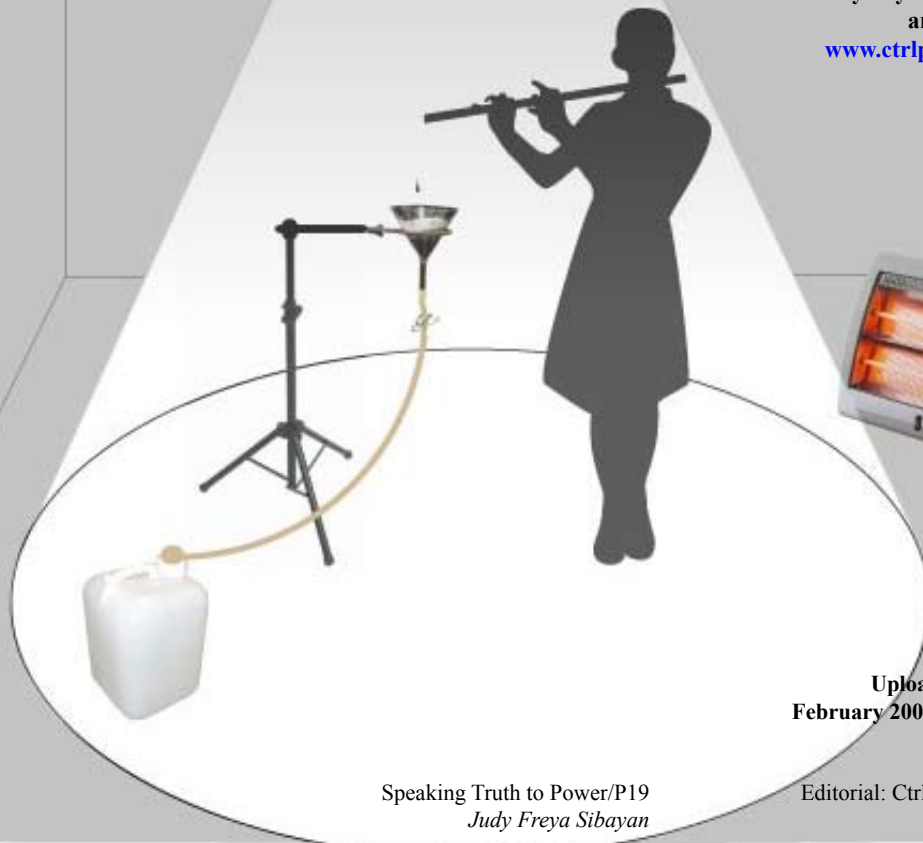


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## Journal of Contemporary Art

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The last few months of 2008 saw hectic activity in the field of Performance Art in South East Asia with events being held in different countries of the region. Generally locating themselves well away from the mainstream of art production and dissemination, the events/festivals, some that have been established for 10 years now, have slowly but surely gained ground becoming thriving points of convergence, bringing together a wide range of practices and practitioners coming to present from various parts of the globe. From attending and presenting my own work at some of the Performance and Live Art events, one thing is obvious—performance artists are a breed of a kind. Their work is ephemeral—a time-based exchange between the artist and audience in the ‘here’ and ‘now,’ they seldom follow scripts and rules that seem to govern the rest of the art world. Moreover, unlike other big and small gatherings and meets of the art world—the biennales, triennials, group shows, where the participants are like so many ships that pass each other in the night, performance artists end up forming a community and interacting with each other on a regular basis. This was particularly apparent at the recently concluded Asiatopia ([www.asiatopia.org](http://www.asiatopia.org)) in Thailand that celebrated its 10th anniversary with a larger-than-in-the-past event hosting 86 artists (due to the political turmoil and subsequent siege laid by protestors on BKK airports, some of the artists who were to arrive and present during the final weekend were unable to make it) over four weekends in the month of November. A few of the participants had already presented at events in Hong Kong and Singapore in the preceding months, before arriving in Bangkok.

To quote the opening lines of Thomas Berguis’s essay *Reflections on Performance Art in Asia* featured in this issue of *Ctrl+P*, “Performance art is still alive!” At least, this becomes clear when we allow ourselves a proper understanding of the significant role that performance art continues to play in the overall development of contemporary art, particularly in Asia.”

Along with glimpses into the practice and thinking of individuals, mainly artists, this issue also presents introductions and a review of some of the Performance art events taking place in Asia that are listed by Berghuis in his essay, in which he also offers a view into the role played by performance art in the development of experimental art in China since the 1980s.

Further study into the significance of Performance Art on the art scenes of other Asian countries remains to be done. And though we have not been able to gather inclusive coverage of some of the recurring and newly established Performance events taking place in Asia, such as in Myanmar, The Philippines, Indonesia, China, Korea etc., we have made a start. An initial inquiry into the events, including the ones not covered here reveals that the one thing most of them have in common is they are set up and led by artists. And it is their passion and dedication to the art form which propels it further despite the fact that most operate with basic amounts of funding and, in the case of Myanmar, although under strict censorship and amid uncertainties created by the ongoing adverse political situation the most recent event, *Beyond Pressure* was held in Rangoon over two weekends in December and organized by artists, Moe Satt, Mrat Htwann, and poet Mg Day.

The Singapore-based Performance art event, *The Future of Imagination* (FOI) was first held at the Substation in December 2003. 2008 saw its 5th avatar and in her essay *Into the Future of Imagination or is it a Teenage Textbook?* Adele Tan offers us a look into FOI 5, a “...bildungsroman of a peripheral practice called performance art.” ([www.foi.sg](http://www.foi.sg))

India saw its first performance gathering in *KHOJLIVE 08* in New Delhi that took place in March to celebrate 10 years of Khoj. Rohini Devasar’s essay presents the history of Khoj, an independent artist-run collective that has in recent years also initiated residencies to support performance and time-based art practices. Mok Chui Yu, one of the founding members of the *On the Move* performance project set up in 2006 in Hong Kong offers the background of the setting up of this event.

We move on to Europe and to a project called *Performance Saga* initiated by artist Andrea Saemann and art historian Katrin Grögel. Presented here is an interview with Carolee Schneemann conducted by Dagmar Reichert after one of the *Performance Saga* meetings, for which Saemann and Grögel curated and invited both established and emerging women performance artists. In addition, they established *Open Dialogues*—a writing project that invited input from artists, historians and critics, and over a period of time conducted interviews with the iconic women performance artists, including Schneemann, which were filmed, edited and published as an edition of DVDs.

Judy Freya Sibayan's work is about exploring and investigating "The creation of spaces outside institutional art spaces. More specific, the work is the performance of these exhibition spaces." In her essay *Speaking Truth to Power*, Sibayan talks about performing at an established Live Art event, the National Review of Live Art (NRLA) in Glasgow in 2006, and her feelings of ambivalence, in "performing as an institution [herself] within such larger more powerful institutions." Sibayan was invited to NRLA 06 as part of *Mapping The Body: Body Dialectics by Women Artists from Asia*, a program that consisted of presentations and a round table discussion by women artists living in Asia. Bina Sarker Ellias, the Mumbai-based editor/publisher of *Gallerie Magazine* chaired the discussion and as she mentions in her introduction text, published here along with Sibayan's essay, "Few women have been able to circumvent the conventionally understood canons of art to claim their own space..." A 'space' that Sibayan has concentrated on to challenge, redefine and claim in a unique way via her performance practice.

In an essay contributed by the veteran performance artist Boris Nieslony, he examines the relationship between performance art and the audience. As he states "Performance Art is an open cultural family tree, as it is supplied by all areas of art and culture and reacts to them. The movements of thought that lead to the creation of an image are expressed directly and simultaneously affect the artist and the observer."

Also presented in this issue are notes on two performance works. *Free Martin Zet! on the Magical A-B-B-B-B Axis Tour without Mystery* by Martin Zet, turned into a tour presenting in various places and involved from holding a drawing workshop with school children in Lithuania, to being arrested as an illegal immigrant in Macedonia and causing a near riot in Poland. Presented here are his notes related to Part 2 of the tour from Belfast.<sup>1</sup>

Jerome Ming who since 2002 has been engaged in an ongoing photo-based documentation of the changes on the Yangtze River affected by the Three Gorges Dam presents *A Postcard to Myself*. Invited to participate in *The Sudden Change* Performance project that took place on the river in 2008, Ming turns a scenic image of the Three Gorges presented on the postcard itself as the site for a performance.

Continuing with our commitment to present Reviews, Eliza Tan review's Singapore-born artist Ming Wong's *mononoaware*, offering us yet another aspect of performance, in this case Ming Wong relating the genres of film and performance via reenactments of selected films.

Jittima Pholsawek at *Asiatopia 08*.  
Photo credits: Ekalax Nubturesuk



Finally, I offer three images of two performances I experienced on the final day of *Asiatopia*. Given the backdrop of political turmoil and the uncertainty when most were dwelling on whether tanks would be rolling out yet again on the streets of Bangkok, Jittima Pholsawek's action of pouring/piling gold dust into the receptacles of a weighing scale suspended in space, and inviting members of the audience in a blowing match thus setting up a competition to maintain a balance as it were, whilst a cloud of gold formed around the face and glittered on to the floor, offered those gathered a succinct statement about the fallout and futile loss resulting from the country's ongoing political power-grabbing contests.



Matthew Ha performing at Bangkok Art & Culture Center, 2008. Photo credits: Jakub Rudzinski.

Out of the main space and not as part of the program, Matthieu Ha's (a Vietnamese French musician and sound artist who found himself hostage in Bangkok due to the airport closure) guerilla action involved playing an accordion and singing an aria of his own making, whilst going up and down the escalators in a loop for over an hour. The clearly visible exhaustion, the melodious music and singing that as time went by started to gain momentum, both started to manifest as pain and offer a release.

Which brings me to the opening essay of this issue, *Music Derived Painkiller* (salivasalve solution) by Ana Prvacki. Here, Prvacki invites others to offer titles of music, sounds that they are most moved by, and talks about her own music-based performances where emotions manifest as saliva and tears, which in turn can become the salve and provide a natural remedy for our ailments.

1. Further reading: [http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol\\_2/contributors/zetttext.html](http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors/zetttext.html)

## Music Derived Painkiller (salivasalve solution)

ANA PRVACKI

During a discussion a few weeks ago someone who was observing my practice and saliva accumulation asked me which composers caused the most pain/saliva. A technical question perhaps, but most poetic. I started to think about it obsessively and decided to invite a few friends and colleagues to tell me which composers, bands, songs, etc. provoke emotion and pain in them. I wanted to investigate the sounds that flood us. For weeks I received the most generous and sincere lists, tunes, and Youtube links of everything from Mahler, Debussy, Satie, Bach, Puccini (lots of Bach, Satie, and Puccini), and Mozart's *Requiem*, to *Hurt* by Johnny Cash, as well as Radiohead, Devendra Banhart, and Cat Power. Joy Division, Leonard Cohen (*Dance me to the End of Love*), and *Ne me Quitte Pas* by Jacques Brel were high on the lists while Sinéad O'Connor's *Nothing Compares 2 U* is at the top of the list, automatically adding Prince who wrote it. I also discovered some amazing music that even though I had never heard before moved me deeply, Silvio Rodriguez's *Ojala*, and *Christina the Astonishing* by Nick Cave (who was also high on the lists). In the process I was reminded of some old triggers: Tindersticks' *Tiny Tears*, Billy



Holiday, Dvorak's *Cello Concerto in B Minor* and Elgar's in *E minor*, both performed by Jacqueline du Pre, the *Symphony No. 3* by Górecki, and many more.

