricultural basis, but seized the dominance of the trading network of the Middle East. The agricultural basis was what lied behind Mao's success in reunifying China as he mobilized the massive human power of peasants; but there was no economic basis left for the Middle East countries to reunify themselves, until oil was found.

Oil changed the role of the Arab from trader to provider. The Middle East hereby turned from the trading centre of commodities into the production centre of energy, which drastically reversed the global market mechanism and geopolitical structure. After the Middle East was politically split up into tribes and families, the unification of the petroleum policies and the reclaiming of the oil sovereignty economically reunited it. When OPEC struck back as a unity in 1970s, the whole world was shocked to see the power of the new Islamic network, as well as the fragility of the industrial system on which modernization was supposed to be based. After several defeats in the Middle East wars, the Arabs chose to fight against the driving force of the industrial system instead of the sophisticated weapon products it made. Energy strategy proved to be more lethal.

### Socialism with Local Characteristics

By carrying out the industrial revolution, the Western European countries had resorted to colonialism, while the United States had benefited from two world wars. The industrial competition between developed and developing countries can actually be seen as a competition between dependent despoliation in the past and independent accumulation in the future - an asymmetric war in which the late industrialized countries get few chances to win. There needs to be a third road to industrialization for developing countries.

National independence movements spread through the colonial countries in the first half of 20th century. When the colonial system collapsed by the end of the 2nd world war, communism widely intertwined with nationalism throughout the ex-colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and finally resulted in the Cold War with the world as its battlefield. However, it had been a long time for these countries to extract and localize the essence of communism into its independent industrialization. Both China and the Middle East countries have experienced the process of nationalizing the colonial economy, and then the reform from a planned to a market economy, denationalizing the downstream industries while keeping the nationalization of core resources and upstream industries. Nationalism is effective in setting up an independent regime against colonialism and imperialism, while nationalization is effective in setting up an independent industrial system in the asymmetric competition with the developed countries, and denationalization of the downstream industries is to introduce the incentive mechanism of market into the planning economy. In China, this model is called "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" as a local revision of rigid fundamentalist communism. Although there isn't a parallel title such as "Socialism with Islamic Characteristics" in the Middle East because of socialism's exclusion of religion, we can still find parallels in the universal values (such as justice and equality) advocated in both Islam and socialism.

Recently China started to advocate a "Harmoni-

ous Society”, which integrated Confucianism as a definitive element in “Chinese Characteristics”. The renaissance of tradition in the modernization process on both ends of the Silk Road show the underlying power of civilization, as well as the climate and geography factors behind, on the fate of the old continent.

### **Made-in-China & Oil Gas Road**

Besides the parallel process in economic reform, China and the Middle Eastern countries also share a similar industrial structure. Both have a sufficient factor of production – in terms of labour and energy resources – and therefore both risk an export-oriented economy that could be easily affected by the global market. Both occupy a singular segment in the global division of labour – product manufacturing and energy supply – and therefore they both strive to enrich its proportion in the global value chain. Whereas China is combining Mao’s heavy industrial base with Deng’s light industry into an all-directional, multi-tiered manufacturing system, the Middle East is trying to evolve from an oil treasury to a global petrochemical industry centre with a world-class production line in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Qatar. China has surpassed Germany to be the world’s largest exporter of Made-in-China goods, and the Middle East is about to surpass the United States to be the world’s largest exporter of petrochemical products.

Historically, there has been a highly complementary economic structure between China and the Middle East. The sustainability of the Sino-Arabian bilateral relationship was based on mutual demands as the biggest provider and biggest trader. Although the Silk Road seems to have retrieved its historical intensity with made-in-China goods and oil gas, its sustainability is questionable. Made-in-China goods are demanded not because they are as unique as silk, porcelain or tea used to be, but because of their cheap price. As more and more petrodollars are invested back into the Middle East countries, more and more cheap labour from other Asian countries are hired to work in the horizontal expansion of the economic base there. They are expected to manufacture goods cheaper than made-in-China. On the other hand, China has established

the diversification of energy imports as part of its national strategy, while investing more and more money into the development of non-fossil fuel and other alternative energy sources. All these efforts for independence will constantly update the content of the New Silk Road in the near future. Beyond the sale of oil, an increasingly diversified bilateral trade can be expected between China and the Middle East as they are evolving into a more normalized and three-dimensional industrial system.

### **Triangular Trap**

Ever since the strategic value of oil and gas was found, their uneven distribution in the strata of the planet has profoundly changed global strategic patterns. We are dealing with a global picture congested with territorial disputes, resource contentions, pricing competitions and political games. The discovery of new energy sources and displacement of energy centres moreover constantly change the rules of the game. Because of their higher level in modernization, and therefore more dependence on energy security and strategic reserves, the big powers increase their efforts to dominate the energy order through political, economic, diplomatic and military means. As for the less developed countries marginalized in the global order, they are either integrated into the energy strategy of the big powers, or organize themselves into “international guilds” with their own geographic priorities in the energy network, to rival with the big powers.

As the geographical interlock of Asia, Africa and Europe, as well as the global energy production hub, the Middle East has become the most sensitive region because of the global hunger for energy. One paradoxical consequence caused by the asymmetrical correspondence between energy distribution and the level of modernization is the fact that more developed the energy-importing countries are, the greater the risk they will take in energy geopolitics, and consequently the more driven they are to establish a favourable international order at all costs. As the biggest energy-importing country and the last super power, the United States is not only the instigator of a series of Middle East/Gulf Wars, but also the initiator of the hegemonic

currency system of "oil dollars" by alienating the oil-exporting countries. With its exclusive right in coinage, it coupled the role of "global central bank" with the role of "global oil bank", to replace gold with oil as the material support behind the U.S. dollars. However, with the political nature and sensitiveness endowed by the modern world, oil has much more inherent weakness than the king of currency – gold. To maintain the stability of the U.S. dollars, the world must maintain the stability of oil. This abnormal linkage has resulted in an unsustainable global order, in which the security of a multilateral system, established on the global energy supply and demand, has to be maintained by a unilateral power. The hegemony of the United States as a superpower is herein based on the trinity of "currency – energy – military", a triangular trap for most of the contemporary crisis. The Middle East is supposed to benefit from the energy, but actually suffered from the trap. The region has become a battlefield with the highest frequency of wars in the post-world war world.

The unilateral operation of a super power in a less developed region is an asymmetric war, which has resulted in another asymmetric form of counter-attack – terrorism. Terrorism further changed the geopolitics of the Silk Road territory. The United States break forward from Middle East to Central Asia by launching the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War. On the other side, China established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) also in the name of anti-terrorism. It's not unlike the Cold War but different: the Silk Road is now shared by Russia (together with the ex-constituent-republics of U.S.S.R) and China (instead of imperial monopolization). However, these ideological enemies are there for a common goal with the United States, which is indeed an embarrassing dilemma for them. The old geopolitical situation of the Silk Road, created in the post-cold-war unilateral world, has been replaced by the new one created in the post-9/11 multi-polar world. The triangle of "currency – energy – military" lost its absurd symmetry because of the asymmetric war.

### High Speed Silk Road

Economic cooperation was soon incorporated into the agenda of SCO, which differentiates itself from the military-oriented NATO on the other end of Eurasian continent. The ancient Silk Road is reclaiming its strategic significance for China: it will be an alternative passage for energy importation. It's also reclaiming its strategic significance for Central Asia: with China's recent Great Leap Forward in the form of its high-speed railway, the Silk Road is expected to accelerate in the near future. It used to be marginalized by the ocean route, which created a series of maritime cities along the shipping lines; we're now going back from the maritime to the continental routes. The ancient inland cities will be reactivated with this accelerating continental transportation. The artery of the old continent, together with its old civilizations, is being renewed. The history used to start from here, now it's coming back.

## III.

### MEMORY TALKS AND WALKS: LONG MARCH PROJECT–HO CHI MINH TRAIL (DUONG TRUONG SON)

*Zoe Butt*

The "Ho Chi Minh Trail (Duong Truong Son)" is an initiative of the Long March Project in Beijing, China. Initiated in 1999, the Long March Project is a complex, multi-platform, international arts organization and ongoing art project, based in Beijing, that can be simultaneously considered a gallery space; a publishing house; a curatorial lab; an artistic collection; a meeting place; a consultant; a commissioning and production atelier, an artistic facilitator, and author. From a critical distance, all of these avenues of production aim to provocatively construct, and in turn renew, presumed action and thinking concerning 'contemporary art'.

The request to present the 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' project within the framework of a making of a 'new silk road' was a pertinent invitation, considering the aim of this project was to try and better understand the context of a shared history between China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, referring to the

geographical pathway of the historic Ho Chi Minh Trail as a departure point for further discussion.

As a curator, 'performing' the conceptual outline of a project was an unusual request from Arthub, a request that for me fell naturally to the voices of the artists with which the Long March Project had chosen to collaborate for this project. Inviting Le Huy Hoang and Nguyen Trinh Thi from Vietnam, and Erin Gleeson and Rattana Vandy from Cambodia; their respective projects articulating the complexities inherent to the experience of war in its aftermath, of the affect of the drawing of borders into new, often slippery zones of ownership and control; of the affect of a historic cultural memory losing relevance in the growth of an urbanizing capitalist society. Sadly Erin Gleeson, Rattana Vandy and Nguyen Trinh Thi were unable to attend the symposium, thus their voices were shared through the presentation of their respective projects, presented by Le Huy Hoang and myself. Conscious of how many presentations were following the repetitive PowerPoint method, I changed my mind at the last minute to get up and introduce the project by walking around the room, rather than use digital imagery and text. I spoke of the Long March Project and its desire to provoke the shared memories of a past, that the 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' project was one of the first artistic projects undertaken to critically look at China's relationship to its neighbors; that it recognized the need for a larger awareness of looking outside while looking within (here referring to the need to look beyond the context of one's own production, to be critically aware of the broader international developments of culture); and that it endeavored to better understand the role of historical legacies, such as the historic 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' (in an attempt to better understand the reasons why cultural and social attitudes between the people of this region is so fraught with tension). Fundamentally, it was a project that believed art and culture had a crucial role to play in re-shaping the relationship between these communities, that an aesthetic language could offer insight into why history should be under a constant state of re-evaluation.

Following the discussion of 'The Tianxia Survey'

by Erin Gleeson and Rattana Vandy, a brief excerpt from Nguyen Trinh Thi's short film was subsequently shared, titled "Chronicle of a Tape Recorded Over", showing Le Huy Hoang re-tracing the steps of his father along the northern section of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Vietnam. Interviewing local villagers along the road, Nguyen Trinh Thi sought their recollections of the use of this historic trail via the personal prompts of Hoang, whose inherited memories from his father remain a crucial component of his ongoing artistic practice (Le Huy Hoang is a Cambodian/Vietnamese whose Vietnamese father died in the prison camps of the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh). In these rural towns, Thi and Hoang traveled by local transport, eating in the homes of strangers and listening to their stories of one of the 20th Century's most controversial political moments. They were also twice arrested by the Vietnamese police, Thi's title referring to the precious tape that captured their arrest being accidentally taped over – an outcome that seemed fitting (though frustrating) to her in its emblematic reflection of a country whose cultural memory has been tightly dictated by a succession of foreign occupation (firstly by the Chinese in the first millennia, followed by the Japanese, French and the USA).

This brief sequence of imagery was immediately followed by a performance by Le Huy Hoang. Taking a large red marker and his own pant belt, he moved to the wooden stage set up in the front of the room and proceeded to draw a red line from one end of the stage to the other, his left hand shaking, not only from the tedious focus of attempting to keep this pen line straight, but also from his steady beating of the belt against this writing arm. The sight of a man, hitting himself, his arm increasingly reddening from the whip of the act, was an attempt to call forth the tension and pain in the drawing of borders, of setting restrictions and rules with force that is so common to the experience of so many in postcolonial societies – the sweat and cut flesh of Le Huy Hoang becoming visually welded to the red line appearing long and continuous in front of him. The audience fell respectfully silent during this act, impressed upon by the intrinsic awareness that this narrative was

coming from first hand experience.

#### These Works Articulate

Another march, another trail, a re-imagining of a shared historical consciousness

Between each other but also looking within while looking beyond

A quest for knowledge in the unraveling of inherited, shared and lived experience

Seeking an artistic remembering of the power of space as a site of memory

‘Talking’

‘Talking and Walking’

‘Talking and Walking and Making’

[August 2009]

## IV.

### ART IN PUBLIC SPACES; 3 PROJECTS

by Samah Hijawi (2009)

Public arts have pushed their boundaries in the many parts of the world much earlier in the century than they have in much of the Middle East. Naturally this phenomenon is seen to reflect on several different reasons that point back to the discourse of visual arts in the area in the last century. However, the necessity for art to expand audiences, and to refuse the elitist stance that Modern Art has existed within in the past is - amongst many other factors- what has pushed arts into the public space.

Naturally, within the public space, a whole new experience for the artist and the artwork will emerge; the level of control over the work may be diminished radically. Also, where the participation of the audience is required (for the work to happen) naturally changes the status of the work from being a finished work presented - statically - to an audience, to a work that is born as a result of its presence in the public space.

The works cited within this paper were produced

and presented in the city of Amman, Jordan. Naturally the specificity of Jordan’s public is very much related to the work.

#### The specificity of the public space in Jordan

Ideas around cosmopolitan cities, and city demographics, social class, gender politics, and minorities are all topics in great discussion in formal and informal settings in many parts of the world. Identities are constantly changing, and issues around identity are pushing racism, and a new-born fanaticism to the surface to add a new face to how identity is defined in local contexts.

Jordan is a particularly unique country in the ‘Arab Middle East’ in that its politics, history and its identity is a closely linked with the political histories of Palestine, the formation of the State of Israel, regional Arab politics, and Palestine (West Bank) being under Jordanian authority from 1968 to 1988. These events, alongside the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the resulting expulsion of Palestinian / Jordanians (due to political standpoints of their respective leaders in siding with Iraq) resulted in mass influx of people into Jordan at intervals over the last 100 years. Arguably, today the percentages of people in living in Jordan of Palestinian origin range between 40 – 70% of population.

Integration has naturally become an issue for the masses, and has been affected by the different policies of the Jordanian government in inclusion / exclusion of the people of ‘Palestinian origin’. These have resulted in the formation of a nation that has complex sense and interpretation of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. These ideas of difference are questioned on a daily basis by both people who’s pre-Israeli / colonial existence narrates a far less confused and aggressive coexistence. These citizens in their dramatic historical narrative actually make Jordan a very precarious place. Governments acknowledge the reality, and enforce police-state behaviour and censor-

[1] Disorientation is a public participatory project realized as part of Unclassified: Meeting Points Festival 5, Jordan, 2007. [2] The American

Oxford Dictionary for Mac [3] Wait, Maurice. The Little Oxford Dictionary of English – 7th Edition. Clarendon Press. 1994. Oxford [4]

Ya Reit is a public intervention realized with the artist Hanan Khalil and Samah Hijawi as part of residency program curated by Rayelle Neimen

entitled ‘No Conition is Permanent’. Jordan. 2007



ship.

Upon entering the public space, these issues all take part in the public participatory interventions. These projects are a commentary on broad themes of identity, belonging and their relationship with history.

### The Projects: Disorientation <sup>1</sup>

**Disorient:** Origin from mid 17th century French word *désorienter* “turn from the east”<sup>2</sup>. Confuse as to his or her bearings. To confuse by removing / obscuring something that usually guides someone<sup>3</sup>.