I have been dealing with the gross product and outcome of music, the technique and surplus of emotion manifested as saliva and tears, a salve that is a remedy. About 70% of it is water, the rest being electrolytes, mucus, enzymes, antibacterial, anti-fungal, analgesic; yes, analgesic, a pain-killer, a "lick-your-own-wounds" kind of material. There is life and vitality in this mix of spit and tears, within pain there is joy, the masochism of biology! Embedded within it is the remedy for what made it, pain relief in the most homeopathic and self-sustainable sense. Feeling pain, making sound, producing a pain-killer, a loop of creation and destruction through which it is not the music that heals but its by-product. Unlike collagen or gelatin, this solution is derived through a non-violent procedure, free of ethical questions and unwilling victims. Just like music, pain is evasive and complex in nature. We can only attempt to catch and examine its source, attempt to eradicate further suffering or at least understand it better, perhaps even sublimate it. The recipe would start with the suggestion to do it regularly, to listen to the music, feel the pain, observe it, and watch it morph, like an amorphous shape-shifter. And then, through an alchemical process, use the collected nagging pain and discomfort and transform it into nourishment. All the ingredients are there and available, it is just a matter of accumulating enough analgesic.

I propose taking an active position as a producer of both pain and cure. The challenge is of course to achieve equal measure of the two opposing forces and be disciplined and precise in the music to pain ratio. We must be mindful when consuming, especially sound, it can go into the ear and out of the eye, or into the ear and out the mouth (via the heart), or loop itself around our head, into one ear and out the other ear and then back again continuously, it could be more dangerous than a baby with a plastic bag!

The ultimate recipe for vitality would be to liberate ourselves by engendering our own ability for a wholesome, natural transformation of our ailments. This could be perpetrated via the ingredients we already possess (our biological, "technical" make up) combined with our innovative, creative, and imaginative capacity.

I decided not to include the lists given to me even though they were all insightful and intense, as many requested to remain anonymous in their choice of music pain. Nevertheless, I wish to acknowledge their contribution and thank them for making me cry and think:

Marina Abramovic, Mark Agosta, Kubilay Akman, Theodore Alano, Avi Alpert, Eugenie Angles, Charlotte Angles Soehner, Marco Antonini, Stephan Apicella-Hitchcock, Juleta Aranda, Kelly Barrie, Joel Beck, Mladen Bizumic, Damien Brachet, Paul Brainard, Emma Brasó, Marah Braye, Tracey Clement, Olivier des Clers, Kerry Coleman, Dean Daderko, William Downs, Sam Durant, Ozge Ersoy, Emi Eu, Julija Fomina, Philp Francis, Trong Gia Nguyen, Alexie Glass, Sebastian Goldspink, Rachel Gugelberger, Tytus Hardy, Paula Hayes, Catherine Hemelryk, Eric van Hove, Nizhen Hsieh, Marcel Janco, Christian Jankowski, Bram De Jonghe, Cecila Jurado, Igor Josifov, Zilvinas Kampinas, Ruba Katrib, Gavin Keeney, Jennings King, Dimitri Kozyrev, Thierry Kron, Robert Knafo, Laurent Labourmene, Steven Learner, Dan Leers, Kris Lefcoe, Kathrin Leist, Gabriel Lester, Larry Litt, Kathrin Leist, Zoya Loeb, Charles Long, Reynard Loki, Amy Mackie, Antonia Majaca, Anthony Marcellini, Chus Martinez, Emma Mayall, Veronika Mazepa, Bjorn Melhus, Darius Miksys, Mihnea Mircan, Christine Morrow, KK Ong, Raquel Ormella, Daniel Palmer, Tim Partridge, Cesare Pietroiusti, Richard and Judith Pigossi, Sreshta Premnath, Rizman Putra, Michael Regan, Vivian Rehberg, Peter Simensky, Cylena Simonds, Vijay Singh, William Stover, Leslie Tan, Jennifer Teets, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Haydee Venegas, Lindsay Vickery, Jason Wee, Ian Woo, Alex Yudzon and Vita Zaman.

“Performance art is still alive!” At least, this becomes clear when we allow ourselves a proper understanding of the significant role that performance art continues to play in the overall development of contemporary art, particularly in Asia. In the past, the discourse of performance art has been largely associated with the emergence of performance activities during the course of the 1970s and 1980s, which were identified in the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. This has even led a few researchers to propose that “despite its international diffusion,” performance art has to be considered “both historically and theoretically a primary American phenomenon.” Clearly, such a crude statement on the origin of performance art risks becoming trapped in the conjecture of a hegemonic model that not only emphasizes the construction of a historical lineage, but furthermore limits the dynamic theoretical discourse of performance art to the vernacular use of the English terms “performance” and “performance art” at a time when these expressions became fashionable amongst members of the artistic community in the United States.

In an attempt to open up the critical discourse of performance art from a broad, international perspective, I propose paying attention to the multiplicity of contemporary performance-based practices that are capable of generating hermeneutic discourses of performance art across different parts of the globe, rather than trying to demarcate the historicity of “performance” as an “artistic phenomenon.” Instead, I would like to reiterate a quote from an anonymous source, which states that “performance art is no more the art of performance, than a bread basket is a basket of bread.” In other words, without examining the dynamic, ongoing practices that inform the ‘art of performance,’ the critical discourse of ‘performance art’ will be empty (except for a few bread crumbs).

These days, performance art continues to be marked by fallacies surrounding many of the common perceptions of its intricate and diverse practices, which ultimately produces a marginalization of its practices. What first comes to mind is how many still seem to struggle with the defining characteristics of performance art, which are different from performing arts. This also means that performance artists need not to be mistaken for performers. Secondly, I am thinking of the way performance art either is praised for its ephemeral qualities, which generates attention to the direct engagement between the artist (body) and the audience (perception), which allows performance art to be administered through various public programming. Alternatively, attention is drawn to performance documentation, allowing performance art to embellish works on photography and video, without understanding the inherent remediation of the performance medium into the complex media of contemporary performance art.

Until recently many public and private art institutions (including museums, galleries, major art centers, and education institutions) have frequently focused their attention on what is considered to be a more tangible set of practices, culminating in the installation of art objects in an exhibition space. The widespread disregard of the role of performance art has played in the development of many of these practices (either indirectly or directly) continuous to place limitations on the development of a more profound understanding of the conditions in which many artists across Asia are producing their art. Instead, too often the field of contemporary art focuses its attention on the predicament of a concrete outcome marked by an object (or rather, a product), which can be valued on the basis of style, form, and technical skill.

In some instances the expectation is raised that performance artists will be recognized for their important role in the development of a particular art historical movement. However, their practices become misconstrued to allow for the promotion of more marketable works of art, by adversely drawing attention to the prime evaluation of photographic documentations, and by failing to produce a clear distinction between some of the unique characteristics of performance art and the broader field performing

arts. Once again, we are reminded that Performance Art is still not well understood and this results in many of the common perceptions of performance art which ultimately marginalize Performance practices.

Performance artists often strive to advance their work beyond the conformities of strict artistic disciplines, styles and techniques. They situate their practices outside the confined spaces of the white cube of the museum and the black box of the theatre. Instead, the direct social function of art practice frequently mentioned is the most efficacious focus of their inquiry. These artists are less interested in rehashing debates about the elusive role of universal theorization in relation to practice. Performance art can be seen as a way for artists to emphasize the direct re-embodiment of the subject in the production and reception of art. Statements by performance artists reveal the development of novel ideas on physicality, reality, and power relations in relation to social and artistic conduct, which coincide with the arrival of new performance practices.

Unfortunately, the imperative role of Performance Art in the overall development of new experimentations in art is still too often overlooked, and becomes marginalized by a general lack of understanding of its inherent roles and functions in the overall discourse of contemporary art. This includes looking at the significant role performance art has provided the driving force behind the development of the broad-spectrum of Chinese experimental art in the 1980s and 1990s.

The historical development of experimental art in China is very much tied with the important challenges to some of the more conventional modes of artistic production, made by artists who were working closely together with art critics and curators to develop a new set of discourses of Chinese modern and contemporary art. The role of performance art in experimental art comes at times when many artists, curators, and local art critics seek to provide new social contexts in their art practices. This becomes clear when examining the development of experimental art in China starting with the inception of the 85' New Wave Movement and amidst the rising international attention for the Chinese Avant-garde after 1989, as well as during the subsequent development of Chinese experimental art during the course of the 1990s, which invoked its inception into a new discourse on contemporary art in China at the turn of the millennium. Nevertheless, until recently, performance art has been pushed into the margins of the contemporary art world. Performance often becomes disregarded by writers, curators, and art institutions, even when these practices seek to inform the development of new, alternative practices of installation photography and video in China.

In artistic communities like in China, artists have sought new approaches to their artistic practice by showing an interest in the direct expressive nature of art through time-

based processes and through site-specific actions, rather than on the content and form of the artistic end-product. Instead, these artists essentially seek more direct ways of bringing art in contact with the dynamic conditions of everyday existence. Hence, the embodiment of art practice becomes the major leitmotifs in the 'art' of performance art.

In my recent work on performance art in China, I use the concept of the role of the mediated subject of the acting body in art. Essentially this notion is based on the realization that the body is always present in art practices, as well as in their subsequent, secondary representations.

Zhu Ming, *Sydney Farm Cove*, Performance. Part of the *Liquid Sea* Exhibition, 9 March 2003 Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2003). Image: Courtesy of the artist





It further makes the proposition that performances are acted out, and that this enactment involves the preparation of material, as well as planning and arranging the way the body operates in space—both in terms of its function in space and of its managing of space.

Until recently, many valuations of performance art tend to focus on the appraisal of the direct encounter with an audience, the ephemeral relationship to time, and the experience of the actual performance space (which is often treated as a stage). The rest is considered history—a mere record of the past. The subsequent focus is on documentation and the providing of a narrative account of the actual event, rather than on an ongoing sequence of intricate practices that resonate a multiplicity of histories related to time, space, action, and continuous corporeal experiences. These experiences connect the event of the performance to the carefully planned remediation of performance art into a manifold of visual—as well as textual and verbal forms, including photography, video, diaries, and sound recordings.



He Yunchang, *Wrestle: One and One Hundred*, 2001, Performance, Near Kunming (Yunnan Province). Image: Courtesy of the artist

Despite clear signals on the substantiation of a complex field of artistic practices, styles, techniques, forms and media, performance art has drifted further and further away from discourses of the visual arts; except when it becomes remobilized through archival (re)presentation. The dominant discourse of performance art further implies that performance art is a historical form of art practice, which climaxed during the late 1970s and early 1980s in artistic communities in the United States, Western Europe, and (to some extent) Japan. Hereafter performance art could be considered ‘dead art,’ suitable at best to be exhibited in the form of photographic documentation of early performance works. For Asia this would be linked solely to Gutai in Japan.

On the other side of the coin lies a field that shows the significant expansion of performance art in Asia. This expansion can foremost be seen in the significant role that performance artists have in the overall development of contemporary art, as well as in the remarkable amount of performance art festivals that are being held across different countries across the entire continent, during the course of the 1990s, and especially since



the start of the 21st Century. A recent count of the major international performance art festivals that have been held in Asia during the past 15 years (many of which are recurrent events) shows a total of 15 performance art festivals—starting with the *Nippon International Performance Art Festival* in Japan in 1993 and moving to the founding of the *1st International Performance Art Festival* in New Delhi, India, in 2008.

The number of performance art festivals across the region is certainly more than the amount of Biennale art events that are being held across Southeast and particularly East Asia. However, there is hardly any attention given to these performance art festivals in the international art world. The general disregard for performance art by the contemporary international art world becomes even more surprising considering that the 15 performance art festivals in Asia are closely linked with at least 26 major international recurrent performance art festivals and performance art events held across the globe some of which go back to the mid-1980s. To conclude these reflections on the role of performance art in Asia, I will include a list of the 15 most important international performance art festivals in Asia. It is my hope that more attention will be paid to these festivals, which mark the proof that performance art is still alive and perhaps even more than any time before in history.