What does it mean for a nation to be disorientated, to lose its bearings, its sense of direction? How does dislocation from a homeland affect a nation in their perception of their sense of belonging to a new homeland, which might not have been perceived as a permanent one?

How do internal politics in inclusion and or marginalization affect the attitude and the sense of ownership of citizens towards their present country?

Finally, how do people consider a country a homeland when they are constantly looking for a way to immigrate?

The project investigates this perceived notion of a transient state of existence of the peoples of the city of Amman and their desire to be elsewhere. Invariably, these ‘other’ places take the form of either a homeland, be it a ‘stolen’ one, or one left in search of work; or to another country that holds the allure of ‘land of plenty’. Through memory, whether based on reality or an entirely illusive one, the work seeks to re-create the mental landscape of this ‘other’ place through the audience’s active participation in the selection of images to form a collage of this vision.

The work travelled over three days to different

parts of the city; Jabal Hussein, a lower middle class area, downtown Amman, and Al Wihdat Palestinian refugee camp. In each location, passerby’s is invited to bring together images forming collages of another place they would like to be.

### “Ya Reit”<sup>4</sup>

“Ya Reit” is a project with Amman-based artist Hanan Khalil, and is part of a curated residency under the title ‘No Condition is Permanent’

*“A state of living is based on developments continuously changing for the better. This ideology is deeply rooted in the psychology of human beings, having to believe in the positive, in the creative, in an organically growing order to improve life. Still, human beings are challenged to be flexible and innovative in order to react on changes regarding personal issues, social, economical, technological and political subjects. Individual experiences and conditionings have an influencing impact on these processes. Cultural and social heritage serves as a base... The stimulus to react will always be based on the desire to improve a situation, or at least to come to terms with it. Yet, for a lot of people it seems that conditions stay the same, embedded in a vivid circle of life. To which extent do individuals have an impact on their own situation and therefore, how do individuals influence their immediate surrounding?”<sup>5</sup>*

Change is perhaps the word from which the work departed. Locally, the desire for change is strongly contradicted with an air of apathy. This can be loosely associated with fate as it is indicated and encouraged in the local religious culture. Therefore, Fate and Change share a commonality in the local context.

Fate is also used in colloquial Arabic referencing to destiny towards two very contrasting events; marriage and death. Both these occasions have traditionally and culturally been ‘celebrated’ with the public in tents as they accommodate large groups of people for the occasion. Hence, Fate and the Tent share a commonality in the local

[5] Rayelle Neimen. No conditionis Permanent. Jordan 2007 [6] Ya Na-seeb transcribes to mean ‘Oh Fate’ in Arabic [7] Ya Reit transcribes to

mean ‘I wish’ in Arabic [8] Where are the Arab? is a public performance work produced in the City of Amman, 2009

context.

The lottery, commonly known as Ya Naseeb<sup>6</sup> was a platform found in the public space in which the dichotomy of striving towards change, and the restraining force of fate, was a 'space' in which the two ideas can be conceptually and satirically engaged. A play on words was used to entitle the work "Ya Reit"<sup>7</sup>

The project took place in the down town area of the city of Amman in Jordan. A mobile lottery stand entitled "Ya Reit..." with empty lottery slips were used to request the public to finish the sentence Ya Reit. The project took place over two days and involved the public's participation in writing their wishes on paper slips that symbolized the lottery ticket. Also some portraits were taken using a Polaroid camera and the same sentence was written on the bottom of their photographs. The third day the collected slips were hung in a tent so people could exchange each other's wishes.

The vast majority of people's wishes were around the idea of the return to a homeland and the freedom of Palestine. This is an important indication of the state of mind of the people that inhabit the public space of the city of Amman.

#### "Where Are the Arabs?"<sup>8</sup>

The ideology of a collective Arab identity is a strong and ever-present reality for modern day Arab citizens. This collective consciousness was born as a result of Al Nasseriah era (coined after Gamal Abdul Nasser the former president of Egypt from 1956 – 1970) who called for Arab Nationalism and attempted to unite the Arab countries. While in reality the dream was only realised briefly between Egypt and Syria, the 'legacy' of an Arab Republic lives on in the psyche of present-day Arabs, and places Gamal Abdul Nasser in the realm of the 'idol'. This is particularly apparent in public opinion that has disagreed with the political standpoints of their respective countries, creating a phenomenon of referring to the

past with fondness, over-whelming emotion, and consequently somehow refusing to exist in the present-tense.

The longevity of the ideology of Arab unity is also one directly related to the occupation of Palestine by Israel. The relationship is formed as a result of the notion that freedom of Palestine is the responsibility of both the Palestinians and Arabs alike. This can be seen through the involvement of the Arabs in several (defeated) wars with Israel in an attempt to free Palestine in the past.

Since the death of Gamal Abdul Nasser, the 'un-born child' of Arab Unity has not been forgotten in light of the frustration and the conflicting values between the public and their governments. A questioning call 'Where are the Arabs?' is repeated consistently especially by countries in the Arab World that have been under attack and / or occupation by foreign forces. These calls and questions to the absence of Arab unity, in an accusing tone from their callers, imply a falsely assumed apathy (seemingly by the called-upon) towards their fellow Arab brothers and sisters in distress.

While the complex relationship of this phenomenon can be discussed in more detail and depth, the focus of the work is more on the relationship of Arabs with history, reality, identity and with truth. The work, entitled Where Are the Arabs? is a 20-minute speech based on a selected compilation of parts of public speeches that repeatedly call for Arab Nationalism and unity to form a Republic. Gamal Abdul Nasser gave these speeches between the years 1958 and 1967.

*"We are gathered here to celebrate the anniversary of unity and the birth of United Arab Republic. What we celebrate today is not merely the birth of Unity, nor the birth of a great nation solely... The reality, my brothers, is that Unity was simply a popular demand that gained its freedom and rid itself from all traces of foreign control. It continued to pave its path, and declared this to its*

[5] Rayelle Neimen. No condition is Permanent. Jordan 2007 [6] Ya Naseeb transcribes to mean 'Oh Fate'

in Arabic [7] Ya Reit transcribes to mean 'I wish' in Arabic [8] Where are the Arab? is a public perfor-

mance work produced in the City of Amman, 2009 [9] Parts of the words used for the Where are the

Arabs? performance work by Samah Hijawi

*rulers... The region was filled with great hopes and dreams, but dreams are not achieved unless the path ahead was paved by the motivation to work, and there is no motivation without freedom.... Unity, my brothers, is the means that Arabs everywhere saw towards independence and freedom. Solidarity was the path that Arabs, in every Arab country, found to safeguard independence, to protect it from those looking greedily towards us, and protect it from the oppressors... The call that brought us here today is a call from God, and you are this call's soldiers, we are all soldiers for this call, all the Arab Nations are soldiers for this call. With these hearts, with these souls, with this faith and with the help of God, your call will triumph, the call of Arab Nationalism."*<sup>9</sup>

The work points out several difference ideas. The performance of a speech from the words of a historical 'idol' aims to trigger nostalgia. Simultaneously, it plays on the existing feelings of frustration in light of the disagreements of public vs. government opinions, as well as the realities of politics in the region. By referencing and engaging the past and re-placing it in the present, the work questions where history is positioned, archived, and processed. Simultaneously it makes note of this state of existing in the past and not the present.

Presenting such a speech in the public sphere automatically brings to question the role of public speaking in the civic space – or arguably the lack of.

While the work mimics (in some form) speeches given on TV by presidents, kings, rulers and persons of authority. In light of the doubt of the legitimacy of media, the work presents itself in a medium that pushes the audience to question truth, and hence their own confidence in a part of history which they hold onto dearly. In a sense, the work in its presentation today scorns its authority in the past.

In the structure of the speech where the whole is made up of a juxtaposition of parts of different speeches that repeat around the same idea, the work is also a commentary on the element of rep-

etition. Repetition is used in the Arabic language as a form of emphasis; through the repetition of a word, a phrase or an idea. Yet, repetition is also seen to invoke boredom and numbness. This last aspect is emphasized with the duration of the work.

In the public space, the work is affected by the audience's reaction to it. Do they stay and listen to the whole speech or do they walk away? Do they have something to say about it? Would they like to try to present the speech themselves to an audience? Every time, the audiences' reaction brings a new interpretation to the work.

### Conclusion

Artists' ability to research, contemplate, discuss and play with every-day issues in the public space also means that a wider audience is exposed to artists and their works. This is an important development in countries where on the one hand, the arts have maintained the elitist position towards their audiences, which limited exposure for both the artist and the general public. On another hand, engaging in public spaces has expanded the aesthetical interpretations that the artist employs in their work. This slow but important development needs the support of structures and art systems around the arts, from within their respective countries, so that art finds a new meaning in the civic arena.

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# V.

## MANIFESTO OF THE SCEPTIC

*by Arahmaiani*

### **Manifesto of the Sceptic:**

1. Our art is an autonomous zone - a self-standing discourse and narrative. It cannot be dictated by the market, politics or religion. Businessmen, politicians and religious leaders are not creators of art!
2. Our art belongs to everyone - everyone has the right to express him/herself. This means that artists should not surrender to the symbolic powers that determine the conditions and the classification of art.
3. Our art must not be separated from life and become mere decoration. Art must be able to encourage a new awareness of humanity and a new social consciousness.
4. Our art is not an object - art is a neutral medium with the function of offering alternative values, changing values, and also turning values upside down. So art is capable of forming new values and bringing down those that are established.
5. Our art is a type of "alchemical vessel" - a vessel that can combine the sacred and the profane in one discourse that is capable of uniting contradicting elements. It can create a meeting point between the material and the spiritual, between the masculine and the feminine.
6. Our art is a channel for creativity - like plumbing that supplies fresh water. And creativity, like water, is an active force that is the essence of life that births ideas and concepts. In other words: a liberating force.
7. Our art is a natural, sustainable process - sowing seed, germinating, and producing fruit.
8. Our art is a "tool" to examine and assess reality, and can be employed by anyone, at anytime, and anywhere.
9. Our art connects the past, the present, and the future.
10. Our art is a combination of courage, rebellion, rational and moral intelligence and the conscience.
11. Although we are orientated forward, our art remembers and considers the past and the present.
12. The definition of art must be expanded - as wide as it possibly can be.











## ALTERNATIVE DOCUMENT

Testing the Silk Road's potency for cultural hybridity is a "mission impossible" from its outset, one which Thai artist Surasi Kusolwong challenged with the comment "Where is [this mission]'s heart and head?" at the end of the summit. Arthub Asia embraced the fragility of the context (with the conviction that fragility needs be embraced in the art world at this moment in time), and asked the brilliant minds of Asia to step up the challenge and go beyond the prescribed recitation of ideas or positions, as expected by validation platforms in formulaic environments, and instead challenge or nourish the possibilities of a "fragile" medium, namely performativity and research-based positions, in regards to the Silk Road's highly constructed symbolisms.









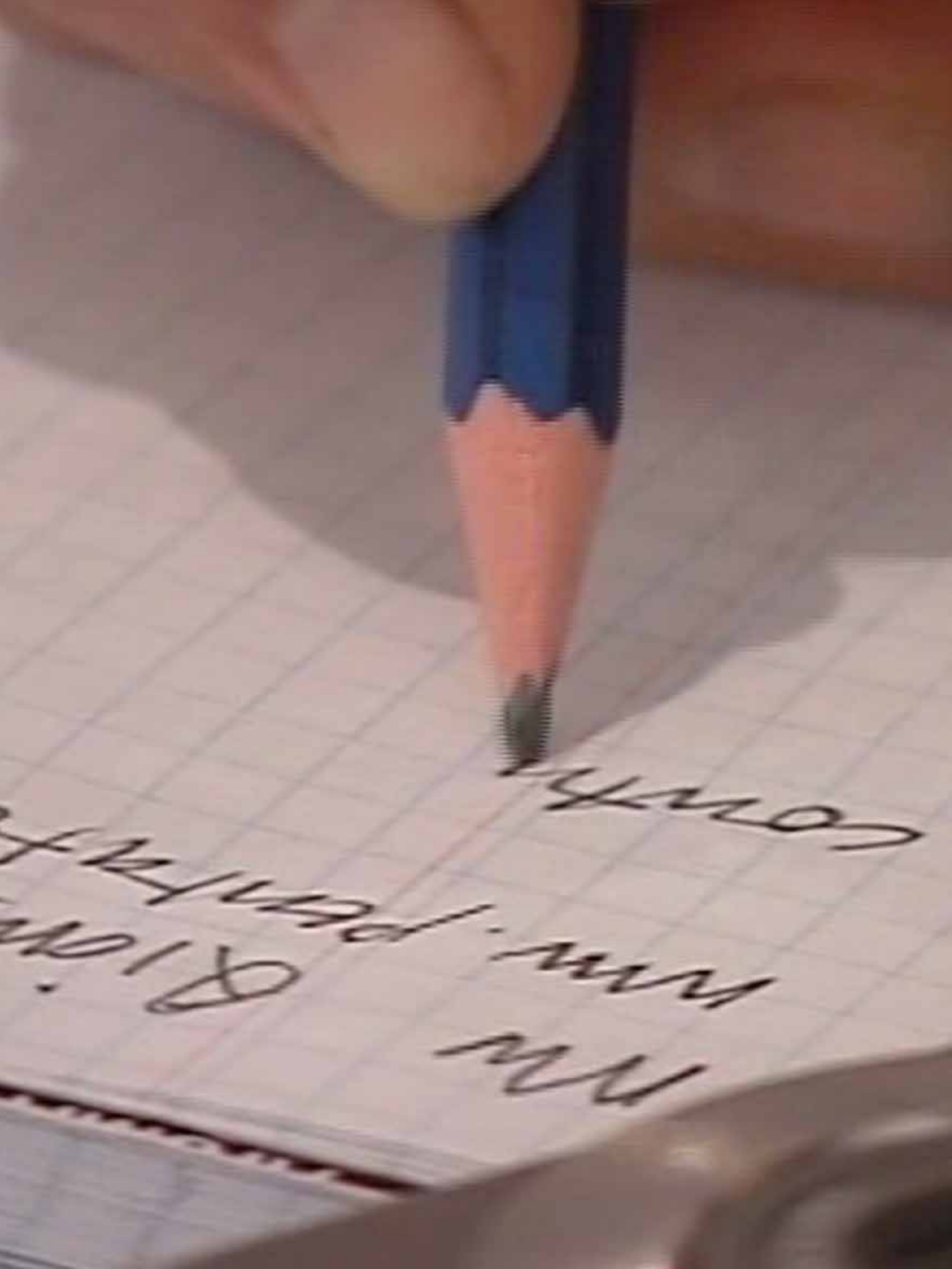












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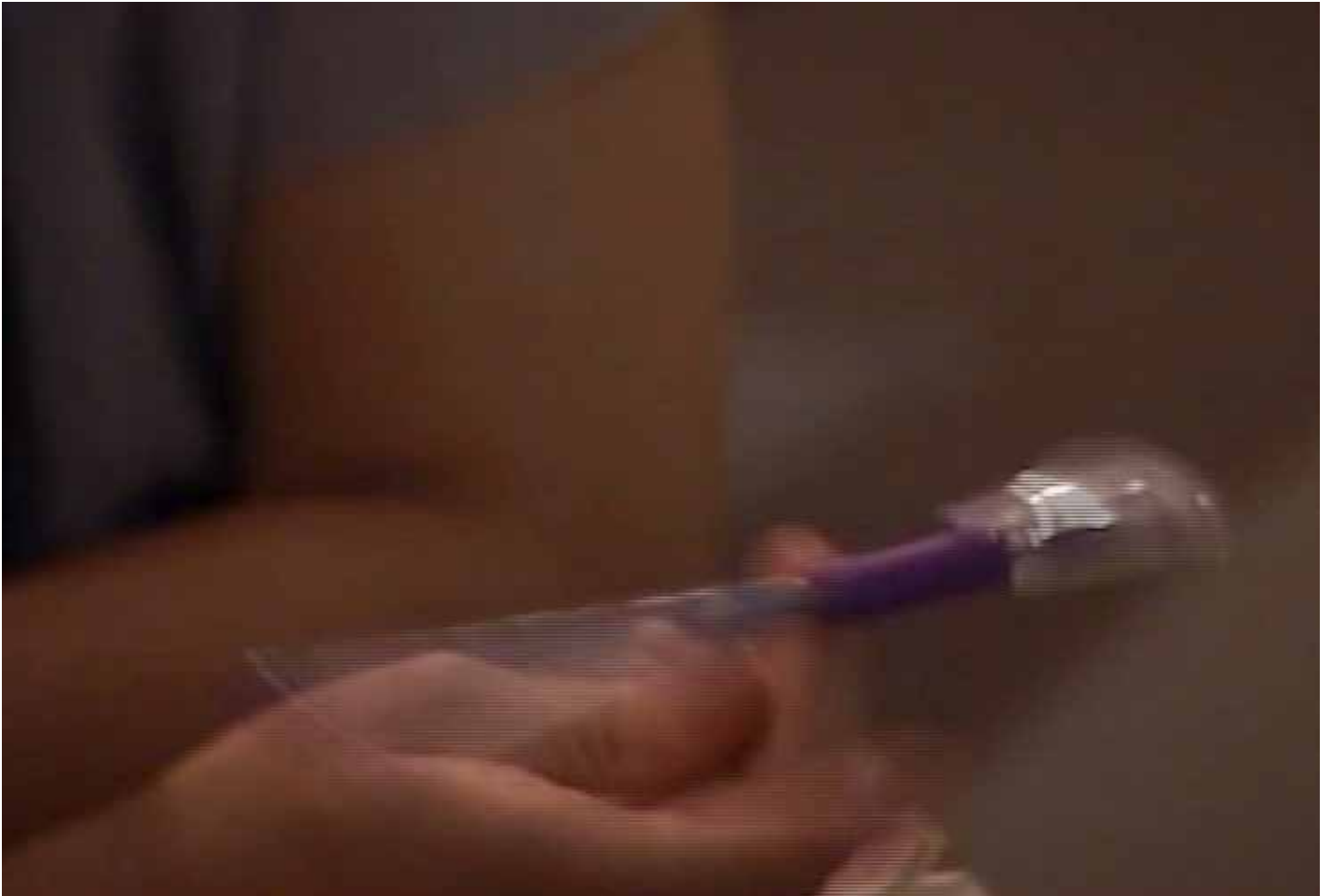
























# Small Threads

HO TZU NYEN

Small Threads is an attempt to create an alternative document of the symposium, seen through the eyes of the outsider witnessing the symposium's proceedings from the sideline.

By calmly stepping out and bringing two actors into action – one as his avatar (Ho Tzu Nyen 2) and one as the 'presenter' of the official documentary team that had been put in place – Ho Tzu Nyen further fictionalized his own subjective observations of the participants and the actions they performed. The video he produced out of his unique viewpoint, paints a subjective picture of the small threads that tied the event together, while allowing for certain connections that existed or emerged during the three days to remain invisible.

**Davide Quadrio [DQ]: Symposiums, talking, power games, relationships, boredom, intangible experiences, talking just to talk, blah blah blah. Is all this "intellectual" practice useful or is it only an exercise? I think this informed our idea to not document the content of the symposium in Bangkok, but rather the forms/the relationships that the participants developed during the encounter. How would you like to comment on this?**

Ho Tzu Nyen [HTN]: Symposiums are platforms that I have personally enjoyed and benefited from, whether as a space for the exchange of ideas or encounters with interesting personalities. But of course there are also symposiums that go nowhere in particular, so it is impossible to generalize. But I think what makes The Making of the New Silk Roads such an interesting proposition is that you and Defne Ayas seemed concerned with the symposium itself as an object – surely this is why you have situated it in a gallery, and thought through its spatial configuration and its temporal shape by attempting to choreograph its unfolding. There is a dramaturgical dimension to it, and as I understand, a willingness to experiment, and risk failure.

I believe that there is always a personal dimension to the projects and experiments that we undertake. For me, your event happened at a time when I had just come off a particularly gruelling film shoot, and the notion of being a participant in the symposium created some amount of discomfort – it was merely a question of the state of my nervous system at that moment. Yet what I heard of The Making of the New Silk Roads seemed so interesting, that I

was also inevitably drawn to it. The solution seemed to find a way for me to be simultaneously, and productively involved with the event as a whole, while also not being a part of it as a participant. What interested me was the shape of the event as a whole, as well as how it would turn out. It seemed to me that the best way to do this would be to become a part of the 'documentary' team that you had already assembled, while getting an actor to be my substitute in the symposium.

Being part of the 'documentary' team turned out to be a fascinating experience, a kind of being inside and outside at the same time. I'm glad you mentioned the intangible, but nevertheless concrete dimensions of every symposium – the 'power games', 'relationships' and 'boredom', its atmosphere, its moments of heaviness, and lightness, its physiological dimension, a narrative of faces, gestures, energies. Freed from the anxiety of participation, I was somewhat plugged into the skin of the event, without being pulled into its pool of words.

**DQ: You were telling me that I was crazy because I did not want limit your approach to the making of the "documentation". Do you not think that as an organizer and a critical art activist I should grant the artist the freedom to define his own boundaries? What did you find interesting in this collaboration and**

**way of producing this new piece of work?**

HTN: Well, Davide when I tell someone that he or she is crazy, it is usually a compliment.

To be honest, this was the first time we have worked together, and I was, on my part, a little uncertain about how far I could go. Because this was not simply a case of producing an artwork, rather, I was working directly with an infrastructural component of the event that you had assembled – the video 'documentary' team. The team was there to fulfil a utilitarian function, and my primary concern was how much my own interference might be an irreparable disruption, so this wasn't just a normal artwork – I felt it was my responsibility to constantly check if there was some kind of threshold that I shouldn't cross.

And of course, it turned out that you were entirely prepared to give me a free reign, which threw me off a little. In retrospect, I might have been pushing around to sense the boundaries that you and Defne might have, so that I could create a kind of frame for myself, a frame that I might work with, work against, a frame that I might have tried to stretch, or secretly unravel.

So what was really interesting for me was that I had to make up my own rules. The first was that I would use

the existing documentary team that you had already assembled, with minimal interference to their technical set up. I wanted to create a kind of system that would not so much negate, but parasitically latch on to the filming process that Kob, the original director of the 'documentary', had already planned.

Second, I would try to understand as much as possible your agenda and construction of *The Making of the New Silk Roads*, and again, with minimal interference into your plans. I am really glad that this facilitated a kind of engagement with you as an organizer that would have been impossible if I had been a participant in the event.

**DQ: The fictional narration of the film that you produced from the symposium is based on the two actors that were secretly introduced into the symposium. Were you satisfied with this strategy? And what changes would you make if you could do it over?**

HTN: The first of these actors was my surrogate for me – he was to play 'Ho Tzu Nyen'. As I have mentioned earlier, having a double allowed me to unplug from the symposium in order to find another way of engaging with it from another perspective, but this essentially introduced a degree of 'fiction' into the proceedings of the symposium, which I found appropri-

ate, given your obvious attempt to foreground the performativity of the event.

The second actor was a girl, who played the official 'presenter' of the 'documentary' team. She was a useful mouthpiece through which very basic interviews could be conducted with the participants.

I had to find a way to construct a kind of relationship tying the two actors together. I needed to develop a narrative that can be sensed, which shouldn't be too hard as spectators are always ready to project the most clichéd of stories between a young man and a young woman.

It is impossible to be satisfied or dissatisfied in a process such as this one. It is like a roll of a dice, you can't control or make undone what results from it. I have edited the film in such a way that it amplifies its inherent dynamics, without changing it. One doesn't cheat and ask for the dice to be rolled one more time.

**DQ: Can you explain a little more about how you technically organized the shooting?**

HTN: Technically, I tried to conform as much as possible to the set-up devised for you by Kob, the original and real 'director' of your 'documentary' team. I also involved Kob as much as possible in my process, and



it was great working with him. It was also necessary – because none of the camera crew spoke any English, and all communications went through Kob!

So we had a basic set up of two cameras, and we worked out a system where at least one of these cameras was to be perpetually focused on the proceedings of the symposium, while the other would be allowed to drift in the most idiosyncratic way possible. Initially the crew began rather ‘politely’ - it was not unlike any normal, or commercial ‘event-coverage’. As such, they automatically restrained themselves from filming down those more compromising moments that plague every symposium - moments of fatigue, boredom, irritation, distraction. Participants yawning, dozing, chatting, surfing, messaging... Though at the same time, it was obvious that this were the stuff that amused them greatly. So I gradually weaned them off these kinds of inhibitions, and instructed them to film what they were really interested in looking at.

In the meantime, Kob and I were constantly coming up with different kinds of exercises for the girl. We would map out elaborate trajectories for the girl to undertake while the symposium was ongoing, and challenge the cameramen to track her movements in long, unbroken takes. I saw this as an interesting way to

carve and reconfigure the space of the symposium for the eye of the camera. For me, the girl was a mobile element, in constant movement, while the boy was a static presence - a gaping eye, glued to the symposium – though he would also have his moments of distraction, like anyone else.

**DQ: Can a piece of ‘documentation’ become an artwork? From what I can understand of your project, you seem to be trying to capture the behaviours of the participants in order to abstract the event, in the hope that a different kind of poetics may emerge. Is this an accurate way of describing the artistic process and the resulting artwork?**

**HTN:** Whether or not the documentation becomes an artwork is really something I can’t say. My primary interest was to test how I could expand the notion of ‘documentation’. For me, the film is a kind of group portrait of all the participants in the symposium. And hopefully, like some of the classic Dutch group portraits of the 17th Century, this portrait can evoke what is buried within the image -- secretive, hidden, untold, little narratives waiting to be unfolded. As a ‘documentation’ of the symposium, what it records are not the words, or the ostensible happenings, but its nervous system.











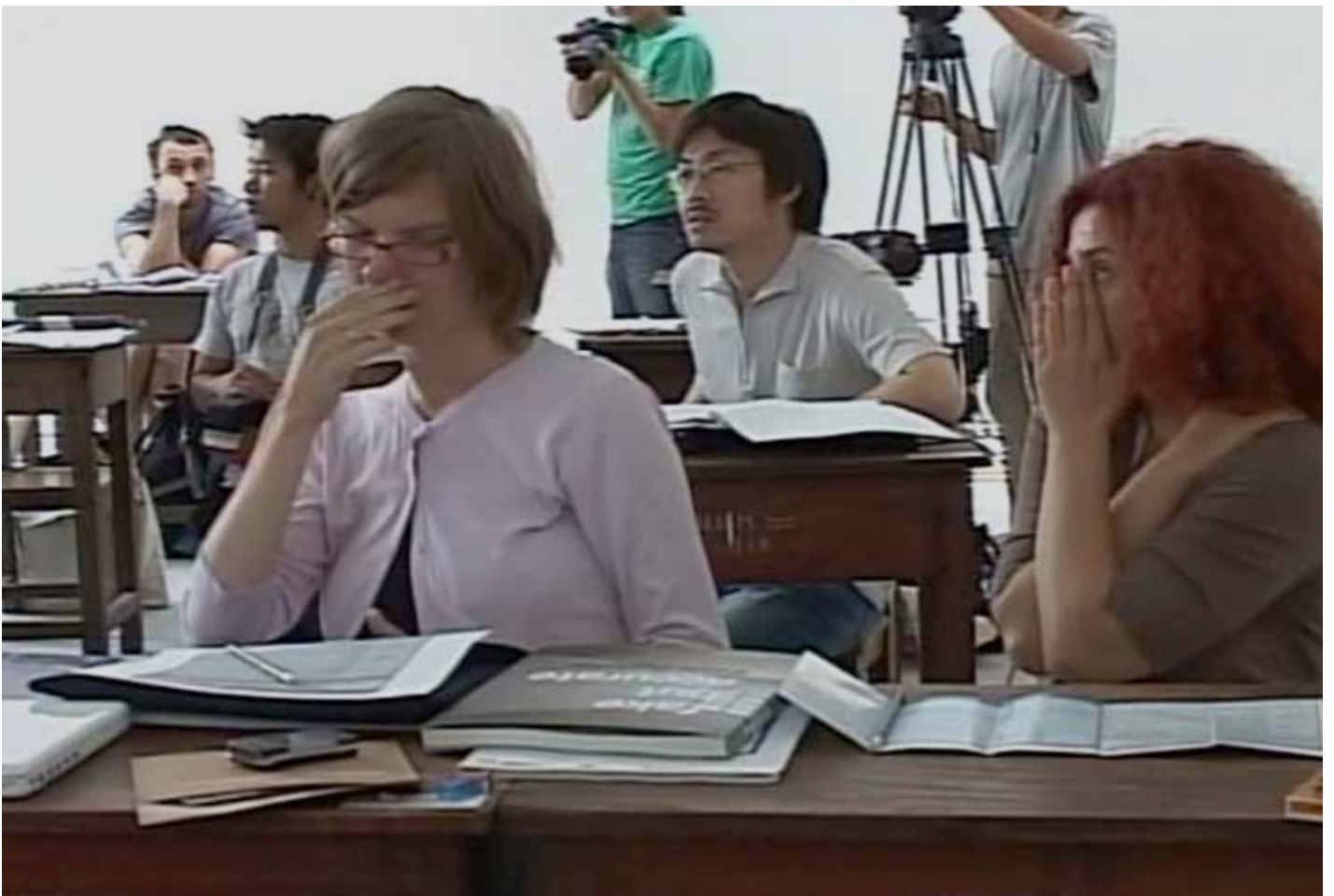


























## EXOTICIZING THE LOCAL

*by Veronica Sekules*

The old silk roads, networks of routes across Central Asia to and from China and Western Europe, carried a regular traffic of luxuries to rulers, merchants and markets, documented over 2,000 years ago. Silks, carpets, precious stones, porcelain and spices travelling west resulted, by the 15th Century, in a profusion of display and consumption recorded in the inventories of rich households and evident in paintings from Italy and Northern Europe. There was also traffic the other way, of damask cloths, linens and wool, velvet, furs and books. But the luxury trades also depended on a substantial infrastructure, both of the raw materials essential for manufacture, such as salt, wood, minerals and alum, themselves being valuable traded items, but also, of skills. At any point in the chain of exchange there was scope for innovation in terms of craft skill, innovation in ideas, perfection in technique, imagination in commissioning a wonderful new building, artefact, painting, type of clothing or food.