### **Major international performance art festivals in Asia, 1993-2008**

Nippon International Performance Art Festival (Japan, annual, since 1993)  
Asiatopia (Thailand, annual, since 1999)  
Philippine International Performance Art Festival (Manila, biennial, since 1999)  
Open Art Platform: Performance Art Festival (China, annual, since 2000)  
Taiwan International Performance Art Festival (Taipei, annual, since 2000)  
Jakarta International Performance Art Festival (Indonesia, held in 2000)  
Future of Imagination (Singapore, biennial festival, since 2002)  
Bandung International Performance Art Festival (Indonesia, annual, 2003-2005)  
Dadao Live Art Festival (Beijing, China, since 2003)  
Tupada International Action & Media Art Event (Philippines, annual, since 2004)  
Hong Kong Performance Art Festival: On the Move (Hong Kong, annual, since 2005)  
Perfurbance (Jogjakarta, Indonesia, annual, since 2005)  
Performance Site (Myanmar, held in 2005)  
Satu Kali (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, held in 2006)  
Indonesia International Performance Art Festival (Indonesia, annual, since 2006)  
1st International Performance Art Festival, KHOJLIVE 08 (New Delhi, India, 2008)

## **Into the Future of Imagination or is it a Teenage Textbook?**

**ADELE TAN**

Unabashedly announcing a coming-of-age narrative, a *bildungsroman* of a peripheral practice called performance art, is the fifth edition of the *Future of Imagination: An International Performance Art Event* (FOI) at the Sculpture Square in Singapore. This appreciation is not altogether surprising given that FOI began life in 2003 as a symbolic marker of the resumption of public funding by its National Arts Council after a near decade-long embargo towards performance art activities. The persistence of the festival organisers Jason Lim and Lee Wen, to ensure its annual occurrence further staked the claims of the practice's legitimacy and relevance, the fruit of their labour borne out by the Singapore Art Museum's hosting of two performance events within their fold in 2008.

The clearest indication of this *bildungsroman* came from China-born artist Yingmei Duan's wish-fulfilment exercise (eponymously titled *Yingmei*) which projected her solo

*Future of Imagination 5* ran from 12-15 November 2008 at the Sculpture Square in Singapore. Participating artists: Adina Bar-On (Israel), Cai Qing (Germany/China), Cheng Guang Feng (China), Dariusz Fodczuk (Poland), Duan Ying Mei (Germany/China), Fabien Montmartin (France), Gwendoline Robin (Belgium), Helmut Lemke (Germany/UK), Melati Suryodarmo (Germany/Indonesia), Mongkol Plienbangchang (Thailand), Myriam Laplante (Canada/Italy), Ronaldo Ruiz (The Philippines), Yuenjie Maru (Hong Kong). Artists from Singapore include Chia Chu Yia (Singapore/Malaysia), Jason Lim, Kai Lam, Lee Wen, Lynn Lu, Sabrina Koh, Angie Seah, Zai Kuning

retrospective exhibition in 2015 at the Future of Imagination Modern Art Centre, the future incarnation of Sculpture Square. Without the aid of any supplementary material except for a printed out script-text from which she read out matter-of-fact descriptions to her exhibition as if a museum guide, the audience could rely on only the effective confluence of imaginative prowess between artist and participants. In parts funny, endearing and fumbling, Duan's delivery in halting English and child-like pitch meant that her studious efforts at translation had helped to make the viscosity and sexual honesty of her past works acceptable if only because the translation pushed it towards the absurd.

The Belgian pyrotechnical artist Gwendoline Robin was also similarly future-oriented with her performance titled *Where is the future?* What she stoked is an innate fascination with fireworks and explosions, akin to an experimentation in a sci-fi fantasy although armed not with fancy gadgetry but with traditional explosives and inflammables. Her last act of "detonating" her helmet coiled with fuses smoked out the entire gallery, setting off the fire alarm which could not be shut off until the next day by the firemen. If Duan's prognosis is charmingly hopeful, Robin's presentation is an ambivalent mix of wonderment and dread, for one cannot avoid the visualization in this case of a future that is headed towards some kind of seismic breakup, symptomatic of an already apparent incandescent political rage.

Without sounding too dystopian, conflict is an inhering truth in all human relations, one that is gently (if beguilingly) put to the audience by Singaporean artist Lynn Lu's one-to-one performance *Lemonade Stand*. She had asked her participants to sit beside her and to recount their own harrowing experiences whilst she sucked on a slice of lemon. The action was formulated in an empathetic or cathartic mode; the wish to identify with her participants' ordeal had Lu repeat what she had heard in confidence but only to re-tell it as if it were her own to her participants as they sucked on their lemon-slice. What came unanticipated to Lu is the negative reaction of some participants who felt their experiences misappropriated by the artist. Emotive sharing is the positive wish of what transpires in a one-to-one relationship but that is no bar to what is sometimes felt as a violation or expropriation of a singular experience.

Yuenjie Maru's *So Close So Far* is another instance of psychic-somatic violation, a cunningly devised performance in which I was made an unwitting accomplice-victim. Without any prearrangement, I was subjected to his sexual advances, myself 'protected' only via my given mask and the activation of my agency. What factious roles did I ultimately put into place here? The knowing art historian-critic who has a vested interest in seeing the performance play itself out, the proverbial damsel-in-distress or the feminist who will stop this dead in its tracks? Even the benign topic of photography in performance, usually taken as the pacified gaze, was suddenly a point of contention. Questions about the responsibility and (objective) placement of photographers (from snap-happy audiences to official ones) were abound as the traditional rift between the document and the artwork was prised open yet again.

Hence, with conflict at its core, the progressive maturation that undergirds a *bildungsroman* is by no means guaranteed. Even though it is possible to claim FOI's five-year passage as a transition from adolescence to adulthood, the accusation of jejune teenage acting out constantly recurs. This is the epithet thrown at Kai Lam's three-part post-punk tribute *JB*, a memorial for the recently deceased opposition politician JB Jeyaratnam, the great bête noire of the Singapore's governmental echelons. Beginning with a reading of Hedwig Anuar's poem *A Ballad for City Hall*, the reading led into a graphic scene of implied sexual violence and was rounded off by a self-penned punk rock anthem *Ballad for JB*. Lam had also roped and tethered himself to the corner of the gallery, then cut his own arm to draw blood as ink for an epitaph on its pristine white walls, and got the crowd to throw eggs at it. Whilst the song failed to rouse due to equipment dysfunction, what remains unshakable is that image of Lam prostrate in front of an invited female audience member who hugged a watermelon between her legs. Lam had continually bored into the fruit with a wooden souvenir Merlion until he pulverised the watermelon into pieces. Clearly the analogy is made about the invasive powers of the body politic but is this all



Ronaldo Ruiz, *Camouflage*, 20 mins, 13 December 2008. Photo courtesy of Ulrich Lau.

youthful frippery? I think not. Staged as a mourning ritual, there is palpable anger but not yet grief, and if in Singapore a public form of grieving is discouraged, then there is room to make such teenage anger useful. Perhaps it is still a little premature to give up on the adolescent rage when physical remonstrance has not been politically deployed in Singapore.

And politics was not far from the mind of Lee Wen, whose crossing-dressed and cigar chomping Stagger Lee was a morally ambiguous archetype of a lawless and defiant tough-guy, who Lee conflates with Asian dictators such as North Korea's Kim Jong-il and Myanmar's General Than Shwe. Incitement to struggle and protest was very much part of his act, getting the audiences to pass round and exchange pieces of aphorisms and then activate some kind of incantatory fervour. But none was more fanatic in his pursuit of a new form of participatory theatre than Dariuz Fodczuk's *The Tiny Therapeutic Theatre*, which mocked the institutionalised positions in the art system and finally descended into the frenetic orgy of creation, destruction and consumption.

Performances appealing directly to topical socio-political events, such as Lam's, Lee's and Chia Chu-yia's *GoldRush*, where she was saddled with bags of gold shimmer and salt in an attempt to distribute it and become awashed in gold, were seen to be more convincing to the audiences. This meant that other works which were all formal engagements such as Adina Bar-On's *40 X 40*, Ronaldo Ruiz's *Camouflage*, Fabien Montmartin's *Unknown Ways* and Jason Lim's *Last Drop* were somehow sidelined in subsequent discussions at the closing forum, even though clearly enjoyed by the public. Body movement, material manipulation, colour and sound are all aspects of performance that aid the artwork's transcendence beyond sociological readings. Yet, even in the most form-conscious of performances, we can also detect lessons to be learnt. For instance, Helmut Lemke's impromptu outdoor paintings inspired by randomly caught street sounds and Angie Seah's incantatory voice in *Black Out*, can serve as parables or incitement for a politics of listening and speaking, although it is up to us to work out exactly what these political ends may be.

Performance art has been accused of many things, from the less grievous chiding of its yielding to intellectual reticence, to that of becoming a flagrantly indulgent and vulgar conjurer of pranks. Yet, almost always present is some lofty ambition to, as Zai Kuning says in his invitation to *A Closed Door* (a life-drawing workshop), 'exercise the pleasures and discomforts of questioning' and 'rethink the assumptions and forms of performance art.' Putting a different spin on this is Melati Suryodarmo's *pièce de résistance*, *Eulogy*, which is a study in homeostasis. Despite the focus on finding a stable equilibrium through physiological process, this does not forswear the dynamic and regulatory adjustments

needed to make homeostasis possible in an environment of maximal biodiversity. Narrowly believing that the image of her sitting in a dust cloud of flour whipped up by the whirling blades of a remote-controlled helicopter to the tune of *Over the Rainbow* was referencing the war in the Middle East, I was soon put into a different thinking space when she told me that it is an experiment to find out what else moves oneself when one's self isn't moving.

The characters in a *bildungsroman* typically undertake a responsibility or learn a lesson but perhaps it is not the artists who are the protagonists of such formative experiences but all the witnesses of the performance actions, you and I who encounter them live or on the page. The lesson then for us to take away here is that sticks and stones may break one's bones, but moving our imagination will never hurt anyone.



Melati Suryodarmo, *Eulogy*, 20 mins, 12 December 2008. Photo courtesy of Ulrich Lau.



# KHOJLIVE08: The Khoj Performance Art Festival

ROHINI DEVASHER

*KHOJLIVE 08* was the first ever International Performance Art Festival in New Delhi, India. Aimed at showcasing the different currents, positions and possibilities of contemporary performance art practice across the world, KHOJLIVE 08 brought together a diverse and exciting range of artists from very different backgrounds and trajectories. Deliberately polyphonic, the festival offered the audiences an image of their own multiplicity, providing opportunities to connect seemingly disparate ideas within a larger theme.

Since the first International Workshop in 1997, *KHOJ* has recognized the significance and importance of trans-disciplinary interaction and exchange. *KHOJ*, which translates most literally as a search or better still quest, is perhaps the only consistent artist-led, alternative forum for experimentation and international exchange, outside of institutional

frameworks, for the visual arts in India. Since its inception in 1997 as part of the global Triangle Arts Trust, *KHOJ* has built an international reputation for outstanding alternative arts incubation, creation, production, and presentation. Alternative spaces, by definition, are spaces for the seeding of radical new ideas; ideas that challenge mainstream practice and discourse. *KHOJ* plays a central role in the development of experimental art practice in India, and in the development of the local art community by providing a space where exploration and risk are still possible, debate and critical inquiry are embraced, community is essential and today's issues are thrashed about in the heat and immediacy of art as it is experienced. With space and opportunity for a diverse group of artists to test their work within a setting that is part public, part private, the Studios house an investigative approach that is more open-ended and enigmatic. *KHOJ* works to establish cross connections and establish networks with artists across India and the globe, celebrating a diverse arena of artists all responding in distinct ways to each other and to the site. 2007 marked 10 years of *KHOJ* and it seemed appropriate to highlight, both structurally and conceptually some of its areas of engagement—in this case performance and live art.