**Art is not made by politicians?**

Of course, it was not just goods but ideas that travelled. It is common knowledge that the imports and exchanges of goods had the potential to change habits, tastes and visual identities, introducing innovations, overturning conventions and ultimately indicating a transition between different expressions of power. It was always a question to what extent the identity shifts were novel or political, momentary or deep-seated. In the field of great international diplomacy, the assimilation of the foreign and exotic is all about shifting power and increasing prestige. The expression of wealth of all European monarchs from Friedrich II to Charles V depended on exotic imports, just as the Ottoman courts adopted Western fashions and regalia. Somehow, assimilation of aspects of other cultures, habits and dress increases power. But it is a delicate balance: how far can this go before there is a loss of

power, before local identity is endangered by too much assimilation? Also, how far are local taste and sensibility and the integrity of local art production threatened or offended by different values and beliefs from elsewhere? And conversely, what is the optimum balance between the intensity of experience of the local, and parochialism and narrow-mindedness? Although means of display and therefore the political realms within which art operates have changed radically over the last hundred years, such questions are still pertinent to artistic exchange along new silk roads today.

**Is technology the new silk?**

The new silk road depends on a multiplicity of routes. It is no longer a luxury trade, but a widely popular and populist one. But while technological new silk roads facilitate faster and more various transit, traffic and movement between locations, cultures and objects, they do not guarantee any further understanding. If anything, technology masks and irons out differences even more. For example, Edward S. Cook recently highlighted how the exotic spectacles of 19th century Indian, Chinese and African craft villages in Europe and America have migrated as a phenomenon on the Internet where, under the auspices of National Geographic, indigenous crafts find a global market. As a result, not only are native craft producers prey to the commercial whims of opportunistic buyers out for an exotic bargain, but contact is sanitized, summarised in testimonials and removed from the mess of everyday life. The marriage of consumer culture and Internet has made us prey all around the world to glib globalization, a cliché for international contact that has no depth or passion. Some of the complexities of the relationships between the trading of ideas globally and the attention to, and retention of, atmosphere from local contexts was highlighted at the Bangkok conference, demonstrating that many of the tensions, dangers and possibilities of the original silk routes are still relevant, but that political contexts have dramatically changed.

Kyong Park has created an extremely sophisti-

cated and complex technological mapping which results from a nomadic practice, the fruits of the simplest form of human engagement and wonder. He travels to cities where he rides on a bicycle, recording data, capturing statistics, images, habits and routes through the built environment:

*“I aim to develop visual languages and tools that help us to grasp and comprehend the enormous complexity of contemporary construction and the impact of our ever transformative urban landscapes”.*  
(Kyong Park)

But the art that results from this shows more than anything how communications technology has enabled not only an obvious shift in practice, but that differences are masked by cloak of uniformity. His investigation of cities, owing much to the spread of Asian technology, is as much a metaphor for the spread of the incomprehensible, the possibility for technologies that are designed to aid communication to proliferate a lack of communication, a mystification and a complication. It is randomness cloaked in order. But as such, it sits as a project in a long line of encyclopedic ventures, a modern equivalent of antiquarian histories of everything. And from its reception by an international audience of fellow artists and thinkers, it is no more and no less able to provide any explanation, but it does widen the range of questions.

### **The best medicine comes from afar**

A former colleague, the anthropologist Ragnar Johnson, used to say the best medicine is believed to always come from afar. In one particular context he was talking about the imposition of a new director from abroad, but it is a truism, which applies in many circumstances where magic or ritual is imported for the sake of healing or increasing power. There were a number of works presented in Bangkok that played with forms of ‘medicine’ as international artistic currency.

Shaarbek Amankul from the Kyrgyz Republic and Mu Qian from China each displayed shamanic rituals, transposing deep engagement with utterly powerful indigenous phenomena into a new artistic context. But where Kyong Park’s work was

detached and analytical, theirs was passionate, with interestingly different characters. Mu Qian presented his films as an ethnographic collection made by the organization Pentatonic Workshop, and as such his films had a documentary character. The camera was held at a respectful distance so that the performances could be observed much as if the viewer was present. It had an intensely local character, but something of the objectivity of a researcher at work, recording phenomena for posterity. Shaarbek Amankul’s work was somewhat different, authored as an artist. Four juxtaposed films, carefully judged in order to reflect his personal and political engagement showed street scenes of political unrest alongside different personal expressions of faith. For two of the films, his camera came close into his subjects and the result was much more about the passion of personal performance and behaviour. At times the rawness and intensity of the Shamanic performance was almost un-watchable. This film raised ethical questions about the terms of engagement: is it aiming at closeness with some kind of human-elemental force? Might it also be prey to a charge of voyeurism, sensationalizing secret and personal ritual? Is it in danger of exoticizing the local when it is shown without mediation to an international audience? Many people were left with questions. But nevertheless, his were some of the most passionately intense works we saw.

### **Intention-reception**

Language was, of course, simultaneously our principle means of communication and our greatest barrier. Luckily for me, as a native English speaker, English was the common language, and I never fail to be grateful for that. But in a way, it was ironic that for symposium that purported to be performative we depended so much on speech, and on PowerPoint or Photoshop as the medium of display.

There were some painful examples of struggle with words, but the tension produced by nervous, halting performance made it all the more powerful. Some of the works that were largely wordless were some of the most direct, and showed how

something conceived in response to particular circumstances could still be interpreted in others. Le Huy Hoang's story about divided states in Vietnam and Cambodia and divided loyalties between families and peoples, was clearly about separation, anger, frustration and violence and could be read as such from any perspective. The most obviously artful and performative works came from Indonesia, represented by Agung Hujatnikajenong as curator. Jompet, the artist who performed through a series of interlocking artefacts, rituals and films, was clearly drawing from local history and politics, and even though the works needed some explanation, they were compelling to watch. The spirit was still comprehensible and their local character gave them much more force than if they had been further translated or explained.

There was a constant question of the gaps between intention and reception, the lack of knowledge among the audience of the specific political circumstances within which works were conceived. This of course is always contentious with any art from any period or place, but intensified by the transposition of location, and at times by the theatricality of the performance. Nika's work, performed in the open with Onno Dirker directing a high power hose at him from a distance until he fell, exhausted by the pressure of the water, was originally, as he said on the day, about democracy.

*“What does the pressure of risk look like? Once we have the full image does this formalize our perception and thereby close it off from further development? Is sharing a view necessitate limiting it? This project was inspired by the image of a water cannon used against demonstrators in Tbilisi, 2008, 7th of November.”*

Clearly, his words admit the 'risk' of alternative interpretations. In Bangkok, in the intensity and heat of the moment, it was possible to read many other things in that performance that were not necessarily envisaged. Yes, one could see very obviously the trials of strength, the exhaustion, the victim and the bully. But also it could have been about heat, waste, climate change, and sustainability. It is through the after image and the mem-

ory that it can more readily be placed in a wider context, and when it acquires its associations beyond the visceral. The powerlessness of the victim pitted against the concentration of political force. It perhaps contradicts the notion that politicians do not make art. Politicians feed artistic practice in many ways, and we have to be political not only as artists and activists, but as respondents, as curators, and as educators.

### Women speaking men's words

Hakan Topal's work showed the impact globally of local disasters and the dangers in interpreting them, but also dealt subtly with the transference of values from one time and medium to another. Heightening the references to conflicts of capital and labour, he shovelled concrete against the background of his panorama of both disaster and tourist photographs, accompanied by a reading of an extract from Friedrich Engels work on poverty and the politics of representation. The situation of disaster was transposed from 19th century England to Bangkok, with the judicious insertion of local names. But through an extra twist of fate, when he discovered that he would have to shovel the concrete himself, he invited me, a native English female voice, to read the text for him. This piece of creative adaptation, gave the work another layer. For me it was a very intense experience to read out loud about the dreadful neglect of the poor in a location I knew well, but applying to a situation that was still widely current. By having it read by a woman, Hakan not only enabled one piece of writing to transcend time and place, but to interpret another situation afresh in a completely new way, which inevitably enriched the issues being raised.

The idea of women speaking men's words was carried on later in the symposium by Samah Hijawi, performing seamlessly in Arabic a long sequence of political speeches about the uniting of the Arab nations. Somehow the emptiness of the rhetoric, evident from the constant repetition of stock phrases, obvious even to those who couldn't understand a word, was made much more ridiculous and much more poignant by being read by a

female voice. No, politicians do not make art, but when their principal means of creative expression is made into an art form, as in this case, it makes it clear the extent to which a vacuum exists around them.

Works presented by women had the potential to heighten political tension in the subtlest of ways. Some of the sharpest tensions were religious. A woman in one of Shaarbek Amankul's films misquoted the Koran, which turned out to be offensive to one of the other stricter Muslim artists. Misunderstood or misquoted religious work stood in contrast to Lina Saneh's wilful critical re-interpretation of Muslim law in her supremely articulate plan to dismember and distribute her body parts in advance of her death as a solution to the Muslim ban on cremation. The project became an exercise in politics and in exoticizing the self, both eminently suitable qualities as currency for the new silk roads, traversing cultures in the cause of art.

#### **Who makes 'the new silk roads?'**

Supersudaca's touristic interpretation of Shanghai's shopping malls, bursting with goods with which they have already saturated the West, were a kind of light-hearted post-script both to the old and the new silk road. They were making comparisons with South America, saying that their countries had not yet reached such sophistication. But their principal reference point was the Barbie store and while it was funny, by some, their presentation was read as not well enough considered. Shanghai's supreme, overwhelming, encyclopedic level of consumerism, which aims to supply the world, is as awe-inspiring as it is fear-inducing, and their response in the face of such unprecedented consumerist power, was to laugh. Some people took offense to their tone. But tension was increased, maybe because there was indeed some critical edge to their analysis.

So, is this what we are receiving in the West? What are the demands at the end of the silk road?

Supersudaca's talk demonstrated that the intense experience of a locality is another potential form of exoticism. There was a desire expressed at the symposium for cohesion, fellow feeling and unity. Indeed art can explore common ground and it can be a force for the expression of shared values. But should we be watchful and fear the too complete assimilation between different cultures? We define ourselves as much by opposites and contrasts as by similarity. To me the more interesting project is to explore what is local and particular, and to preserve our productive and creative differences. That sense of local differences travelling is what energized the old silk roads. We need to remain excited by each other's creation of art made from intense and passionate local experience.

In the intensity of the experience in Bangkok, there was little time for true reflection on some of these issues of similarity and difference. Some performances received little or no comment, not because they were not interesting, but perhaps there were occasions when responsive or critical words were thought to be unnecessary. Is reception in silence too much of a lazy art world custom? Pier-Luigi Tazzi's criticism at the end was that this was a kind of quasi, part-academic operation: a hybrid event without resolution and full of half-thoughts at which he felt himself, as an observer, to be a ghost. But, this was perhaps where the event was undecided as to what kind of thing it was: was it art creation, reflection, display or critique? While the academic process is explicitly verbose and self-consciously intellectual, exploring argument, interpretations, attempting points of view, answers and resolutions, this was above all part of the world of art, and art is meant to stimulate, to make propositions and can remain enigmatic. These were works in progress: proposals and thoughts towards performance, and proposals and thoughts towards the complex political-personal issues along the open-ended new silk roads. Perhaps because we were both creators and witnesses, the event was bound to be unresolved.









## NEW ROADS

### BY SEPH RODNEY

The Silk Road—it was only later, after sitting with my memories of the conference I realized that I had to look at this “road” as more than a conduit for information and objects. The original route has enjoyed historical emphasis on its conduct of goods, that is, its function as a means of commercial interchange. But this definition did not help me come to terms with the baffling array of artists and researchers who attended the symposium. I came to view the Silk Road as more than an historical artefact alone, but as a metaphor for a route, that is, a strategy for traveling, for negotiating one’s way through cultural space. (By ‘culture’, I mean the specific rituals and practices that characterize a particular group and their way of life.) Both senses taken together made it possible to understand how this conference consisted of older strategies for artistic inquiry and cultural evocation, like well-worn paths that had conducted many travellers. Yet, it also seemed to contain moments in which the artists and scholars found their legs and made new routes. Now, I look back the way we came, at what these different roads might tell us about this experiment in Bangkok, and what they might indicate about the future. Such diverse and deeply considered

forms of analysis and displays of cultures as offered by the roster of artists and researchers only began to resolve themselves for me once I understood them as differing approaches. The academic presentations helped make this clear. Both Kyong Park and Jiang Jun presented analytical work (rather than performative) that demonstrated the extent to which the antiquated Silk Road was a mechanism for exchange that was significantly internal to the Asian continent. Jiang demonstrated that following the trail of insignia, signs, and emblems with a particular rubric in mind he could find meaningful distinctions, and thus see separations between the cultures of Mongolia and China that are historical, but also, by his claims, structural. Kyong delineated the complexity of current cultures across Asia, with its blossoming economic and legal institutions, and changing social and spatial forms of organization. He showed that mapping as an attempt to configure what is happening can be a mostly futile exercise. Both presentations struck me as remarkably self-referential. The logic underpinning these analyses presumes that the cultures and subcultures within the East may be understood by comparison with each other, rather than to cultures out-

side the continent. This logic puts to one side that paradigmatic division of East and West, so often thrown up as a key division among questions of how a cultural practice is recognized as constitutive of a culture. This logic then suggests a different way for me to appreciate the significance of the old Silk Road, known for bringing travellers into connection to others outside the borders. The other seems important. Indeed it is the notion of the 'other' that has troubled much of Western politics and political theory in the last century. At the root of this trouble is the conviction that knowledge brought from outside perspectives provokes a deep and productive (and even intolerable) self-awareness. I wonder what lasting effects come from creating a road that essentially loops back on itself, ferrying people and cargo around a geographic area that although varied, is still contained within the Asian continental or cultural borders. By metaphorical extension, I wonder whether an approach, bound by certain internalized, intellectual borders, diminishes its travellers' exposure to other perspectives that could contribute to self-criticality and self-awareness. Yet, I also recognize that a crucial aspect of a culture is the creation of a specific set of logics internal to the community. This set of logics, we might say, is what gives a culture its character. Enacting them we might rightly consider political.

Our own politics, that is our relations of

power with the conference organisers and with the structure of the symposium itself, were disjointed and faltering. On the first day we made our presentations in classrooms at the Bangkok university, squeezed behind tiny desks and squeezed into tinier chairs, all facing the front of the room like obedient pupils. I had a conversation with a few of the artists and scholars in our community, after the first seven hours of rigorous slide-talk-slide presentations that had most of us feeling physically cramped and vaguely disquieted. We brewed insurrection. Talking with each other we concluded that this scholastic environment didn't work for us and that we would challenge it: the next day we would change all the desks around, make a circle or square in seminar format. We would revolt, and make our own space. It did not happen. That idea somehow died—perhaps through inaction, or indifference, fear, or forgetfulness.