Beginning with the first International Artists Workshop in 1997 to more recent International Residencies devoted solely to the genre, *KHOJ* has supported and nurtured performance art practice and the first International Performance Art Residency was hosted in 2004. Artists from Jakarta, Belo HoriZonte, Brazil, Amsterdam and Mumbai with practices ranging from theatre to studio-based performance, worked intensively together, exploring notions of body, materials, space and time. Encompassing a variety of related genres from body art, live art to action art and

Mehr Javed performing  
*Air Hunger*, Photo credits: Sandeep Bali



intervention, there were as many ways of doing performance as there were performers. Given that India boasts a rich and fertile tradition of dance and theatre, questions of performance/the performative and its impulses within the Indian context were thrown open for scrutiny. The 2006 Performance Art Residency, which saw a greater focus on live performances in the public sphere, was curated with the intention of bringing together various practices within performance and live art to create a potpourri of talents, aiming to re-energise and redefine the concept and practice of 'Performance' in India. And finally just last year, the Performance Art Residency 2007 more specifically addressed the theatricality of installation and the reality of performance as installation. The interest generated by these various projects provided fertile ground to establish a new vocabulary and understanding for the idea of Performance Art, particularly in the South Asian region.

*KHOJLIVE 08* as the culmination and fruition of this engagement was a melting pot, a witch's brew of exciting, manic, serious, camp, glamorous, wild, humorous, profound, moving, disturbing, dramatic, and provocative performances. From March 25th -30th 2008, the Festival was a dynamic action packed six-day programme of events. An eclectic mix of 25 artists from Indonesia, Pakistan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Bangkok, Germany, Nepal, France, Egypt and artists from cities across India, working across a range of Live Art practices such as experimental theatre and dance; installation, video and photography were invited to define, redefine, dissect and reconstruct the genre of live art.

In an effort to access and diversify our audience base, it was vital that we forge links with prominent art galleries and cultural spaces across the city. It was equally important that we situate a practice as ephemeral as performance art within the commercial gallery. In the absence of enlightened support by the Government of India towards contemporary art practice, the visual arts scenario is predominantly supported and therefore responsive to the art market. The Festival opened with a bang at the KHOJ Studios and performances continued every night for the next 5 nights at 5 venues across the city, including two cultural spaces and three of the leading commercial galleries. The Goethe Institute Max Muller Bhavan, Alliance Française, Anant Art Centre, Palette Gallery and Gallery Espace became ground zero for the most eclectic smorgasbord of performances the city had ever seen. A group of ten curators from the LIVE Art Development Agency UK conducted workshops and presentations at top educational institutions on the makings of performance. Combined with film screenings, open mike sessions, and finally a seminar, the festival's extensive outreach program aimed to generate as much debate around the area to the audiences as possible, invigorating artists, students and educators alike.

The first of its kind in Delhi, *KHOJLIVE 08* was remarkable in one crucial quarter—the audiences as distinct from the crowds. Drawn by interest, curiosity or pleasure, comprising artists, writers, filmmakers, students, designers, theatre goers, actors, dancers, photographers, graphic designers, businessmen and lawyers, it was an audience shaped by the society it was drawn from. Compared to the far smaller gatherings at the KHOJ Studios in Khirkee Extension, in the South of Delhi, these were crowds of unprecedented proportions with between 350 and 450 people attending every performance day after day. More than one venue was packed to overflowing, quite simply because we were completely unprepared for the numbers of people who turned out to see the performances. Yet in spite of the squeeze and the crush, a spirit of carnival rapidly grew over the week as essentially the entire creative community of New Delhi and those visiting the city became a captive audience to the festival. More significant still, was the audience's response to the performances. Extravagant glitter and camp was met with delight and humorous mockery, the deliberately provocative with an attitude of 'live and let live,' the deeply personal and often painful with reverence and complete attention. The audience didn't just show up; they engaged, further putting the stamp of success on the festival. The website which was updated regularly with blogs and videos, recorded an unprecedented number of hits. The imagination of the media was arrested, and the festival was extensively reported and covered by more than 30 print publications and more than ten TV broadcasting channels during and after the course of the event. By stepping out of the

Participating at *KHOJLIVE 08* were: Amitesh Grover, Artmaharaj (aka Shantanu Lodh) and Mrs Manmeet, Inder Salim, Maya Rao, Nikhil Chopra, Neha Choksi, Rehaan Engineer, Sarnath Banerjee, Sonia Khurana, Zuleikha and Manish Chaudhari, Sushil Kumar (all from India). Boris Nieslony (Germany), Da Motus! (Switzerland), Fred Koenig (France) Monali Meher (Netherlands/India), Steven Cohen (France), Ingrid Mwangi (Germany), Jean Christophe Lanquetin (France), Ashmina Ranjit (Nepal), Reza Afisina (Indonesia), Khairuddin Hori (Singapore), Hassan Khan (Cairo), Mehr Javed (Pakistan), Varsha Nair (Thailand/India), Ray Langenbach (Malaysia/USA), Doug Fishbone (UK/USA). For information on the KHOJ Workshops: [http://khoj-workshop.org/tags/performance\\_art](http://khoj-workshop.org/tags/performance_art)

377 *Bedtime Stories and Songs* by Rehaan Engineer. Photo credits: Sandeep Bali

studios where we were housed, *KHOJ* was able to bring something to audiences across the city that was unlike anything they had seen or experienced before.

While the efficacy of a festival platform as a space to connect, stimulate and celebrate was brought out very clearly, the future of *KHOJLIVE* may lie in its mutation into the model of a biennale, with hopefully an increasing number of Indian artists participating each time. What the festival began, i.e. creating unique opportunities for direct contact between artists, writers, and curators, a biennale could build upon by corralling greater resources, more collaborators and partners, and providing fresh curatorial perspective, offering encounters with performance art and artists to wider audiences.

*KHOJLIVE* recovered within the complications and the divisiveness of modern living, a sense of community. *KHOJ* above all is a community of artists; those who came together in 1997 for the very first workshop, those that have come on board since and all those who have been a part of its projects over the past 10 years. The festival celebrated *KHOJ* certainly, but it also celebrated those artists across the world who have been integral to the making of the event. 'Post *KHOJLIVE 08*' was marked by a sense of achievement tempered with a realization that something very special was over. The festival more than served the purpose of throwing up questions about the nature of performance and live art practices mediated through a range of practitioners. But it aimed above all, to seed collaboration and new modes of practice and representation. As a result its long term impact or ripples will be the true marker of its success.





Since the early 1990s some of us in Hong Kong have been associated with Seiji Shimoda, the tireless performance artist from Japan who has been vigorously promoting performance art by organizing festivals in Japan and by personally presenting all over the world.

As his friends, we began organizing public presentations of performances by him and subsequently for his fellow performance artists coming mainly from Japan. Meanwhile Hong Kong also had its happening artist, the Frog King, Kwok Man Ho. Kwok was already performing what he called Happenings in the 1970s, but then he moved to New York and did not return until the 1990s. Another well-known Hong Kong performance artist, Kith Tsang, was actually Kwok's student.

In the early 1990s, performance art was sporadic and for a whole decade the only performance art I saw was that which was brought over by Seiji Shimoda. These events were brought together and hosted by the Asian People's Theatre Festival Society together, sometimes, with Para/Site, Museum of Site etc.

Things changed when a couple of Chinese artists who lived in Japan arrived to perform in Hong Kong with Seiji. They were Huang Rui and Chen Hsi Shen (Sanmu) who had been living and working in Osaka and Tokyo respectively. Huang and Chen were very concerned with the June 4th Tiananmen massacre and supportive of the Chinese democracy movement. In Hong Kong they experienced the local people's commemoration of the Tiananmen tragedy first hand, and they were to return year after year to perform and mark the memory of the massacre.

Sanmu eventually decided to settle down in Hong Kong with his wife and son. Over the years, he went on to bring/ invite artists from Mainland China to partake in the subsequent memorials held every June 4th. China, meanwhile, had experienced an explosion of performance art which was probably most subversive among all the artistic media.

In one of the events around June 4th (called Art Attack), one Chinese artist invited a local theatre worker to be his collaborator. This was Ko Siulan, who after the performance decided that she had found the medium to express herself. Ko Siulan was soon to circulate in the different Asian and overseas performance festivals, and become one of the Hong Kong-based artists who has a substantial network of performance artists all over the world.

I believe there exists now a fraternity of performance artists internationally, moreover with the Internet, it is easy to organize internationally – much more than the days when we had to rely on snail mail, international telephone calls and faxes as in the past.

So, the first On the Move series in 2006 was simple enough to bring together – it was conceived by Ko Siulan, Sanmu and myself. But mainly it was Siulan who suggested and invited the overseas artists while Sanmu recommended and actually approached the ones from Mainland China.

We made the decision that instead of inviting everyone to attend one big bash, we would organize a series of mini festivals. At each mini festival 4 or 5 artists from China and overseas would be invited at a time, to come and join with local artists. Together they would perform two times over two days during the weekend – once free of charge at an open space (public space outside a shopping mall or department store, a pedestrian thoroughfare with automobile traffic blocked off etc.) and another time inside a small performance space (underground or above ground) for

Untitled. Zhang Yi-wang from Tianjin, China at Cattle Depot Theatre, Hong Kong. *Hong Kong On The Move*, June Action, 2008. Photo credits: Eric Ng



which an admission fee of around \$50-\$60HK (1 dollar US is 7.8 dollars HK) is normally charged (this ticket price is one half or one third of the cheapest theatre tickets). Apart from performances, we also engage the overseas artists to facilitate workshops of varying duration so that the overseas and Hong Kong artists can share their artistic insights and approaches towards creating new works. These occasions also allow the younger and aspiring performing artists to interact with the visitors.

In the year 2007/2008, we had five On the Move mini festivals and the same number in 2005/2006. In between the festivals or at times during the festival, we also organized presentations at local universities and school to students who otherwise might not have the chance to come face to face with performance art.

During the past years we have been graced by the presence of many internationally known performance artists including Seiji Shimoda, Boris Nieslony, Tamar Raban, Alastair McLennan, Yoyogasmana, Saegusa Yukio, Mideo Cruz, Takeda Keiji, Chumpon Apisuk, Arai Shin-ichi, Fumiko Takahashi, Ito Tari, Hong O Bong, Varsha Nair, Andree Weschler, Marilyn Arsem, Roger Hill, Shimizu Megumi, and with them were Chinese artists like Wang Chuyu, Shuyang, Bei Zhongmin, Wu Weiho, Wang Molin, Manyu, Yeh Yi-Li, Zhou Bin, Xiang Xi Shi, Chen Mo, Zhu Lu Ming, Ng Fong Zhou, Wan Tsui Yim, Daigwangyu, Yang and others.

The festivals were organized thematically such as Women Perform, The Power of the Powerless, The Body Project, June Art Action, Nation, Nationalism and Art, Remembering Foo Lo Bing, Artists' Olympics etc.

As to funding, one must point out that the On the Move festivals were quite "poor". The festival has support from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council but it is almost always insufficient to cover all costs. Thus the organizers are essentially volunteers, and the incoming artists are provided with simple accommodation, a small per diem and humble hospitality. But by and large, the visiting artists have been happy with their exposure in Hong Kong.

One important outcome of the festivals is that performance art has become more visible in Hong Kong and both the number of practicing artists and audience are growing steadily. Performance art is now supported by the Hong Kong Government under a so-called "Cultural Ambassador Scheme" whereby the Asian People's Theatre Festival Society will be collaborating with local performance artists to make two hour long performances from January to July 2009. The Hong Kong Arts Development Council, the funding body of the two series of On the Move festivals, is also supporting three new On the Move initiatives—an integrated performance and visual arts programme for which overseas and local performance artists will perform, hold a workshop and exhibit their two or three dimensional works (May 4th-June 4th 2009), grants for young artists to attend performance art festivals in Asian cities in 2010/2011, and a symposium on the "Future of Performance Art in the New Decade 2011–2020" with invited participation of the performance art festival organizers of various Asian cities, in early 2010.