Apparently, we did not fully appreciate that these imposed rules were there only to be broken. At the end of the first day, Davide Quadrio said to me that he too was hoping for more provocative action and thought that as everyone settled into the layout they would become more comfortable and would act for free. Then at the end of the symposium, Davide reminded me that he had both written and said repeatedly that freedom of action within the space was completely up to the participants. He

and Defne Ayas were happy to receive whatever performative actions people thought up to challenge and remake the space. Though our internal politics (to my knowledge) failed to cohere in action, we saw illustrations of political action, indeed action dramatized as an individual striving against repression. We witnessed this in the performance work of Nika (Nikoloz Chkhaidze). Nika, for what seemed like a punishing length of time, pushed himself against a barrage of water directed from a fire hose. The work was both painful and beautiful in decontextualizing the individual, almost ineffectual, gesture against control. It both staged and demonstrated risk: we saw Nika's body pummeled into the concrete floor as he pushed back in a Sisyphean struggle to overcome, to get to the man holding the tool of violent oppression. Then, unexpectedly, Onno Dirker, playing the part of the repressive state apparatus, lost control of the hose (vehicle of repression) and its power sprayed everywhere. It wet everyone. (Onno himself was bruised by landing hard on his elbow while trying to regain control.) It is likely significant that this work took place outside. In restaging history in that isolated act of hosing down the dissident, the work transcended itself. It allowed in the accidental, and thus real risk. Nika could not have planned to show, but nevertheless did, that the regime sometimes falters. Thus it was a work that proposed a certain strategy for collaboration between artists, for representing political determination: It

did so through dramatization, that though decontextualized, was compelling in its bodily risk.

Indeed without the sense of risk, or without the active challenge to the boundaries of the space performative action fell very flat. Arahmaiani's work was illustrative of this failure. Her performance consisted of standing on the balcony of the Stephan Rusu's Flat Space piece, waving a hybrid flag of no clear provenance and no specific agenda. The work suggests political activism enacted in the simple deed of waving a handmade flag, but it illustrated activism without clarity. Its trite formulation could not indicate where our energies needed to be placed, or what could be at stake, and perhaps most importantly, what the cost will be. This piece stood in contrast to much of the other work in the symposium, that though silent on historical specificity, was articulate in its dramatization or in its methodology for comprehending the significance of a cultural practice.

Some of the artists and scholars were quite successful at making a case for how particular cultural practices define a community and allow the participants to constitute a sense of self around and through these behaviours. Agung Koerniawan presented work concerned with how people who live in a particular city come to recognize it, and I would suggest, their place in it. His work, largely documentary footage of the nighttime activities of a

particular group, with recordings of their own voices and depictions of their music, depicted these night lives as the socially significant ways they understood being part of a community.

This approach I found deeply ethical and concerned with social inclusion. There was a more subtle set of politics at work here: not a politics of rebellion, but of recognition. This grassroots ethic means to take as its foundational perspective, the experience of the worker, the shop owner, the farmer and student. Thus it works in opposite fashion to a colonial history that tended to privilege the view from those at the top of the social hierarchy.

This ethic was demonstrated performatively as well, through Agung Hujatnikajennong's video of a dancer/performer sweeping through a factory and blessing the machines in his path. That work connected ritual to economic necessity, performance to the material necessities of a community. It also served as a piece of historical analysis in showing indigenous practices, that eventually become embedded in a culture as ritual, may be tied to self-preservation.

Other artists and scholars employed these strategies. In Alexander Ugay's documentary work, or Shaarbek Amankul's videos of Shamans, Mu Qian's examination of the Pentatonic Workshop, or Zoe Butt and the Long March

Project, small, rarely seen pathways of culture were made visible. These works ordered for our view cultural practices such as singing, reciting poems, exorcizing demons, etc. In these works the presenters used a strategy of documentation that de-emphasized the filmmaker's creative influence, thus producing work that seemed authentically amateur in its making of a video or filmic record. This strategy also conversely emphasizes the significance of the recorded event itself. The effect is to chronicle ways of life, concretizing them in an anthropological record, and reminding others that the examined culture continues to exist. There was, in these presentations, a sober celebration of ritual practices. Just as each time a family's members gather around the dinner table and enacts the ritual of eating together to both say who they are to each other and to confirm that each one is a member of the familial community, these works kept an inheritance circulating in the community. These works made memory a live endeavour. Thus, remembering made a case for the necessity of remembering.

Howard Chan's projects complicated this approach in placing cultural preservation of every-day ritual in the contexts of both community self-awareness and curatorial strategy. In doing so he conveyed the primary reason practices and knowledge produced from within a community need to be preserved: because their institutionalization and recognition gives

a dignity to their day-to-day lives that otherwise is rarely given. His Museum of the Streets allows those who visit to recognize themselves in images that are otherwise destined for easy consumption. Tourist images that proliferate everywhere function in just the opposite way. They are empty and attach to nothing. Through programmes such as the Refrigerator Project, Chan takes the image back to the simple quotidian usefulness of the refrigerator in the family home in order to talk about generational differences, social mobility, class. Crucially these images are not intended for foreign export as a commodity, but as internal communications.

This approach seemed fresh to me, a new conduit, built on top of the old road that routed exoticism to a western world hungry for consumables, a world in which citizens have learned to comprehend themselves through consumption. The old road imagines cultures it made connections to as sources of delectable goods to consume. At one point we were confronted with this old, reactionary approach to imagining the connections between differing cultures and we laughed at how ridiculous the idea seems to us now.

Felix Mandrazo and Max Zolkwer of Supersudaca, presented us with a tourist's suitcase full of commoditized images, images full of rapture over colourful toys and effervescent objects. Their presenta-

tion was a clear and jubilant illustration of precisely the attitude of someone who travels to other cultures to use them as a source of pleasure and escape. Thus cultures and their practices become cheap, empty souvenirs—each representation is disposable, the image, the object, the trip, the story. Many of us laughed at this way of representing their travel experience. Indeed, with this laughter we distanced ourselves from that old Silk Road. We recognized that this perspective was itself an antiquated artefact. Anger was another response: Agung Koerniwan verbally objected and walked out of the room during the presentation. He later said, in explanation, that humour is difficult to pull off and can be subversive when it is powerfully employed, but if not knowingly employed, risks failing and becoming a bad joke. But I think he missed the opportunity to recognize this encounter as genuine confusion based on the clash of signifiers that on the one hand are held as constitutive of the dignity of people, and on the other a source of disposable pleasure. There was a chance there to examine the ways that symbols take on meaning, and perhaps the most generous form of our politics was enacted then, when we spent some time wrestling with what Felix and Max had confronted us with.

In reconsidering the original road, we met with distinct ontologies, ethnicities, practices, and, in the work of Gary Pastrana, commingling. It was one of

the surprising works. This make-shift hybridity, was illustrated in his work of taking two chairs, sawed and hacked to pieces, recombining them randomly with two workers simultaneously operating a glue gun and hammer and nails. The result was Frankensteinian, glue-sutured, contorted bodies of sculptural inelegance. Despite the ungainliness of the newly produced 'chairs' Gary's work suggested questions of its potential uses for these new objects: they could not return to the functions they had fulfilled before. Therefore new uses would have to be imagined for them. This made me think of how disparate parts of our cultural history, the materials out of which we fashion well-used rituals and practices have a built-in resistance to being torn apart and recombined. They would not be recognizable and they may likely become useless. Hakan Topal purposely and performatively articulated an argument for uselessness. He actively attacked the foundation of twentieth-century rationalized labour, endlessly repeated concrete structures, and the relentless consumption that would support all of it. Hakan physically savaged sacks of Portland cement, snapping me back from the brink of sleep and into presence with the sound of his striking shovel. Against a backdrop of a photograph installation of tourists taking pictures of themselves in various tourist spaces (again in consumption), and with Veronica Sekules sitting in a chair in the middle of his space and reading aloud, he tore the bags apart. As Veronica

read out a text referring to political trauma and historical struggle, Hakan took the cement bags apart and shoved the grey, dusty material over Veronica's feet, and everywhere around the space. His work spoke of un-building, of tearing down. He scattered the substance of modernity (Portland cement was an artificial compound that replaced natural cement and contributed to an accelerated building process at the end of the 19th century) recanting its knowledge, disavowing its claims. The failure of modern architecture to put at ease our cultural distinctions, or render them insignificant is well documented. Hakan placed himself outside of this continuity to argue that it must and can be stopped.

Other works at the symposium placed the body back into the question of cultural examination. David Cotterrell presented films of soldiers wounded in Afghanistan, presenting work that had a contradictory relationship with the speaker. In his work, the bodies of soldiers, blasted and battered, take on a dramatic presence in the operating theatre. In a slow-motion video record of surgeries being carried out warring bodies are made vulnerable by injury. These bodies become bodies over which the fight for preservation is waged. However the person making this struggle visible is manifestly opposed to war. David identified himself as a pacifist to us and presumably to the soldiers with whom he was embedded in Afghanistan. Despite this

he put himself in harms way to concretize and then complicate his own response to war. His work poses question regarding invasion and preservation, cultures that meet in violent conflict and the aftermath of such encounters. In addition, the bodies of wounded soldiers are practically and symbolically held as the nation's own, and in the surgery are fought to be reclaimed from the damage of war by an almost similar level of skill and loyal commitment.

In Lina Saneh's presentation of a narrative about her own body, the very terms of individual ownership versus ownership by the culture or community are discussed. Lina presented a piece she had written in which she seeks to get rid of her body, piece by piece in direct denial of a proposed law that would prohibit the donation of body parts after death. Thus, she looked to graft onto local practices the conviction that her own body is her own, this despite that local customs refuse to regard the body as simply belonging to the individual. One conclusion to be drawn from her work is that the body is placed in a role of primary significance, as in Nika's piece, where our politics are enacted and tested. She argues in essence that the body is where politics and political understanding begin.

At the last, the positioning of Ho Tzu Nyen was interestingly contradictory—he was both with us and not with us. He allowed himself to be represented

for most of the symposium by a stand-in who went on to ask the kinds of questions only an outsider asks, naively and candidly. Why? And then what happens? How do you see this commenting on art in general? These questions could have, with a bit more context, pushed us to look at the art practices presented during the symposium from the perspective of a spectator who can take little for granted. This strategy did also propose what seemed to me to be a new way of thinking the traverse between and among cultures: to be in it, but not of it, to stand slightly outside, looking, recording and mapping. Tzu Nyen did that long enough to get a sense of where to reposition himself in relation to us. In the end he decided to document us, to show us to ourselves. This strategy seems to me to avoid the self-referentiality that threatens to reduce self-criticality. Tzu Nyen used this approach to produce a video of what he observed through from the vantage of being there/not there. I concluded, once back in London, that this strategy was the most convincing to me for negotiating the old Silk Road, while looking to both preserve significant cultural practices and discover new ones. Cultural meaning exists in passage and in flow; preservation should not mean consecration. As Els Silvrants said, it is crucial to step out of borders, ideologies and markets. It seems indeed to be crucial to take such a road out, and then just as crucial to take a road to step back in.







## ARTHUB AS A DE-INSTITUTION

As Arthub Asia we have been initiating and delivering ambitious art projects through a sustained dialogue with visual, performance, and new media artists across Asia since 2007. This could not have happened neither without the collaboration of creative players and thinkers across Asia, nor without the local and international museums and other public-private spaces and institutions who enabled us in many ways.

Our ambitious stab at the possibilities for a collaborative platform took off at a time of urgency when we noticed that contemporary artistic practices had a short history of structural development and faced contradictions and problem of “translations” especially in regards to methodologies of research within the Chinese and Asian context at large. As Arthub Asia directors, we set out to explore the dis/connects between neighbours and cultures across Asia, that were not bound by the blue-chip name institutions in the export-import matrix of the Western hemisphere. Was there room for validation platforms across Asia?

If this answer is still unclear, we surely wanted to contribute to make such a shift and our background and geographical area of expertise was a great starting point. We were the unconscious son and daughter of the awakening of Asia which we not only saw in the last two decades of working within this immense continent but also contributed to by shaking and shaping. We were immensely inspired by the independently operating artists, and auto-didactic curators, producers, visual arts administrators across China and part of Asia, and wanted to see how a collective intelligence could be acknowledged and empowered out of a network that we would create from scratch. To do so, not only have we identified a trust network in the region, but we analyzed together various existing models of operation. This process officially began in 2007, with the travel funds (artists mobility program called Compass) made available for Arthub Asia by Prince Claus Fund.

We also looked at the cultural exchanges that have taken place historically, mostly in modern times, and in colonial circumstances, and learned from them,

yet the fact is that the various levels of economic and political “ruptures” over time (as in the case of China 1949-mid 1979) have only led to a short interfacing during the last twenty years.

The culmination of this research strengthened our conviction that there is a need for furthering experimentation, knowledge-production and diversity among dedicated artists, art professionals, scholars, and arts organizations in the region.

In order to attain our mission and to address the possibilities of collaboration in this vast continent, we worked non-stop, 24/7 and we decided to keep the core group (multi-tasking) very small, with no space, office or facilities but focusing all attention and financial resources to the project itself.

So proudly and not so silently - despite being only three people at the core of the organization - Arthub Asia has been incredibly active in the last four years, proving that structures can actually be extremely flexible and reduced to what we defined as a “de-institution”. With this term as presented in a recent conference in Seoul, we indicate deconstructive and deconstructed institution-perceived organizations and collaborative networks that have no space, minimum flexible organization made of pier-to-pier collaborators based on trust and mutual goals. De-institutions are highly productive and virus-like mutating and expanding/reducing following the NOW economical, psychological and cultural conditions.

Arthub Asia was born in 2007 out of a unique, long lasting experience with BizArt (b. in 1998), the sole Shanghai-based non-profit art space that was, for many years, only responsive to a local need and demand. The principle of locality and “groundedness” is what made BizArt strong at first but also became its Achilles’ Hill, pigeonholing it to its guarded condition. Bizart-supported artists’ mobility across the globe or various issues of interculturalism and cultural imperialism between Shanghai and rest of the world did not come to the surface until much later in its history, so to say only once the process of building common ground between China and the rest of the world kicked off (2003 with the Korean residency and exhibition “In the Heat of the Sun” and the UK Artists Links project). Once the base was consolidated for the local root, it was time to move out of

the box and explore interfaces with the rest of Asia and the world. And it is then that Arthub Asia was conceptualized.

For cultural observers, Bizart seemed too local and guarded (and is now transformed into an artist enterprise MadeIn, which deserves a special case study on its own) and Arthub Asia too “intensively flourishing”, going into too many directions, but still the two projects share the same validity of being “pioneering” enterprises both at a conceptual and a structural way. Both organizations prove that art systems can be re-made, collapse fail and eventually be genuinely reshaped as a reflection not only of the socio-political conditions but also of the personal level, following desires, intentions and anagraphic changes of the initiators of the projects. It is a strong claim of the possibility of fragility as a status for development that skips the nostalgia of the achievements and pushes to find other conditions of existence. It is all very idealistic in a way, but funnily shaped the lives of many people, at least of the three directors: Davide Quadrio, Defne Ayas and Qiu Zhijie.

## PERFORMANCE

## CAO FEI – RMB CITY OPERA

06 November 2009,  
Carignano Theatre, Artissima 16,  
Turin, ITALY

As part of the Artissima 16 Theatre Project *Blinding the Ears*, Arthub Asia invited the artist Cao Fei to put forth her investigation of the boundaries between digital fantasyscapes and the physical world by creating a live piece based on her RMB City project. Planned and developed in the online world of Second life, RMB City is a virtual metropolis built up as a platform that fosters creative activities.

In this piece Cao Fei worked with avatar-actors and stage elements to create a performance based on the “model dramas” (Yang Ban Xi) of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. These dramas, the only politically approved performance form at the time, were propaganda productions (movie musicals, ballets, operas), afterward adapted into cinematic media in order to deeply entrench themselves in the collective memory and imagery of the population.