After almost 20 years after Seiji Shimoda presented his *On The Table in Hong Kong*, he would find a fairly vigorous performance art scene in Hong Kong. It is a scene that blends itself consciously with an activist movement striving for an alternative world which reverses the existing trends of social fragmentation, dominance

of the global culture of competition, and the endemic urban and ecological violence. And, Asian People's Theatre Festival Society sees that although performance art is very much the spontaneous expression of the individual, it can be the way that every person chooses to express himself or herself and sees it as a people's medium in their fight for a better world.

*Red Rupa 2*. Yuenjie Maru, from Hong Kong at Times Square, Hong Kong, *Hong Kong On The Move*, June Action, 2008.  
Photo credits: Eric Ng



# Iconographic Mystery: A conversation with Carolee Schenemann

DAGMAR REICHERT

The day after her performance *Remains to be Seen* in Bern, on December 4, 2008, I was given the opportunity to talk with Carolee Schneemann. This is an extract of a longer conversation. Schneemann began the performance by defining “Remains” in English and German. Two objects of the *Mysteries of Iconography* were presented: a coil of rope and a wooden stick.

**Dagmar Reichert:** Yesterday in your performance you described some continuous traces that run through your work.

**Carolee Schneemann:** It takes so many years to begin to see there is a recurrence of material, of thoughts, and then there is also the offering—that’s part of the mystery—of how these things come to be realized at all. So for last night, the only things that I knew I had, were the sequences of power point images and the bell—brought from home—I did not know how I would use it. And the music by Gnarl Barkley, *Crazy*. And then yesterday I found a bungee cord behind the stage, so that could represent the cord, the line, but then I’d need a stick and I found a stick in the broom closet. This is when the spirit of the work is in the whole fabric and begins to give you these objects, or a word or a thought. It is outside of me, but it is what I need. And then I feel that what I am searching for is speaking back, becomes magnetic. My work also offers me a history in time—not just what I pay attention to, but that things in the world begin to pay attention to me.

**DR:** In your performance I had the impression there might be a tension between on the one hand the impulses that, at a certain time, your cultural environment would take from you (maybe your society at the time was ripe for a new attitude of women to their body), and on the other hand, the works and the directions you had to follow for yourself?

**CS:** Well there was always resistance to everything I did. When I started my performative lecture with the early paintings and called them “my ineptitudes,” it’s because the culture was denigrating, ignoring, trying to limit my sense of authority or potentiality. And I don’t know where I really found that sense of authority or potentiality. It starts in the need to make these drawings, which were made when I was four years old and became predictions of recurring elements: the rope or framing line, the broken vertical of stairs. But all along the way the world around me was saying you cannot do that.

**DR:** You could serve as a snowplough for new things.

**CS:** A SchneeploUGH! Well now the appreciation is remarkable. I am still astonished when there is as much shared insight, that is wonderful.

**DR:** The tension I felt yesterday was when you talked about the reception of your work *Interior Scroll*. As if you meant: I don’t want to be just that, there are other things to my artistic work, things that “remain to be seen.”

**CS:** You know, I never thought I was working for society. I always thought I have to see something. And then it occurred to me that this would be very potentially, of use to the culture. With *Fuses* I did not know what I was going to find. I made an attempt to visualize the intensity of heterosexual connection—because there was no precedent around me. And I did not know if I was doing anything of any value at all. But the strength of my work is really in the structure and in the sense of how materials or visual elements



have to be structured in time so that there is an aspect of rhythm and momentum, duration. Intensive editing is part of it, rigour, and research into history. That is what really interests me and I think it is what has sustained what I do.

**DR:** When you talked about an “iconographic mystery” in your work last night, does this have to do with you trying to understand what the central question to your life could be?

**CS:** No. I am not trying to understand. I am trying to see. I am trying to see connections and relationships. It is more visual than conceptual. Because if I ask a question I am looking for an answer, but if I want to make an observation I invite connection. So it is not predictive. I don’t know what I am going to find. So the whole presentation last night, the rope and the stick, that just became clear to me very recently when I went through my old childhood drawings.

**DS:** And it is abstract enough to mean many things? So the broken stick may be stairs, a broken phallus, a weapon, or—as you said—the energy flow through the body, or?

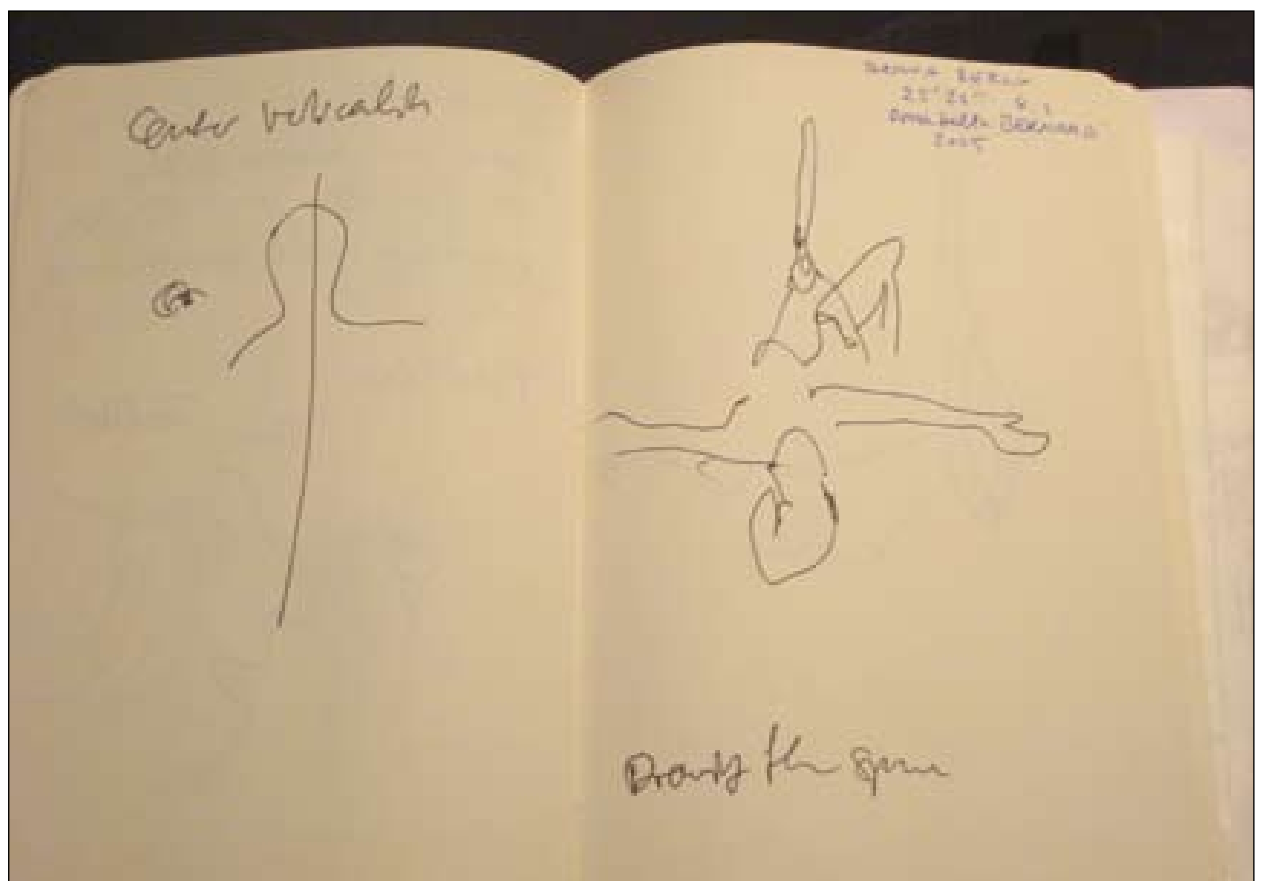
**CS:** Exactly. The correlatives of material. And then they introduce a deeper meaning. And that is not one that I expected. I love to be surprised. And then there are other aspects that have to do with the paranormal and the animal—the recurrence of the cat. I just recently found this amazing, the drawing of the exuberant cat I showed yesterday.

**DR:** What are for you, at the moment, the most burning open questions?

**CS:** Loneliness. Loneliness in juxtaposition to all this public receptivity. When I now go home I am all alone. I don’t call home, there is nobody there to call home to. For most of my life I always had a partner.

**DR:** And can that be transferred into powerful work?

A drawing done by Chris Regn while sitting in the audience and witnessing Carolee Schneemann’s Performance *Remains to Be Seen*,



This text was written as a part of *Open Dialogues: Performance Saga*, a writing project that was part of *Performance Saga Festival-Bone 11* at Schlachthaus Theater in Bern, 3rd-6th December 2008. The DVD-Edition (published by edition fink—publishers of contemporary art in Zurich, Switzerland) is bilingual. All texts and interviews are in German/English, the DVDs can be ordered and extracts from the interviews can be watched on the website: [www.performancesaga.ch](http://www.performancesaga.ch) Performance Saga is a project by the artist Andrea Saemann and the art historian Katrin Grögel. The project works at various levels to transmit and update the history of Performance Art and nurture the dialogue between the generations. It includes the initiation and realization of performances, the publication of video interviews and the conception of events.

A drawing done by Chris Regn while sitting in the audience and witnessing Carol-ee Schneemann's *Performance Remains to Be Seen* to Be Seen, Dec. 4, 2008



**CS:** No. Not for me. It is just a condition of age. Especially for heterosexual women. The men all die, or suddenly realize that they are really gay, or they renew themselves with someone very young like your best friend's daughter.

**DR:** Did you never have the wish to have children?

**CS:** Never. I raised my brother and sister when my mother was very sick, that was enough.

**DR:** If so many people now just address you in terms of this very small portion of your work, do they not try to turn you into a monument while you are still very much alive? That could make you lonely too.

**CS:** You know, in a subtle way it is very sexist, because it reduces the full scope of the work to a very feminine, physicalized aspect of it. It has become clear to me that this is still part of an unconscious patriarchal mould. The tough stuff, the technologies, projection systems, the full environments that I have made, those are being ignored, so the culture can concentrate on the naked female.

**DR:** So you nourished these traditional images without wanting it.

**CS:** Yes.

**DR:** But it also may have to do with the logic of media and the fast stereotyped images it produces. It turns you into something like a label, not a human being any more.

**CS:** It is a label. And that is also part of an economic way of organizing information. If you are collecting an artist's works you want that it "looks like" that specific artist, it "looks like" a Cindy Sherman, so variations and permutations defeat a project. And that might also be why I almost never sell any work whatsoever. I only have work in one museum in the United States. So much of my work is in the storage shed in the country. Birds eat it, they take the parts they like, and mice. Do you know the perfect way to dissolve epoxy-resin?

**DS:** No.

**CR:** It is mouse urine. If the mouse pees on epoxy, it will dissolve (laughs).

**DS:** What were your thoughts after your performance last night?

**CR:** The audience was wonderful. What an incredible audience! They were funny, responsive, smart. They were right where I was. When I came out on stage and—by coincidence—the music I had playing in a loop had just stopped and was about to begin, and because I knew it I started doing the steps, and people in the audience were laughing: "she knows this already." Yes, it was vibrant. And the translators were just adorable. The usual struggle that we don't speak the same language and nuances get lost... became a fragmented interchange and it was nicely in proportion. And just this sense of family here and the organizers' attention to details is really wonderful.

# Mapping the Body: Body Dialectics by Women Artists from Asia

BINA SARKER ELLIAS

## An Introduction

I tend to argue when confronted with the question Why Women Art? Art has no sex. There is no Male art as such. Therefore, why be gendered? My answer is that it is, in fact, absolutely necessary to be specific. Women in art have experienced exclusion from the major movements through centuries of definition by historians and insurmountable barriers riddled by the conventions of art practice. Few women have been able to circumvent the conventionally understood canons of art to claim their own space or bequeath their skills and aesthetic knowledge to future generations. They are understood only in meanings related to male paradigms of art and femininity.

A significant trend therefore, in the last two decades, is the shift towards new emerging women artists worldwide. Women who have secured a position despite sexual and cultural differences by addressing those very extensions of male dominance, and by opening the windows to their own bodies in order to understand the politics of gender differences. The need to exhibit, discuss, critique and regularly create interventions by women artists becomes essential not only in exploring and understanding ourselves but in being understood. Where then to begin but at the site of the discourse: The woman's body.

*In Mapping the Body*, we have here this year, women artists from Asia, nailing their own narratives. It is not in-your-face feminism at work, but rather, an inclusive force that invites the viewer to come and explore the filigree of thought, emotion and imagination that the artists have experienced. From sexuality to notions of beauty, to art, culture and body as commodity, gender bending and the body in flux, these are testimonies of creativity that raise questions and provide answers if you wish to unearth them.



Varsha Nair and Tejal Shah performing *Encounters* on a window ledge at The Tramway for the *National Review of Live Art*, Glasgow Scotland, February 2006. Photo credits: Judy Freya Sibayan.

JUDY FREYA SIBAYAN

## Speaking Truth to Power

For the past decade, I have been exploring, investigating and proposing a praxis of production, circulation and reception of art outside the white cube. The creation of spaces outside institutional art spaces has been the work itself. More specific, the work is the performance of these exhibition spaces.

Having worn, curated and performed a gallery for five years which happily has evolved to my rendering my body now as the museum itself for the past four years, I have produced “institutions” so to speak, that have their *raison d’être* as exhibition spaces



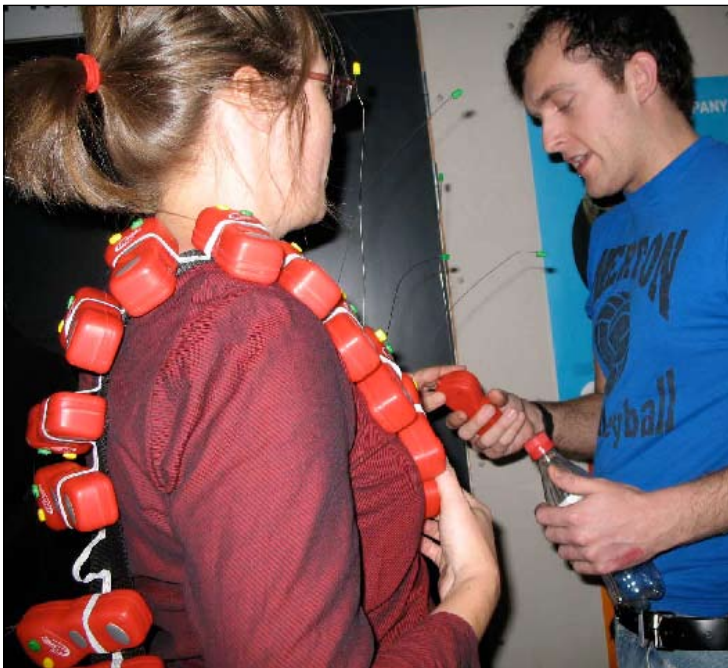
*Mapping the Body: Body Dialectics* by *Women Artists in Asia* was presented at the National Review of Live Art, Glasgow, 2006. This roundtable discussion was chaired by Bina Sarker Ellias. Participating artists: Yoshiko Shimada and Bubu (Japan); Nilofar Akmut (Pakistan/Afghanistan) Judy Freya Sibayan (Philippines); Beauty Suit Team (Thailand) Liliane Zumkemi (Switzerland/Thailand); Tejal Shah (India); Hsu Su-Chen (Taiwan) Varsha Nair (India/Thailand). Further information on participating artists in the National Review of Live Art 2006: <http://www.newmoves.co.uk/nrla-2006>

practiced out there, almost invisible, performed as intimate non-spectacular gestures, acted out with one or two people as my audience when I break bread with friends and family, in bus stops, in groceries, in buses, at the beach, while queuing in line in banks, —in fact practiced everywhere.

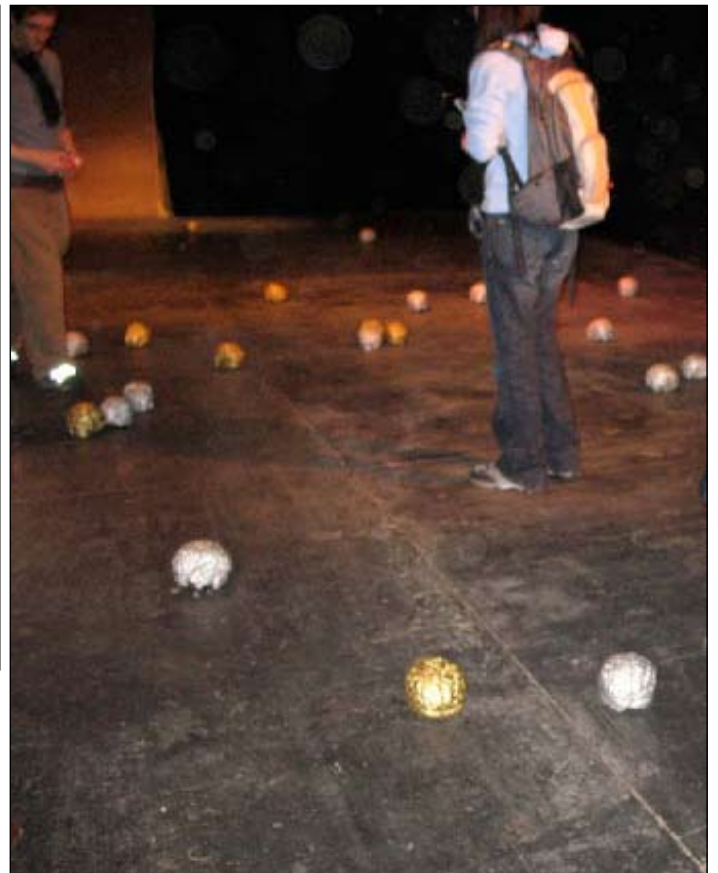
This is the first time I am performing this particular work for and in a space and context like the Tramway, a space designated specifically for live art thus the first time this particular work has been considered as live art. Although I have, often enough, been invited to perform this very same work by and in museums and galleries—institutions of public spectacle which are the very same institutions that this particular work professes to critique through parody; the very same institutions that belong to the system that I profess to be able to live and make work without.

But in accepting these invitations, it has always been with great discomfort that I have performed within such spaces and contexts for I fully recognize and acknowledge that in having the power to eventually include my art within the larger matrix of culture, these are the very same system and institutions that are the sources and producers of the critical discourse that I desire. However, it is a symbiotic relationship. These institutions too desire to profit from the criticality of my work precisely because of the symbolic, thus cultural capital it can provide them.

It is no wonder therefore that it has always been with great ambivalence that I perform these works within such institutions of public spectacle. I have yet to do full justice to my work and the works of the artists I have exhibited in my gallery and am currently exhibiting in my museum when performing as an institution myself within such larger more powerful institutions. Like the archetypal fool, the tendency has always been to fumble and to bungle the performance as if subconsciously I never want to fully perform the work so as not to be co-opted by these institutions for perhaps, it is necessary to make art in this space of discomfort and ambivalence if I am to insist on the artist as having agency of speaking truth to power.



Above: Liliane Zumkemi providing an audience a remote control to activate her work *Brain Control* at the 2006 National Review of Live Art. Right: NRLA audiences play *Brain Control*. Photo credits: Judy Freya Sibayan



What right does a person have to stand in front of another person,  
in front of a group of other persons, and say this, do that, even intervene?  
This right can land in horror or just as well in understanding.

The connection between performance and the audience is analogous to the development of the terms “performance” and “audience.” In this analogue, I will attempt to point out several differences; that this relation “determined” in the title is circular and has been circular since its invention and, that this “issue” goes beyond the capacity of human reasoning as long as the fundamental values of society do not teeter, and the security of benefice does not burn out and turn into trailblazing “shining paths.”

I gladly put down words and lines as well—not about envy, jealousy and other refined vanities, as no word could be created, no line could fit in without these mortal sins from the Middle Ages and ancient times.

What kind of an animal is this “public recognition”? How does one keep it, and where? Should it wildly, tiredly roam, circling around an imaginary axis in a fenced-in cultivated garden? Doing a reverse figure eight, or be trained to entertain us with cultivated tricks?

In the 1920s, several musicians in Vienna practiced being in a cage like the above-mentioned animal. It was prohibited, yes, downright forbidden to mention these concerts in public; every musician had to abandon any form of criticism, and it was also announced that they had to refrain from using any affirmative, negative or unpopular expression.

And what kind of an animal is this, this mob called “the audience,” which has life and death at its command, which lets comets glitter and opens abysses of immeasurable depths? I am no longer able and willing to speak about “the audience” when I am in a situation where I stand before other people. In the words of Karl Popper: Experience immunizes itself against experience.

## **Performance and the invention of the observer**

The paradigmatic statement of the Viennese on this “being kept in a cage.” The realization of how it is done takes the place of the secret of what it is.

At first, the customary, a visit to Fritz Mauthner (he declined), then to Wolfgang Pfeifer, for they did the diligent work, they had the satisfaction.

The audience. The total number of the members of an audience, the assembled crowd of spectators, the public. To make public. Plainly, to show in public, to display, to let yourself be seen. Actually—to “be suitable” as a state, to release for public use. The examination of the “political” starts here, or the discrete recommendation (read Hannah Arendt).

And yet—terms are bent.

What makes people “make themselves public” and, on the other hand what makes other people “become the audience”? A consensus of observing? More than likely not.

The deepest root probably lies in the “bond,” — religare, religio. The commonness, the unifying element as a symbolic connection, the unifying common element displayed in profane and sacral rituals. The privilege of those who have access to the conditions, under which dispositions are allowed to permanently develop.

Decree. Application—“to be suitable” as a state. When I thought of this, spending time, focusing my brain, to me the reason is given as—to dissolve “the audience” in every respect. Action Art, Actionism, Happening and Performance Art have been striving to do this for 50 years under the banner of competence.

Bourdieu showed in his studies that people are interested in the differences and distances in the areas of social spheres—relational characteristics, ensembles of positions that are distinct and coexistent. The closeness, neighbourhood, relationships and

remoteness of symbolic forms. Symbolic economy as an external appearance.

The interest does not allow talk about communication. Interest—sympathetic sympathy, the importance, the attention, the meaning and penchant—has to have all of its energy present in the differences, in the in-between.

“The audience” has, like the “doctrine for universities,” a blind trust in forms of communication that were molded under different media prerequisites in the past. Thus the formation of intellectual and social mass cloning (Big Brother).

The “observer” is the “singular.” The observer represents the fundamental features of that dimension of an event that is striven for in the Post Fluxus art form of the “performance.” The performative dimension of a plot (the action and the parallel observation, the perception, the viewing) is its actual life, its “real effect.”

Look, Hubert, look at him wave!

This “invention” is also one of the essential differences in the development of the term “performance” in relation to “Performance Art,” and that is why the performances of the Futurists or Schwitters or the Surrealists are not yet Performance Art. This does not mean that in a yet to be developed “Theory of Action” these activities, or, for example, also the aspired excesses (fighting with the audience) of the Futurists or the Surrealists, should not be taken into account.

Patterns of plot are the mark of the difference between a person who is an “audience” and a person who is an “observer.” It is the terms that are used that refer to the differences.

The Futurists, Surrealists, etc., still spoke of lectures, presentations and readings, but in the Actionism of the Situationists and the Lettrists the parameters of the plot were active, as the term makes clear. This change in one of the parameters of the action was also present in the founding concepts of Black Mountain College, which then led from Cage to Kaprow.

Analogous to the invention of the observer was the invention of the exemplary biography of artists; protagonists with very different approaches are, among others, Marcel Duchamp and Antonin Artaud.

Identify other sources.

I always asked myself: What are the reasons that drive people to show up somewhere, to assemble? Are they by chance the fundamental images: love, death, anger? Are they the chaotic structures?