© Arthub Asia & Cao Fei, courtesy of Vitamin Creative Space and FarEastFarWest collection

Featuring ballerinas pirouetting with rifles or male proletariat dancers executing landlords, the Yang Ban Xi combined elements of the then banned Chinese traditional opera with ballet, propaganda songs and popular music. Cao Fei, who has always been extremely fascinated by this extraordinary integration of elements, has extensively explored the potential of the operatic medium ever since.

DIRECTED BY *Cao Fei (SL: China Tracy)* SCRIPT *Cao Fei (with contributions from Hu Fang)* • PERFORMERS *He Yufan, Jiang Jun* • COMMISSIONED BY *Artissima 16, Turin, Italy* • CURATED BY *Davide Quadrio & Defne Ayas* • PRODUCED BY *RMB City, Depart and FarEastFarWest Collection* • PRODUCER *Zhang Wei (SL: Freeway Mayo)* • THE RMB CITY PROJECT IS DEVELOPED BY *Cao Fei and Vitamin Creative Space* • FACILITATOR *Uli Sigg* • PUBLIC PRESENTER *Serpentine Gallery, London*

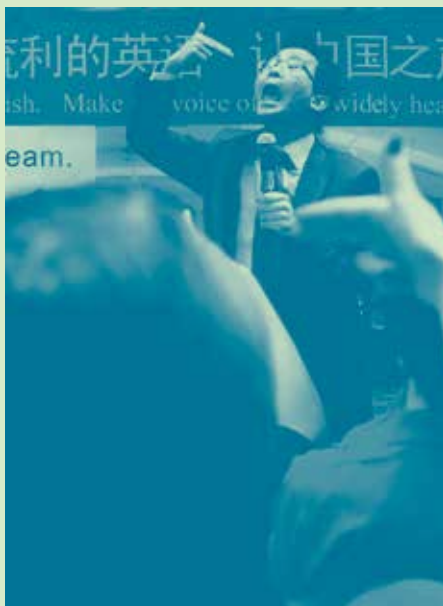
## PERFORMANCE

## ZHOU XIAOHU - CRAZY ENGLISH

15 May 2010,  
Tate Modern, LONDON

Zhou Xiaohu’s *Crazy English* is a performance that was especially conceived for *No Soul For Sale – A Festival of Independents*, a happening that brought together over 70 independent art spaces, non-profit organizations and artists’ collectives from all over the world to celebrate Tate Modern’s 10th anniversary.

Crazy English mirrored the concerns of Shanghai-based Chinese artist Zhou Xiaohu about the Chinese social tendency to misread and mistranslate western marketing concepts and tools.



© Arthub Asia & Zhou Xiaohu

For this performance, Zhou Xiaohu invited one of the teachers of Crazy English, a company specialized in teaching English language to large Chinese audiences in football stadiums and similar big-scale venues. The artist presented the Crazy English method as a performance in itself, being a technique that takes standard American English and makes of it an invented interpretation of the language. Zhou's aim, through the simple action of bringing Crazy English to London, was to show how something familiar as the English language, can instantly be transformed into something alien and foreign (English for foreigners), thus raising questions of legitimacy and the distorted effects of cultural imperialism.

CURATED BY *Davide Quadrio & Defne Ayas* • SUPPORTED BY *FarEastFarWest Collection*

#### EXHIBITION

JOMPET (KUSWIDANANTO) - THIRD REALM

05 June – 29 September 2011,

Gervasuti Foundation, VENICE, ITALY

Yogyakarta-based Jompét has gained notoriety for his delicate multimedia installations that often combine video, sound and kinetic sculptures. In the

frame of the Biennale events, the artist presented Third Realm, a site-specific project based on the idea of phantoms. Jompét constructed mechanized ghostly figurines and positioned them in a parade-like manner. Although evoking an odd Venetian Carnival, the figures were neither embodied, nor flamboyantly masked. Instead, they relinquished their bodies, featuring only fragments – a hat, a few garments similar to colonial military dress, a pair of shoes - all suspended from the ceiling. Some of them were equipped with drum kits that periodically beat a sporadic percussion.



© Arthub Asia and Ark Gallerie, Jakarta, courtesy of Gervasuti Foundation, Venice

The installation represented Jompét's personal journey through the complex, colonial history of Indonesia and Java, and was the result of his long-standing research into the compendium of psychosomatic traces of a bloody past. The work is also a fragile description of the integrated nature of Java's many identities - a land of many people and languages where religious syncretism brings Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and animism together. Positioned within Venetian arches and interiors, the installation was set to tackle not only the repercussions of national identity and religion-based politics, but also the very foundations of democracy and its homogenizing effects upon society.

CURATED BY *Defne Ayas & Davide Quadrio* • PRODUCED WITH THE SUPPORT OF *FarEastFarWest Collection, Ark Gallerie, Jakarta and the Gervasuti Foundation, Venice* • Part of *Arthub Asia's Here Be Dragons* program at the *Venice Biennale*

XIJINGMEN (CHEN SHAOXIONG,  
TSUYOSHI OZAWA & GIMHONGSOK)

01 June - 29 September 2011,

Bevilacqua La Masa,

St. Mark's Square, VENICE, ITALY

Xijing - the capital of the West - exists upon a fictive geopolitical axis created in correspondence to the real cities of Beijing (capital of the North), Nanjing (capital of the South) and Dongjing/Tokyo (capital of the East). Conceived since its inception as a progressive exploration in five open-ended chapters, the Xijing project departs from the literary exercises of fictional geography and imaginative mapping, to voyage instead through the 'enactment' of a symbolic territory where the connections between spatiality and identity are continuous with its collective production.



© Nicolo De Giorgis, courtesy Bevilacqua la Masa Foundation, Venice

The first four chapters (Do you know Xijing?, Welcome to Xijing, This is Xijing and I Love Xijing) were charting the paths of the phenomenal world of politics and institutions – of art, history and society – through performative interventions. Flipping between dark humour and existential eccentricity, these abridged scripts were devised to render Xijing as the immanent side of human things, be it of memory or mythology, literature or tradition, the foundation of urbanity, the conception of citizenship, the formation of power and authority.

The exhibition featured an original large-scale installation which, as a second iteration of the fourth

chapter (I Love Xijing), constituted a main sculptural landscape accompanied by a selection of video-based works and a sound installation related to the previous chapters. This installation, being a reeling archive of the core performances of the artists' collaborative practice, was a visual synthesis of their unique collective research.

CURATED BY *Beatrice Leanza* • COMMISSIONED BY *Arthub Asia* • SUPPORTED BY *Bevilacqua La Masa* • TECHNICAL SUPPORT BY *HDD\_FUN Studio* • Part of *Arthub Asia's Here Be Dragons program at the Venice Biennale*

SOUNDTRACK/COMMISSION

YAN JUN – MUSIC FOR LISTENING  
ON THE MOON

12 December 2010, SHANGHAI, CHINA

"The Moon Life" concept store is an artistic project developed by Alicia Framis and designed by Shanghai-based Byn. Conceived as an itinerary show/pop-up shop, the store features concepts, prototypes and products about daily life on the Moon.

Yan Jun composed Music for Listening on the Moon especially for Moon Life. Jun's work is based on everyday life sound and the practice of listening without searching for a particular meaning. Working in the field of sound and language, Yan Jun is known for



© Yan Jun

his ability to range effortlessly from poetry and installations to performing and recording music.

MUSIC BY *Yan Jun* • LABEL *Sub Jam/KwanYin* •  
COMMISSIONED BY *Arthub Asia*

## EXHIBITION

SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES:  
NARRATIVES OF RESISTANCE

26 February – 26 March 2011,

*The Art Center, Center of Academic Resources,  
Chulalongkorn University, BANGKOK, THAILAND*

## LECTURE

## ARTIST LECTURE BY ZHANG PEILI

07 March 2011,

*Jim Thomson Art Center*

The exhibition *Survival Techniques: Narratives of Resistance* constituted a reflection on human conflict and the ways we endure it. Considering the different reactions to situations that rise out of diverse ideologies, nationalities and backgrounds, and our efforts to communicate through those differences, the participating artists explored the human travails and the struggles entailed by the existence in a state of flux.



© Zhang Peili

Taking the poetry and the power of imagery as a starting point, *Survival Techniques* looked closely at the layers of artistic creation, revealing the art-

ist's quest to reach his or her truth, often achieved by manipulating the facts and playing with reality and fiction. The individual artworks in the exhibition were linked to each other, echoing one another and creating semantic conversations, giving the audience the feeling of a geographical collapse, as well as creating an unnamed world based on the capacity of art to expand the specific into universally relatable concepts.

With the revolutions in the Arab world, known as the Arab Spring, we have increasingly witnessed civil resistance involving various measures such as demonstrations, rallies, and marches to express dissatisfaction against the authoritarian regimes. Nevertheless, the situations in Thailand and in the Arab world, along with the reactions of their populations, are not unique. As history has always testified, there have always been groups of people, races, and nations surviving in times of political uncertainty and social unrest.

ARTISTS *Zhang Peili, Happiness, 2006 / Rainer Ganahl, I hate Marx, 2010 / Yang Zhenzhong, I will die, 2000-2007 / Shen Shaomin, I am Chinese 2006-2008 / Artur Zmijewski, Them, 2007, courtesy of Vanabbe Museum*  
• CURATED BY *Davide Quadrio* • SUPPORTED BY *The Art Center, Center of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand* • ARTIST LECTURE MADE POSSIBLE BY *Jim Thomson Art Center, Bangkok, Thailand*

## EXHIBITION

## NEW INK – SHCONTEMPORARY 2011

07-10 September 2011,

*Shanghai Exhibition Center, CHINA*

The *New Ink* exhibition presented video work, installations and performances built up as an overview of new appropriations of traditional ink techniques in contemporary artistic practices in China and beyond. Many aspects of the use of ink in art were taken into consideration including its cultural history in the region, the weight of its legacy, its formal and compositional rigor, and its capacity for empathy and emotional sensitivity.

*New Ink* included works by FX Harsono, the Yangjiang Group (Zheng Guogu, Chen Zaiyan and Sun Qinglin), Jennifer Wen Ma, Bai Yiluo, Chen Qi and Qin Feng.

ket. For these students of art, the memory of the S.U. was neither some style of sketch they have learned, nor just some image of a monument.



© Lee Kit, courtesy of Aike Gallery



© Arthub Asia & Qiu Zhijie, courtesy of Shcontemporary

CURATED BY *Defne Ayas, Davide Quadrio & Qiu Zhijie* •  
COMMISSIONED BY *Arthub Asia for ShContemporary* • *Part of a side-program of the ShContemporary Art Fair 2011 curated by a team of international curators led by Defne Ayas, Davide Quadrio & Qiu Zhijie*

WORKSHOP/INSTALLATION

REPUBLIC 1: DO YOU STILL REMEMBER  
THE SOVIET UNION?

07 – 08 September 2011,

Shanghai Exhibition Center main hall, CHINA

Students born in the late 80's were inquired about the meaning of 'Soviet' upon their visit of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Hall, the venue of ShContemporary. Seeking answers among their own families, the students subsequently interweaved the responses they got with concepts extrapolated by Plato's The Republic.

The performances that followed the research phase, took place on a bamboo made stage, a reminiscence of the 1950's during which the building was erected. The floor of the stage could be seen either as the shadow of this building or as the bow of a ship. Images of some old movies and posters of former Soviet Union formed the projection background for the installation.

The Republic 1: do you remember the Soviet Union was not an ideological reminiscence, but an archaeological excavation in the current site of the art mar-

The Republic is a long-last project of 'Total Art Studio' in China Academy of Art. The 'TAT' is a series of experiments performed together with events, performances, videos, social investigation and social participation.

THE STUDENTS OF TOTAL ART STUDIO, CHINA ART ACADEMY *Cheng Tao, Guo Houtong, He Bing, Huang Danyang, Huang Songhao, Li Lun, Li Yingqi, Li Shibai, Liu Xiu, Luo Jinhua, Miao Wenjun, Song Xinxin, Tian Zhenkun, Wang Fangyi, Wang Yuyan, Wang Ziyue, Wu Han, Zhang Dongchuan, Zhang Haoxiang & Zhong Ai.* • ARTISTIC DIRECTORS *Qiu Zhijie, Song Zhen & Zhao Jingyan* • COMMISSIONED BY *Arthub Asia for ShContemporary* • *Part of a side-program of the ShContemporary Art Fair 2011 curated by a team of international curators led by Defne Ayas, Davide Quadrio & Qiu Zhijie*

FESTIVAL

FINAL CUT - PROCESSING NEW  
MEDIA IN PUBLIC SPACE

18-22 October 2008, Xujiahui Park,  
Xuhui District, SHANGHAI, CHINA

Final Cut - Processing New Media in Public Space was a five-day mini-festival of live performances, site-specific installations and video screenings taking place inside Xujiahui Park in the Xuhui District,

one of the most bustling areas of Shanghai.

As a part of the Shanghai E-arts Festival 2008, Final Cut focused on the liveability of urban space, the public sphere, and its transformation through new media. The program was developed in co-operation with visual artists, musicians, DJs, architects, programmers, dancers, and designers. Featured artists and presenters included Christian Marclay, Elliott Sharp, Wu Na, Bruce Gremo, Wang Li Chuan, Ben Houge, Yan Jun, Top Floor Circus, Aaajiao, Nunu, Ling Xi, B6, Alizia Borsari, Dead J+Chen Xiongwei, Feng Mengbo, Wang Yuyang, Zhou Xiaohu, Michael Bell Smith, Shih Chieh Huang, Terra Bajraghosa, Takeshi Murata, and Eric Siu. Also Hipic.org and the 40+4 project were on view.

CURATED AND ORGANIZED BY *Davide Quadrio & Defne Ayas*

• COMMISSIONED BY *Shanghai E-arts Festival 2008*



© Arthub Asia and Feng Mengbo

CONCERT/VIDEO

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY - SCREEN PLAY

22 October 2008, 7:30 PM,  
Xujiahui Park, Shanghai, China

Screen Play is a video score by artist Christian Marclay in which found film footage is combined with computer animation to create a visual projection interpreted by live musicians. As Marclay says, "Moving images and graphics give musicians visual cues suggesting emotion, energy, rhythm, pitch, volume, and duration. I believe in the power of images to evoke sound." Screen Play was first presented

in New York in 2005 as part of Performa05. For its Shanghai premiere, Screen Play was interpreted by three different ensembles made up of Chinese and international musicians. Screen Play was also the first ever Performa event brought to China.

CURATED AND ORGANIZED BY *Davide Quadrio & Defne Ayas*

• PERFORMERS: *Elliott Sharp, Wu Na, Wang Lichuan, Ben Houge, Yan Jun, Bruce Gremo & Top Floor Circus* • IN COLLABORATION WITH: *Performa05 New York* • Presented as part of *Final Cut of the Shanghai E-arts Festival 2008*



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PERFORMANCE

FENG MENGBO - Q2008

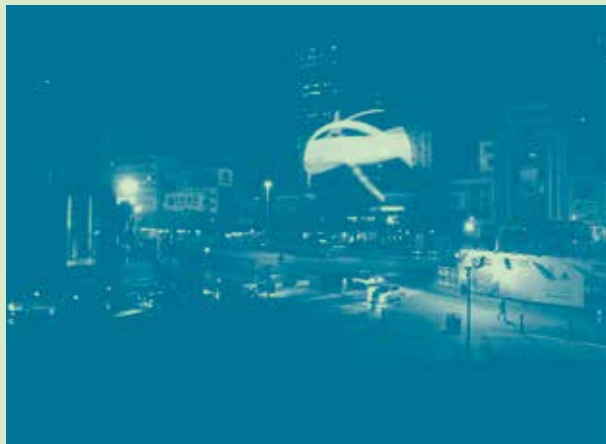
21 October 2008, 7:30 PM,  
Xujiahui Park, Shanghai, China

Based in Beijing, Feng Mengbo has been blurring the boundary between digital gaming and contemporary art by making work that inhabits both spheres. Besides experimental modifications of commercial games and the creation of brand new ones, he has extensively used gaming hardware and software as tools for social commentary, as media in the development of performance projects as well as in the creation of paintings.

For Final Cut, he invited the audience to join a participatory journey in Q2008. His live performance both responded to and was altered by the audience's input.



CURATED AND ORGANIZED BY: *Davide Quadrio & Defne Ayas* • COMMISSIONED BY: *Arthub Asia* • Presented as part of *Final Cut of the Shanghai E-arts Festival 2008*



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#### VIDEO

#### VIDEO SCREENINGS

#### – XUHUI COMMERCIAL LED SCREENS

18-22 October 2008, Xujiahui screens, Shanghai, China

A selection of videos was shown on a number of commercial LED screens in the Xujiahui area in order to create a direct engagement with the public. The work reflected on issues of liveability of urban space, the status of the public sphere and its transformation through new media, and used early 20th century Futurist notions of dynamism, speed, industrial noise and “urbanity” as its inspiration.

This project allowed us to understand how the use of outdoor screens for advertising purposes can be broadened within the cultural sphere. We questioned if and how artistic content can keep the pace of advertising. We thus screened a selection of videos exactly as if they were commercials.

ARTISTS: *Aajiao (Xu Wenkai), Terra Bajraghosa, Michael Bell-Smith, Shih Chieh Huang, Takeshi Murata, and Eric Siu* • CURATED AND ORGANIZED BY: *Davide Quadrio & Defne Ayas* • COMMISSIONED BY: *Arthub Asia*. • Presented as part of *Final Cut of the Shanghai E-arts Festival 2008*

40+4, ART IS NOT ENOUGH! NOT ENOUGH!  
OR THE MAKING OF THE ARTS IN SHANGHAI  
(1980-2008)  
18 October 2008,  
Xujiahui Park and on Xujiahui screens, Shanghai

After 10 years in the Shanghai art scene, Davide Quadrio undertook an ambitious interview project including artists from all streams of artmaking. Ranging from the avant-garde to the traditional, official or academic scene, this project presented an extensive cross section of the art scene in Shanghai.

Together with Lothar Spree, Zhu Xiaowen, and Xu Jie – the last of whom wearing the hat of professional interviewer – 40+4 probed the relationship between the artists, their work, and the evolution of contemporary art in Shanghai over the last two decades.



© Arthub Asia and Xijing Men

All the 40 artists interviewed were asked the same questions, each of which was printed on a flashcard, with a total of twenty-seven cards, divided into four colours and presented along with famous quotes about art stated by historical figures.

By way of this “forced” conversation, the artists’ narratives attempted an analysis of the history of contemporary art from the nineteen-eighties to the present, as they reflected on the condition of the urban artist, the ties existing between contemporary

Chinese art and its past, as well as in relations to the world history of art; the art market and the state of art criticism in China.

The presentation of this project for Final Cut represented an open dialogue of the artistic community to the city - a vis à vis discourse that brought about reflections, happiness and frustration, critical analyses of the cultural development of the city in the last 15 years.

ARTISTS INTERVIEWED INCLUDED: *Shen Fan, Zhang Enli, Shi Yong, Yu Youhan, Zhou Tiehai, Huang Yuanqing, Xu Zhen, Huang Kui, Yang Fudong, Lu Chunsheng, Liang Yue, Liu Jianhua, Li Shan, Zhang Ding, Tang Maohong, Wang Xingwei, Song Tao, Lao Jin Feng, Hu Jieming, Xiang Liqing, Yang Zhenzhong, Ding Yi, Luo Yongjin, Qiu Anxiong, Xu Longbao, Wang Tiande, Zhu Julan, Song Haidong, Gu Wenda, Li Xiangyang, Gong Yan, Li Lei, Liu Dahong, Wang Nanming, Yu Xiaofu, Zhang Peicheng, Xia Haicun, Qiu Dexiu, Yang Hui* • *The original installation was shown in Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzi, Florence from 21 March to 4 May 2008* • CURATED BY: *Davide Quadrio* • CONCEPT BY: *Davide Quadrio and Lothar Spree* • INTERVIEWS BY: *Davide Quadrio and Xu Jie* • QUESTIONS BY: *Lothar Spree, Davide Quadrio, Zhu Xiaowen, Huang Kui, Li Xuehui, Zhang Enli, Xu Jie* • FLASHCARDS DESIGNED BY: *Huang Kui* • TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWS: *Flora Yu, Zhu Xiaowen, Alexia Dehaene, Davide Quadrio, Stephanie Chauvel* • CAPTIONS: *Liu Bailu* • CAMERA: *Lothar Spree and Zhu Xiaowen* • EDITED BY: *Zhu Xiaowen* • EDITING ASSISTANTS: *Shen Jiamin and Gao Yue* • POST PRODUCTION: *Zhu Xiaowen and Dirk Schulz* • AFTER EFFECT ANIMATION: *Dirk Schulz* • INSTALLATION TECHNICAL SUPPORT IN CHINA: *Alexander Brandt and Dirk Schulz* • SOUND COMPOSED BY: *Hu Zi* • SPONSORED BY: *Canadian Consulate Shanghai, Arthub Asia, Tongji University, College of Communication and Art, Shanghai* • CO-PRODUCED BY: *Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzi, Florence, Italy*

## EXHIBITION

## DOUBLE INFINITY

29 April - 23 May 2010,

Dutch Culture Centre, Shanghai, China

Double Infinity, a joint initiative by the Van Abbemuseum and Arthub Asia, was presented at the Dutch Culture Centre in Shanghai and ran concurrently with the World Expo of 2010. This project witnessed the determination of a European museum such as the Van Abbemuseum to open its premises and its

collection to the dynamic responses and contributions of Chinese artists, providing enriching, humorous and critical insights.



© Mao Dou and Arthub Asia

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS: *Lara Almarcegui, Johanna Billing, Stanley Brouwn, Comfortable Collective (Jin Shan, Gao Mingyan, Li Mu, Maya Kramer), Cao Fei, Alicia Framis, Liu Gang, HHD\_FUN (Wang Zhenfei & Wang Luming), Job Koelewijn, John Körmeling, Surasi Kusolwong, El Lisitzky, David Maljkovic, Julika Rudelius, Speedism (Pieterjan Ginckels & Julian Friedauer), Xu Tan, Pieter van Wesemael, Zhou Xiaohu, Xijing Men (Chen Shaoxiong, Gimhongsok, Tsuyoshi Ozawa)* • CURATED BY: *Defne Ayas, Charles Esche, Davide Quadrio in collaboration with Remco de Blaaij* • DESIGN BY: *Wang Zhenfei* • SUPPORTED BY: *Netherlands China Arts Foundation, Gemeente Eindhoven, Dutch Culture Centre, Dutch DFA (Dutch Design Fashion and Architecture), Shama Xujiahui & Mondriaan Foundation. Chinese artists and Surasi Kusolwong productions are made possible thanks to FarEastFarWest Collection*

## PANEL DISCUSSION

## SHANGHAI FUTURISM I:

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND TYPOGRAPHY  
IN CHINA - THEN AND NOW

22 March 2009, M on the Bund, Shanghai, China

What is the current state of graphic design and typographic experimentation in China? What is the extent of its influence on visual arts, and media, from books to (maga)zines, album covers, movie

credits and advertisements? How is it used in underground scenes as a dynamic vehicle for visual communication - from Beijing to Shanghai to Shenzhen – both today and traditionally?



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Inspired by the centenary of the publication of F.T. Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto, which was republished in Shanghai in 1921 and had a vast influence on the artists and designers at the time, this panel discussion looked at the rise and evolution of graphic design and typography in China since the early 20th century.

Three panellists, Lynn Pan, Ou Ning, and Pan Jian Feng presented their investigations from both historical and contemporary perspectives in order to provide an understanding of the creative process behind Chinese graphic design and typography, and its strong connection to poetry, literature, and artmaking.

The focus on links between Futurism and China continued in April 2009 with Inner Noise from New Asia, an evening of noise music that used the Futurist manifesto *The Art of Noises* as a reference point, and featured new work by performers from different parts of Asia including Otomo Yoshihide, Sachiko M, FEN and Shanghai's Asthma Writers Union, and MTDM.

ORGANIZED AND MODERATED BY: *Defne Ayas* • IN COLLABORA-

TION WITH: *PERFORMA09 New York* • This program was presented as part of the Shanghai International Literary Festival 2009.

## MEETING

INTERNATIONAL MEETING BETWEEN  
AUTONOMOUS CULTURAL CENTERS  
STEMMING FROM CITIZEN AND  
ARTISTIC INITIATIVES

25-27 September 2004,

BizArt Art Center, Shanghai, China

Previous to the birth of Arthub Asia but in the spirit of it, this symposium brought together art centres from Asia, Europe and other parts of the world, in order to establish a network for artistic and intellectual exchange.



© Arthub Asia

This meeting, that occurred in tandem with the Shanghai Biennale, was supported by the Asia-Europe Foundation as part of its Asia-Europe Artists' Laboratories program investing in new environments in which artistic projects and exchange between Asia and Europe can be tested and developed among artists' run spaces and artists' networks.

The symposium took the form of an installation in which each organization presented itself. A selection of video work was presented in and around ShanghArt and Park 97 as an extension of the meeting. They featured both presentations of the participating organizations and a selection of artistic work.

A PROJECT BY: *BizArt & Artfactories* • WITH THE COOPERATION AND SUPPORT OF: *Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)* • IN ASSOCIATION WITH: *"in-between" International Alternative Space Conference* • *The video program was organized in collaboration with: ShangArt Gallery and Park 97*



© Arthub Asia

MATERIALS OF THE FUTURE:  
DOCUMENTING CONTEMPORARY  
CHINESE ART FROM 1980-1990 (AAA)  
& CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART:  
PRIMARY DOCUMENTS (MOMA)  
11 September 2010,  
Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, China

Arthub Asia was the organizer of the co-launch of AAA's (Asia Art Archive) Materials of the Future: Documenting Contemporary Chinese Art from 1980-1990 and MoMA's Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents in Shanghai. These milestone projects focus on the dramatic development and growth of Chinese contemporary art over the last three decades by documenting, collecting and translating critical discussions, primary materials and key texts.

WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF: *The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation, Minsheng Art Museum, Hong Kong Arts Centre and JIA Boutique Hotels* • SPEAKERS INCLUDED: *Doryun Chong, Jane DeBevoise, Wu Shanzhuan (artist), Shi Yong (artist), Wu Hung and Yu Youhan (artist)*



© Xu Zhen, courtesy of Shanghart

SYMPOSIUM  
THE MAKING OF THE NEW SILK ROADS  
27th-30th August 2009,  
Bangkok University Gallery, Thailand

More than thirty scholars, artists, and practitioners in visual arts, performance, and other cultural fields from around the world gathered in Bangkok to discuss and reflect on the dynamic, on-going echoes of the ancient trading route Silk Road and its multiple dimensions. The four-day symposium aimed to reassess the complex interconnections within Asia's cultural and artistic spectrum at the beginning of the 21st century.

PARTICIPANTS: *Agung Kurniawan, Alexander Ugay, David Cotterrell, Els Silvrants-Barclay, Gary Pastrana, Ho Tzu Nyen, Howard Chan, Arahmaiani, Jiang Jun, Kyong Park, Lina Saneh, Mu Qian, Nikusha Chkhaidze (Nika), Onno Dirker, Pratchaya Phinthong, Rahraw Omarzad, Samah Hijawi, Shaarbek Amankul, Stefan Rusu, Hakan Topal, Zoe Butt, Seph Rodney, Veronica Sekules, Agung Hujatnikajennong, Le Huy Hoang, Nguyen Linh & Nguyen Trinh Thi, Supersudaca/Max Zolkwer & Felix Madrazo* • OBSERVERS: *Shahidul Alam, Tay Tong, Pier Luigi Tazzi, Phoebe Wong, Nana Seo Eun-A, Erin O'Brien, Joumana El Zein, Surasi Kusolwong* • ORGANIZED BY: *Davide Quadrio & Defne Ayas (Arthub Asia)* with the support of *Ark Fongsmut (Bangkok University Gallery)* and assisted by *Monvilai Rojanatanti* • SUPPORTED BY: *Prince Claus Fund & the National Research Center of the Kingdom of Thai-*

*land, with additional support from the Mondriaan Foundation and ANA Singapore.* • SCENOGRAPHY CONCEIVED BY: *Supersudaca, and executed with the support of Supernormal*

*Film:* DIRECTED BY: *Ho Tzu Nyen* • CONCEPT BY: *Defne Ayas, Davide Quadrio, Ho Tzu Nyen* • ADVICE BY: *Seph Rodney* • FILMING CREW ORGANIZED BY: *Kob Chacree* • ACTOR 1: *Ms. Karn Wanadornworawisan* • ACTOR 2: *Joe Chan* • PRODUCED BY: *Arthub Asia with the support of FarEastFarWest Collection*

## PROJECT INDEX

Arthub produced high-impact productions including performances and exhibitions by visual artists from all around the globe, with focus on China and Asia-Pacific including works by: Feng Mengbo, Christian Marclay, Aajiao, Zhou Xiaohu, Birdhead, Speedism, Cao Fei, Surasi Kusolwong, Comfortable Collective, Xijing Men, Ho Tzu Nyen, Jompert Kuswidananto, Jennifer Wen Ma, Heman Chong, Lee Kit, FX Harsono, Julika Rudelius, Wang Yuyang, Li Mu, Gary Ross Pastrana, Yan Jun, and more.

Arthub created a platform for international partners for the production of exhibitions, performances, workshops, seminars and publications including Artissima (Torino), Gwanju Biennale (Gwanju), SHContemporary (Shanghai), Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago), Strozziina (Florence), Performa (NYC), Bevilacqua La Masa (Venice), Gervasuti Foundation (Venice), Van Abbemuseum (Netherlands), Sainsbury Art Center (UK), Shanghai Art Museum, Hong Kong Culture Center, Videotage (Hong Kong), One Minutes Awards (Amsterdam), Gasworks (London), Substation (Singapore), Cemeti Art House (Jogjakarta), smARTpower by Bronx Museum of the Arts (NYC), Artsonje (Seoul), Pathshala, (Dhaka, Bangladesh), Asia Art Archive (Hong Kong), de Appel arts centre (Amsterdam), Rockbund Museum (Shanghai), MOCA (Shanghai), Gwangju Biennale (South Korea), Fudan University Institute of Visual Arts (Shanghai) etc.

Arthub actively facilitated a dynamic network of numerous contemporary artists, art professionals and writers, starting first with an Asia-wide exchange platform and community, where different ideas and individuals merge, interact and motivate each other.

Arthub acted as a catalyzer of the same people who

want to share and initiate ideas for projects including for knowledge production (publications, research projects, symposia) and diversity (capacity building, networking and regional mapping).