The citizens of Athens were well-versed in their definitions of “to make public,” “public debate,” and the determination of the right of a person to be among other persons (which was not valid for slaves). Raising one’s voice also meant putting one’s life on the line, and not only in the city-state. To hold the “right speech,” reality in the strictest sense. The performance disappeared in history for centuries. The Scholastics had already accomplished this quite well and it appeared again in the 1950s; whether it was well timed or inevitable is an open question. It was time once more to make the demand for a valid, eventful presence.

But there it is, in black and white, the stimulus word. “Most of the works created by people that we usually see as being universal—law, science, art, morals, religion, etc.—are inseparably linked to the scholastic viewpoint and the economic and social conditions that make them possible and are everything but universal. They evolve in certain, extremely special social universes, in the fields of cultural production (the fields of law, science, art, philosophy, etc.) where actors are involved who have the mutual privilege of fighting for the monopoly of the universal and thus can contribute either way to the progress of truths and values that at that given time are seen as being universal, yes, eternal.” Once more I must thank Bourdieu for this comment.

And yet—terms wander around.

Bread and circuses, the Romans were the first to develop the changing of the symbolic economy into cultural capital, the prevention of an eruption of the social tensions and differences. The Roman Catholic Church would develop a new social system with its own symbolic economy in this cultural environment, paired with a new economy of capital. This constant nursing of the rituals. The nobility, in their own interest, made the



distinction of the “possession of the entire audience,” the baroque festival. The bourgeoisie discovered their symbolic forms in theatre, their symbolic economy, their cultural capital. This also included the necessary difference and positioning of the development of economic capital.

The working class? Demonstrations, sport clubs for workers, gardening, street festivals, pageants, the member of the audience as a participant who is an activist standing on the street or on the sidewalk in every economy.

The external appearances of the tricksters and the inhabitants of the outskirts of societies were linked by “to make public” and “to be public.” They were excluded from every cultural economy and every symbolic economy, as they were unemployed and without a trade and therefore provided no capital; they moved in the realm of given rationals, contrary to every substantial interpretation, always in relative positions and in a realm of relations, timelessness—a characteristic of the outskirts.

The term “the audience” did not sneak into culture until late, very late: the beginning of the 18th century. Is building a nest a strategy of legitimization? What is done, for example, when one speaks of “folk aesthetic” or of the “common people” who care less about having their “own culture” attributed to them at all costs? Or what is the populism of Laurie Anderson, who, in adhering to rules and breaking them, celebrates the status quo of “universality” in her performances?

“We eliminate the stage as well as the auditorium. They will be replaced by a type of single location without fences or barriers of any sorts, and this will become a Theater of Action as such” (A. Artaud—The Theater and its Double).

Performance Art is an open cultural family tree, as it is supplied by all areas of art and culture and reacts to them. The movements of thought that lead to the creation of an image are expressed directly and simultaneously affect the artist and the observer. The global images that appear during Performance Art require no replicas, no detours; they are non-symbols, they are without motifs. Thus they also fulfill the casual desires of the classical arts, or as Kleist wrote in his essay *Über das Marionettentheater* (*On Puppet Theater*), “Therefore I said, a little distracted, we must eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge again in order to fall back into the state of innocence. However, he says, this is the last chapter in the history of the world.”

In the words of Georg Kubler, all of these slightly scratched historical collections are trends, substrative trends that up until the present day feed public actions and public interest (found in a symbolic economy and in cultural capital) and display the panorama of fields, the fields of power. Parallel to this, from physics, linguistics and, for example, from the Early Romanticism “break,” there appeared the trio: performance, competence and the observer.

The interest of the observer, each member of the audience is an observer.

In the language of Performance Art, every outline of a global image is a design, an identity and, possibly, simultaneously its rejection: The performance is in a period of time that is called “now,” a complex play of the interaction of very different media.

The interested member of the audience can, seen in a direct manner, participate in the design of a global image, an idea, its education and its rejection. This is fundamentally different in every performance that has to do with the nature of global images. They can be similar but they are unique for every person and, here, once more, another factor of Performance Art comes into play. It has the character of a language and eludes a quick development of style by means of its liveliness.

From the 1960s onwards the relation actor-observer, had the characteristic of a workshop of artistic-social research for the performance artist. In their experiments, the performers did not test art historical issues, but rather systems of politically relevant behaviour and social action which is why the performance was ideal as the tip of a lance, and was “applied” to feminism, transverse and gender developments, and the development of Cultural Studies and popular culture.

One can say that there almost was an epistemology of the experiment; at any rate the reports from performance festivals grazed in these rich fields; a shining hope, the figure of the observer as an aura of living transformation.

By comparison I see a drought nowadays.

The artists, however, did not reckon with the general development of social conditions—the power of quantity does not allow experiments and naiveté in aesthetic and ethical questions. Analogous to an optical illusion, artists are overpowered by a permanent referential illusion when they thematicize “art and the audience.” The seismographic reaction as a stylistic device also proved to be a dead-end and remained as a nice event during the presentations of Fluxus scores.

The term “aesthetic rationality” contains, despite a possible interpretation that could be developed, a rather rigid view of the relationship “artist-the audience.” If one succeeds to guide this to the understanding of relationships, an insight into the difference can evolve.

When one no longer speaks about the audience as a privilege or about the audience as competence, but about the privilege of a group of observers, members of an audience are defined by their interest and apply competence and judgment. The difference in interests also exists in artists. Approximately 140 and more different definitions (discovered so far) of Performance Art have an equal number of and overlapping demands on the observer. The terms “site specific” and “situation,” on the other hand, produce additional forms of interest groups of observers.

The audience as “material” was thematicized by Allan Kaprow in his first 18 *Happenings in 6 Parts* in 1959 in the Reuben Gallery, New York City. This concept of declaring the more or less coincidental presence of a group of persons as being a processual art work developed out of Environment Art (art that has the aim of shaping human environment). In 1964 Kaprow rejected the general use of the term “happening” in a discussion with George Brecht. In actuality, during the development of the term, there was every type of rather coincidental and customarily harmless event for the general public, events, which Kaprow refused to be responsible for.

George Brecht thematicized the occurrence of small, unimportant events on the street; he was interested, as probably all artists of Action Art are, in the effect.

Vito Acconci sat down on the stairs in the stairwell of the building he lived in and did not let anyone get past him who wanted to go up the stairs to the upper floors—neither the visitors to the building nor the people who lived in the lofts. This hindrance was accompanied by threatening gestures, insults, etc.

Another use of the audience as material at a Happening was practiced, for example, at the Happening *In Ulm, um Ulm, um Ulm herum* by Wolf Vostell (*In Ulm, around Ulm, all around Ulm*). The audience was driven in busses from Ulm to a secluded spot. They were led off the busses and the busses drove away. The Happening occurred by abandonment in a situation. There is another variation of this Happening, this time by Allan Kaprow (Pasadena, 16 April 1973, a taped conversation). It demonstrates how “the audience” is dissolved and a different understanding between the observer and the artist is striven for in the effect.

“The man on the street” consists of a conglomeration of specialists, shop owners, criminals, and workers. It is an expression without any opinion. There are no limits to the number of listeners. It is simply what one can see in every big City. And then, when one goes to the man on the street in a small village, this man, on the other hand, is very different.

It could also be a tourist walking by. The man on the street is a cliché, assuming that a difference between true humanism and a person in an ivory tower exists. This is the ideological question. The question hiding behind it is: Whose side is one on? The street or the ivory tower? My answer to this is that I usually find myself in an airplane somewhere, going from here to there. There are thousands of people in airplanes and thousands walking on the street; they belong to the most varied socio-economic groups. There is only an unbelievably strong mixture that is constantly in motion. No one is at one certain spot, no one is right or left. These are very fragmentary positions, very momentary. In fact, a person who always remains in the same philosophical position is probably an idiot.

Terry Fox: “It is like performance. I began to do performance in 1970. At that time there was hardly anybody in the States doing performances until Vito Acconci and

Dennis Oppenheim did it. I lived in Amsterdam in 1967 and in Paris in 1968 and when I moved to Paris in 1968, there was the revolution. The art schools were closed and the artists were making posters and street theater. Until then I was a painter and did not make sculptures. In Paris I had my first idea for a sculpture, which consisted of odd things, because I did not have a history or training in sculpture. I had not done it before. What I saw happening in Paris was done live and so instead of making a sculpture and putting it into a gallery where maybe 100 people could see it in one month I would do things in the street. So 1,000 people could see it in one hour. I started making sculpture by opening fire hydrants. I liked the water running down the streets: turning and running, turning and running. Even the throwing of cobblestones and the police, all that was sculpture to me.

It began there and I felt that sculpture was something that you can do for an audience. For me a performance is a form of sculpture being done in front of an audience. It becomes visible how it is done. It's like raising bread. I have done that a lot of times in performances in a lot of different places. You smell the bread and the yeast in the dough. First it is just flat on the floor and when it gets warm it expands and rises and rises and something else can be happening there. I like that. So for me it was a way of really broadening the content of what art was" (Terry Fox, *Ocular Language*, Salon Verlag).

When Larry Miller, one of the youngest of the Fluxus artists does a "Fluxus evening," three quarters of the pieces and events are designed by other Fluxus artists. This is not new, as scores also require interpreters. What deserves examining, however, is the moment in the structure of the event. In music a demand is placed on the interpreter, which corresponds to an orderly sporting event with an evaluation of the athletic performances. Fluxus strove for a complete negation of all of these factors by the choice of material, the prerequisite of how the event is conducted, etc. That this usually did not succeed due to market pressure and the self-dynamics (expectations) of the reception is another story. Artists such as Robert Filliou, John Cage or George Brecht made it rather clear that the location of the event is a location of connection; it is "immoderate."

Expectation behaviour cannot be modified; it cannot creep in or be left at the cloak-room; only a participating, moving engagement and a methodically applied attention make an approximate understanding of a "performance" possible.

When it should be determined where performances should take place, then they should be where people negotiate with other people the "form of value" of their existence, and where they determine their location with the other living beings in this world and their position in the cosmos, where culture is the moment with people sharing the shaping of life.

Esther Ferrer. June 2000, in San Sebastian, Spain, on a beach and a beach promenade. A group of 16 persons carrying stools arrive at the beach, put the stools down, climb up the cliff at the beach, take up positions and start to perform a score from the repertoire of *ZAJ*. The group consists of several persons who were "invited" artists from the festival, and a number of bathers and persons strolling along the promenade. This "audience" is not coincidental, for Esther Ferrer chose the location and the people there were made into the "audience."

Valerian Maly & Klara Schilliger. Water-soaking Performance on the occasion of Performance Day, Seedamm Kulturzentrum, Pfäffikon, Switzerland, on 28 March 1998. "The organizers scheduled the Performance Day one time to take place on the ship *Albis*. The performances took place on the ship during a sightseeing tour on Lake Zürich. As actually there isn't hardly anything artistic to do on a sightseeing tour on a lake, we decided to have the performance off the boat.

We rowed up to the side of the *MS Albis* in an old rowboat where you have to stand to row, and the passengers could watch our performance from the ship.

"Water-soaking" is a process performed once a year with wood boats: the boat is filled with water so the wood can swell and the planks become watertight again. In front of the audience we filled the boat with water as we scanned the names of the passengers on the *MS Albis* until the boat sank with us in it."



Let the “audience” invited to the event enter the room assigned for the event, then the performer locks the door from the inside and the persons are at the performer’s mercy, such as, for instance, Nikolaus Urban or Mike Hentz with the group delta have done. Persons were taken prisoner and tied up. Nikolaus Urban put on a blindfold and thrust a knife in the air all around him.

Orlan. Her performances (operations) can only be seen via camera, cable, satellite and TV (in classically furnished exhibition spaces and where a group of spectators, however one defines this, can sit down in front of a television). The other levels of her publications are informative events and lectures.

Or Stelarc: There are no longer any observers, but rather persons who intervene, sending electronic impulses via a mouse click to his body and animating him to perform movements that are beyond his control and are only the physical mechanism of his locomotor System. (His demonstrations will not be described here that, like Orlan, depict classical lectures and also classical audiences.)