AS ARTHUB ASIA, WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN OUR JOURNEY IN THE RECENT YEARS:

Aajiao, Atabekov, Abu Naser Robii, Abul Mansur, Adele Tan, Adeline Ooi, Agung Hujatnikajennong, Agung Kurniawan, Agus Suwage, Ahmed Fadaam, Ai Weiwei, Akihiro Nakajim, Alak Roy, Alessio Antoniolli, Alexander Brandt, Alexander Keefe, Alexander Ugay, Alexia Dehaene, Alexis Kouzmine, Alia Swastika, Alicia Framis, Alizia Borsari, Alvaro Rodriguez Fominaya, Amsul Arifi, Ana Pato, Ana Rascovsky, Andreas Schmid, Anik Fournier, Anis Moquit, Ann Warr, Anne Warr, Annu Wilenius, Anusapati, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Arie Dyanto, Ark Fongsmut, Arseny Sergeev, Artur Zmijewski, Asia Art Archive, Asli Cavusoglu, Asthma Writers Union, Atelier Veldwerk, Audrey Wong, Aye Ko (Tin Swe), Ayu Arista Murt, B6, Bai Yiluo, Beatrice Leanza, Bedwyr Williams, Ben Houge, Berned Lintermann, Biljana Ciric, Birdhead, Birgit Hopfener, Brian Keith Jackson, Bristy, Britta Erickson, Bruce Gremo, Bu Hua, Budi Kustarto, Burak Arikan, byn, Cao Fei, Cao Kai, Carol Lu, Cecil Marian, Cecilia Andersson, Cecilia Kenning, Cevdet Erek, Cha Young Seok, Charles Esche, Chen Cheng, Chen Qi, Chen Shaoxiong, Chen Tong, Chen Xiaoyun, Chen Xingyu, Cho Joohyun, Cho Tae Kwang, Choi Ami, Christian Marclay, Christina Riggs, Christopher Taylor, Chu Chu Yuan, ciboh, Claire Louise Staunton, Conrado Uribe, Dan Wang, Dai Li-ching, Daniel Aschwanden, Daniel Rycroft, Daravuth Ly, Daria Menozzi, Darius Mikšys, David Chan, David Cotterrell, David Maljkovic, Davide Bertocchi, Davy Linggar, Deadj+Chen Xiongwei, Dikdik Sayahdikumullah, Ding Yi, Dogen Kinowaki, Doger Panorsa, Dolorosa Sinaga, Domenico Buzzetti, Dorji, Dr. Bernd M. Scherer, Dr. Pieter van Wesemael, Duke Riley, Dyan Anggrain, Edwin Zwakman, Eko Nugroho, El Lissitzky, Elena Valussi, Elif Uras, Elizabeth Grady, Ellen Pau, Ellen Pearlman, Elliott Sharp, Els Silvrants-Barclay, Emiko Kato, Erbolosin Meldibekov, Eric Guichard, Eric Siu, Etienne Minoungou, Etsuji Yoshida, Eugene Tan, Eva Aggeklint, Farah Vardani, Fatima Lasay, Federica Beltrame, Felicity Lufkin, Felix Madrazo, Feng Ling-an, Feng Mengbo, Fiona Biggiero, Francesca Dal Lago,

Francesca Tarocco, Francesco Pedraglio, Franziska Koch, Fumihiko Sumitomo, FX Harsono, Gao Minglu, Gao Shiming, Gary Ross Pastrana, Geng Jianyi, Georg Schöllhammer, Germaine Acogny, Gim Hongsook, Giovanni Gaggia, Gong Yan, Goutam Chakraborty, Gu Dexin, Gu Myung Sun, Gu Wenda, Gulnara Kasmaliev, Güne Terkol, Guo Hui, Guo Yuanyuan / Peng Penghua, Gutierrez + Portefaix, Hadas Zemer, Hakan Topal, Han Seon Uk, Han Xiaoli, Hans Van Dijk (he is always with us), Hasif Amini, He Yufang, Hee-jung Ryu, Heman Chong, HHD Fun, Hipic.org, Hiroshi Ohashi, Ho Tzu Nyen, Howard Chan, Htoo Aung Kyaw, Hu Fang, Hu Jieming, Hu Yang, Huang Kui, Huang Yuanqing, Hwang Hye, Hyunjin Kim, Iani Arahmaiani, Ikhsan Syahirul Alim (Ican), Irwan Ahmett, Isaac Leung, Isidro Blasco, Jacob Korczyns, Javier Villa, Jay Koh, Jean Christian Bourcart, Jee Eun Park, Jeeun Park, Jennifer Wen Ma, Jeong-Hee Lee-Kalisch, Jeun Jin, Ji Weiyu, Jiang Jun, Jiang Zhi, Jin Feng (lao), Jin Feng (xiao), Jin Shan, Jinsuk Suh, Jitish Kallat, Job Koelewijn, Johanna Billing, John Clark, John Finlay, John Kormeling, John Mack, Johnson Chang, Jompert Kuswidananto, Jorge Villacorta, Jose-Carlos Mariategui, Joumana El Zein, Juan Gaitan, Julian Friedauer, Juliane Noth, Julie Walsh, Julieta Aranda, Julika Rudelius, Jun Yuan, Kama Wangdi, Kamrul Hasan, Kan Xuan, Kang Sung Eun, Kazi Monir, Ken-ichi Nakagawa, Kendal Henry, Kim Binnara, Kim Hong-hee, Kim Hyunjin, Kim Mina, Kim Naum, Kim Sunjung, Kinga Wangchuck, Kob Chacree, Koon Wee, Kuenga, Kyong Park, Lara Almarcegui, Law Yuk Mui, Lee Ambrozy, Lee Eunu, Lee Ji Hyun, Lee Kit, Lee Mingwei, Lee Weng Choi, Lee Young, Leo Xu, Li Juchang, Li Lang, Li Lei, Li Liang, Li Mu, Li Peifeng, Li Pinghu, Li Shan, Li Xiangyang, Li Yan, Li Yongbin, Li Zhenhua, Li Zhi Wen, Liang Yue, Lida Abdul, Lim Boram, Lin Tianmiao, Lin Yiling, Lina Saneh, Ling Xi, Liu Dahong, Liu Gang, Liu Jianhua, Liu Mao Ying, Liu Wei, Liu Yan, Liu YingMei, Lize Mogel, Lorenz Helbling, Lothar Spree, Lu Chuan, Lu Chunsheng, Lu Yang, Lu Yuanming, Luo Yongjin, Lynn Pan, Ma Liang, Ma Leonn., MadeIn, Mahbubur Rahman, Mai Mai, Marco Bevolo, Margit Thøfner, Mariko Mori, Maris Gillette, Martin Hill, Martin Mhando, Martina Köppel-Yang, Massimiliano Gioni, Massimo Torrigiani, Mathieu Borysevich, Mattia Matteucci+Patrick Tuttofuoco, Max Zolkwer, May Moe Thu, Mayumi Miyata, Melanie Jackson, Mella Jarma, Michael Bell Smith, Michael Lee, Minsheng Art Museum, Mithu Sen, MKR Palash, MOMA, Monica Dematte, Monirul Islam, Moon Jung Ki, Moon Sungsic, Morgan Perkins, Mostafa Zaman,

MTDM, Mu Qian, Muhammad Yusu, Muratbek Djumaliev, Nana Seo Eun-A, Natasha Egan, Navin Rawachaikul, Nazlee Laila Mansu, Neville Mars, Nguyen Trinh Thi, Ni Jun, Nikusha Chkhaidze (Nika), Nilofar Chaman, Nindityo Adipurnomo, Norberto Roland, Nunu, Oak Jung Ho, Oday Al-Ubaydi, Oh Kyoun, Oh Yin-Hwan, Oliver Moore, Olivo Barbieri, Onno Dirker, Otomo Yoshihide, Ou Ning, Pan Jianfeng, Paola Iovene, Park Jin Young, Park Mikyung, Park Sun Young, Park Yeon Hee, Patrick D. Flores, Paul Gladston, Pauline Yao, Pearl Lam, Peggy Wang, Per Bj. Boym, Peter Stamer, Phil Collins, Philip Tinari, Philippe Laleu, Pia Johanson, Pierre Giner, Pieter van Wesemael, Pieterjan Ginckels, Pippa Dennis, Popok Try Wahyudi, Pramuhendra, Pratchaya Phinthong, Prilla Tania, Qin Feng, Qiu Anxiong, Qiu Deshu, Qiu Zhijie, Qiu Anxiong, Rahraw Omarzad, Rainer Ganahl, Rania Ho, Raphaël Dallaporta, Rebecca Catching, Remco de Blaaij, Ren Hai, Restu Ratnaningtyas, Reza Afisina, Rieke Vos, Ristyanto Cahyo Wibowo, Rob Lemkin, Roberta Lombardi, Roger Mc Donald, Rokeya Sultana, Rossella Menegazzo, Rosyid, Ruangrupa, Rudy Luyters, S. M. Sultan, Sabina Santarossa, Sachiko M, Salah Hassan, Salam Djaaz, Samah Hijawi, Sasha Weliland, Saubin Yap, Seph Rodney, Serghei Ticina, Shaarbek Amankul, Shahidul Alam, Shao Yi, Sharaad Kuttan, Shen Fan, Shen Shaomin, Shi Qing, Shi Yong, Shih Chieh Huang, Shin Dong Yi, Shishir Bhattacharjee, Shohagh, Shu Haolun, Sigalit Landau, Sigit Pius Kuncoro, Silke von Berswordt, Simon Kaner, Soenaryo, Sofia Saavedra, Song Dong, Song Haidong, Song Ho Eun, Song Tao, Song Tao and Ji Weiyu (Birdhead), Song Yuzhe, Song Zhen, Speedism, Stan Abe, Stanley Brouwn, Stefan Rusu, Stefania Galegati, Studio 8, Su Chang, Subham, Subir Choudhuri, Sudad Shalan, Suh Bokyung, Sun Xun, Sung Doris Ha-lin, Supernormal, Supersudaca, Surasi Kusolwong, Susan Katz, Suvendu Chatterjee, Sylvie Levey, Takeshi Murata, Tang Maohong, Tayeba Begum Lipi, Teguh Ostenrik, Tera Brajaghosa, The Propeller Group, Theatre in Motion/ Institute for Provocation, Thet Sambath, Thin Lei New, Thomas Berghuis, Thomas Dariel, Tiarma Siraait, Ting Chang, Tintin Wulia, Tisna Sanjaya, Titus Spree, Tobias Berger, Tong Sze Hong, Top Floor Circus, Tosiya Suzuki, Tozer Pak Sheung Chuen, Tsuyoshi Osawa, Ugo Untoro, Uji Handoko, Uli Sigg, Ullan Djaparov, Uta Rahman-Steinert, Veaceslav Ahunov, Veronica Sekules, Victor Pinchuk Foundation, Videotage, Wan Tipu, Wang Gongxin, Wang Guangyi, Wang Jianwei, Wang Li Chuan, Wang Luming, Wang Mo Lin, Wang Nanming, Wang Peng, Wang Tiande,

Wang Wei, Wang Xingwei, Wang Yuyang, Wang Zhenfei, Watson Rubie, Wenny Teo, WHW, Wibowo Adi Utama, Wimo Ambala Bayang, Wu Junyong, Wu Na, Wu Shanzhuan, Xiang Liqing, Xijing Men, Xu Cheng, Xu Tan, Xu Xixian and Xu Jianrong, Xu Zhen, Xu-longbao, Yan Jun, Yan Lei, Yang Fudong, Yang Hui, Yang Wenliang, Yang Zhenzhong, Yangjiang Group, Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh, Yi Zhou, Yto Barrada, Yu Xiaofu, Yu Youhan, Yudhi Soerjatmojo, Yuli Prayitno, Yuswanto Adi, Zainul Abedin, Zeina Arida, Zeng Fanghi, Zhang Da, Zhang Ding, Zhang Enli, Zhang Haitian, Zhang Liaoyuan, Zhang Peicheng, Zhang Peili, Zhang Qing, Zhang Weiwei, Zhang Xian, Zhang Yonghe, Zhao Chuan, Zheng Guogu, Zheng Zhuangzhou, Zhou Tiehai, Zhou Xiaohu, Zhu Feng, Zhu Jia, Zhu Julan, Zhu Xiaowen, Zoe Butt, Zoe Zhang Bing, Zoncy (Zon Sapal Phyu), Natasha Ginwala, Sue-an van der Zijpp

Van Abbemuseum (The Netherlands), BUG, Bangkok University Gallery (Thailand), ANA- Arts Network Asia (Singapore), ASEF (Singapore), John Thompson Art Center (Bangkok), Prince Claus Fund Network Partners including Arab Image Foundation (Beirut), DRIK Picture Library (Dhaka), Cinémathèque de Tanger (Morocco), Supersudaca (South America), Mondriaan Foundation, Gwanju Biennale, Chulalongkorn University Gallery (Bangkok), Strozziina CCCS (Florence), Bevilacqua La Masa (Venice), Minsheng Museum (Shanghai), Rockbund Museum (Shanghai), Shcontemporary Art Fair, Arrow Factory (Beijing), Bronx Museum of the Arts (NYC),

Tongji University (Shanghai), Fudan University Institute of Visual Arts (Shanghai), Shanghai Biennale 2012, Loop Festival (Barcelona), Gasworks (London), Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago), FOAM (Amsterdam), Artissima (Turin), Transart (Trento), Triangle Art Trust (NYC, UK), Bring To Light (NYC), Galeri NON-Stage (Istanbul), Hang Zhou Academy of Fine Arts, ZKM, Indonesian Art for International Biennale (IAIB), Asia Art Archives (Hong Kong), Literary Festival (Shanghai), Sponge Arte Contemporanea (Pergola), Platform China (Beijing) Tate Modern (London), Cemeti Art House (Yogyakarta), Ruang Rupa (Jakarta), Green Papaya (Manila), Cini Foundation (Venice), Future Generation Art Price, Vitamin Creative Space (Beijing/Guangzhou), World Film Festival (Bangkok), National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) (Bangkok), X (NYC), Xurban.net (Istanbul, Balcan, NYC), Open Academy, Laboratory Art Beijing, Theatre in Motion/Institute for Provocation (Brussels/Beijing), Sainsbury Art Center (Norwich, UK), Chobi Mela V (Dhaka), Shanghai Cultural Development Foundation with Shanghai eArts Festival (Shanghai), Blue Sun (Ulan Bator), Leiden University, IIAS, B'Art: Bishkek Art Center, CES Artslink, Nica (Burma), IIVA (Yogyakarta), SSamzie Space (Seoul), Loop Space (Seoul), Irish Museum of Contemporary Art (Dublin), Prague Biennale (Prague), Artists Forum International (AFI) (Seoul), Guangzhou Triennale, Performa (NYC), Creative India (Mumbai), *and more.*







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GENERAL & CURATORIAL DIRECTION

ARTHUB ASIA

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PROOFREAD BY

Martina Johansson, Francesca Girelli & Veronika Sekules

DESIGN BY

Indianen ([www.wereldderindianen.be](http://www.wereldderindianen.be))

PUBLISHED BY

weme.im

IPAD VERSION BY

weme.im

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2007-2012  
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Mu Qian  
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Pratchaya Phinthong  
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**And with the participation of:**

**Ying Monvilai  
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