*Rent an Artist* by ASA-European eliminates the difference between observers and actors by having this principle guided by an interjected medium of information, and everybody is an actor and nothing is portrayed except for the information medium, e.g., an office in a converted freight container in a public space, the job interview, etc.

Black Market International focuses on the portrayal of encounters as a “model of an encounter.” Therefore it is insignificant in this association whether their performances are conducted in the hermetic spaces of a gallery or in a public space, e.g., a market square, a radio station studio, or in a “site specific installation” (for example, a run-down indoor riding arena is rented for an encounter). Black Market International more or less demonstrates with this, that their performances are possible in every location. The long running times and the structure of the performances allow the observers the chance to come and go when they want, for time is also an extract and a model of the continuity of the encounter.

Fen Ma Liuming. The integration of the observer into the performance as a participant, all the way to the transformation that the observer becomes the performer and the performer who was invited to perform fades himself out. (During his last performances Ma Liuming took sleeping pills).

Many performances survived and survive only as a myth through media history. When Karel Dudesek and Bernhard Müller, for example, travel across Communist Poland in uniforms of American soldiers and visit Lech Walesa, the leader of the free workers’ union “Solidarnosc,” or the Bangkok project of the aforementioned - delta t group, then the media recipients are the “audience.” Another example: Jan Bas Ader sends a little postcard with the information that he wants to cross the ocean in a small rowboat and it’s “farewell forever.”

And, in order to also (in)admissibly stretch the term performance here, there is the “invisible performance.” An example: Judy Radul in Vancouver stages small events as private rituals, as discrete interventions, an intervening change in an encounter that is proceeding in any case, without any incidents or as a participating event. The intervention as an incident without any intentions, a disturbance in the course of the event, or also without members of an audience, without viewer or observers, but rather the viewer/reader/recipient is a medium, a storage device for memory energy.

In my opinion the term performance is overstretched in regard to the use of PCs and the Internet. It also seems to me to be overstretching it to speak of an “observer” in this area, for other levels of perception open up here, and possibly an autistic time period.

When a furious young woman leaves the short concert, John Cage runs after her, catches up to her, brings her back to the concert and talks to her. This is also a responsibility as a presence of mind towards the viewer. After the performer has succeeded in establishing the “here,” the viewers simultaneously move into the “now.” If the viewers move into the “now,” the performance occurs as a presence of mind.

## Epilogue

In the short work *Living and Teaching as a Performance Art* (1969) by Robert Filliou, George Brecht wrote: “If you want to know something, spend your time with someone who knows something.”

And. “Money, more money, a lot of money for the esteemed audience, not sponsored like every ‘common theater seat,’ but rather like the esteemed G.H. from L. did it, as an approach and a model, the potlatch, the gift per se.”

Translated from German by Robert Rowley

# Free Martin Zet! on the Magical A-B-B-B-B- Axis Tour without Mystery

## MARTIN ZET

A-B-B-B-B:

A for Alytus (a city in Lithuania, tour date: 2002)

B for Bitola (Macedonia, tour date: 2000-2002), Belfast (Northern Ireland, tour date: 2002), Büyükçekmece (Turkey, tour date: 2002), Bialystok (Poland, tour date: 2003)

Description of the project for *fix02* festival of performance and time based art organised by Catalyst Arts, Belfast:

Two shy guys in handcuffs and Polish convict uniforms (wearing Czech and Russian or Lithuanian skates) are making a sightseeing tour through Belfast, having some lunch, beer, possibly also visiting the Mayor\* (with an extra pair of Russian skates: a gift—message from the East for him), accompanied by two guards (two policemen or one policeman (or British soldier) and one IRA soldier). Everything is very carefully documented (some photographs must be taken in front of the most spectacular Belfast monuments).

Then a couple of days (or at least one day) later a press conference with all available media is to be organised in the City (or Catalyst Arts) Hall. It will expose and describe the dirty techniques which they (we) used: for example, the uniforms were stolen, the policemen (Brendan O’Neil, Colin Williamson) were being paid, they (we) were not Polish, that we (or one of us) got drunk during the whole event and behaved improperly, that actually we were invited there and the whole thing was just fake, a planned simulation, and that we profited from an art event—the performance festival in Belfast—paid from sponsors money (intended for the arts) for our political reasons (propaganda for ZCCA – Zet Center of Contemporary Art), etc. Also, instead of only talks we could show a video of us skating around Alytus’s famous sportsman, one of the Lithuanian National Children’s FMZ! Drawing Contest organised at Alytus Art School, one of the Piotrkow Trybunalski festival and one from this tour through Belfast. After the videos we would analyse the scandalous background of those events. And we could then go on to reveal as much as possible the dirty techniques employed by the FMZ! movement, and also by ZCCA itself—in the same way communist parties used self-purifying practices\*\*—one of us would have to be punished (we would suggest Martin Zet—one day on bread and whiskey) or both of us (for the other offender, one day in a strip bar\*\*\* or a day observing the old ladies in the city library).

Afterwards we can announce that because we had the strength to be so self critical, we had overcome the crisis and now we are even stronger than before. This will be the time to take a flight\*\*\*\* in a small plane or helicopter and throw thousands of

flyers over Belfast promising a new future for ZCCA. Or, if during the press conference ZCCA splits into two organisations, ZCCA and DCCA (D is for Dirzys), we could promise bright tomorrows for these two organisations which are in brother relations forever!—Navechnie vremena!

Or if ZCCA simply transforms into DCCA, we would also predict something very positive.

After landing we will come out and say that we have changed our minds—we are sticking to our true values and still trust in ZCCA and its ability to clean itself from the inside, and in fact all the problems of ZCCA are not problems at all anymore, but assets, and we are really proud to belong to it.

*\*About the visit of the mayor:*

*The main objective of the visit is to organise an international meeting of mayors of the cities in which we — the performance artists — feel good. The vision is a sort of brotherhood of cities that is based on the friendship of artists — a much stronger basis than the comparatively short-term official friendship of politicians.*

*\*\*Something like Khrushchev's speech in XX congress of KPSS in 1956 in which he first spoke about Stalin as a criminal (cult of personality). We also need to put on the knee-high soldier boots at this moment— in order to emphasize our decision about our self-critical ability just as Khrushchev (again) did in the UN sometime in the 70s— to be able to take the boot in hand and bang it on the table while speaking, as he then did.*

*\*\*\*If the strip bar is chosen then the entrance ticket and budget for the strip bar must also be accompanied by an invitation and travel expenses (ferry boat) for Charlie Citron from Amsterdam, his wife Eveline and their daughter Zoe, to come and see the punished one suffering (bar expenses not included).*

*\*\*\*\*flight: both of us, tired from the conference, arrive at the airstrip — the main organiser thanks us, gives us flowers, puts two little tabs of LSD on our stuck out tongues and we walk on the red carpet to the helicopter, accompanied by the Belfast City Orchestra (or a tape recorder) playing the Beatles song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," we take off.*

### **List of things needed**

*For the walk in the city:*

2 pairs of handcuffs, 2 guards (1 policeman [or British soldier] + 1 IRA soldier), 3 pairs of skates (we could try to take care of this), 1 kind Mayor, a substantial budget for the guards to host us in the pubs and bars , free tickets (or access) to the famous tourist sites in Belfast

*For the press conference:*

1 room (City Hall?), 2 microphones, 2 pairs of knee-high soldiers boots (or at least 1 boot), all available media + politicians, a video projector

*For the punishment:*

At least 1 (or 3) bottle(s) of fine Irish Whiskey, 1 loaf of famous Lithuanian dark bread (responsibility of Redas Dirzys), 1 ticket (and budget) for 1 day in the local strip bar, 1 ticket to local library

*In case of the flight:*

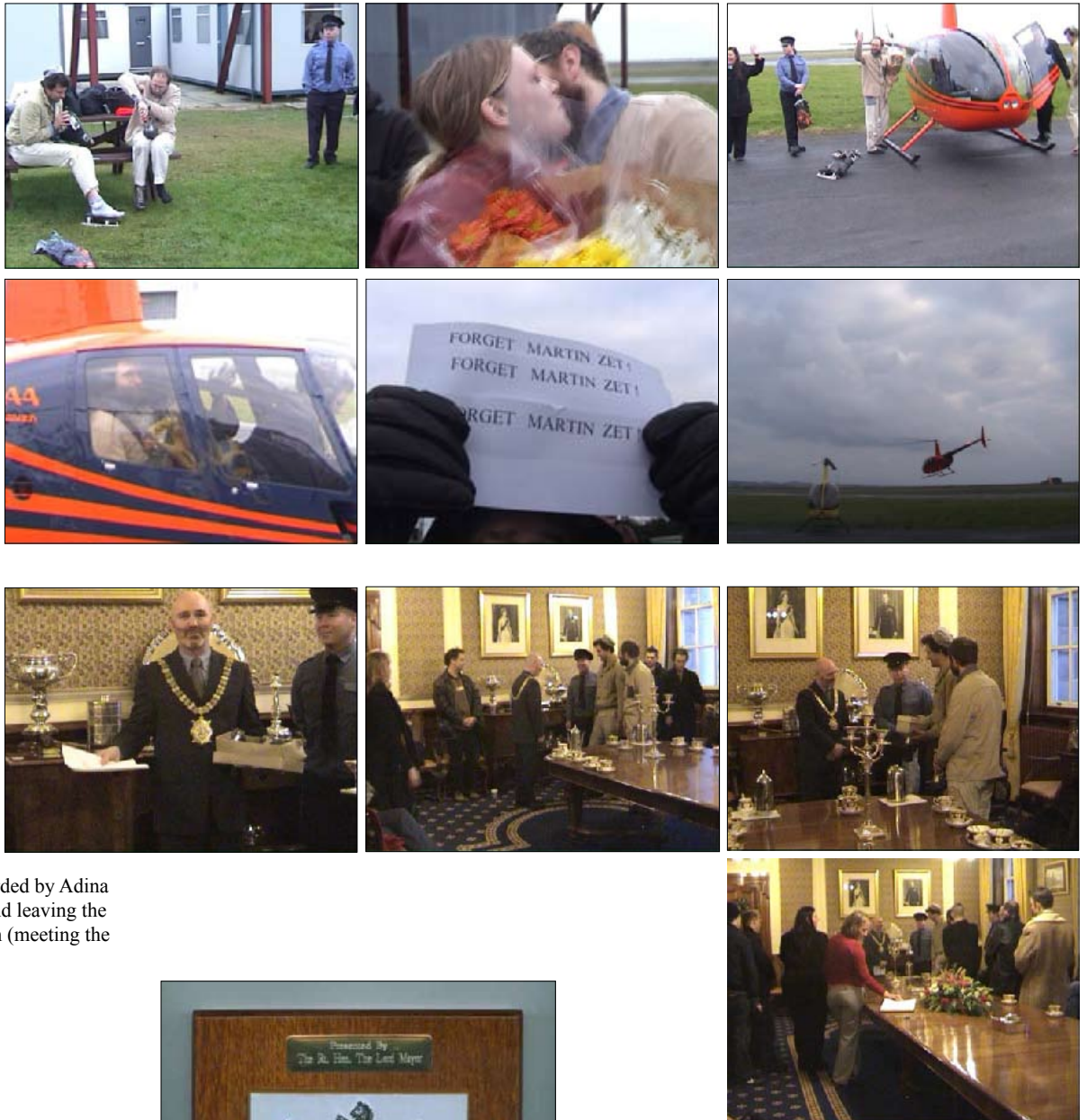
1 red carpet, 2 bouquets of flowers, 2 small tabs of LSD, 1 city orchestra (or a tape recorder) playing Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds, access to a photocopy machine plus a couple hundred sheets of paper for flyers, from 30 minutes to 6 hours of helicopter (or a small plane) time, 1 big banner reading: FREE MARTIN ZET! (sorry—I cannot help myself, M.Z.) to fly behind the plane or the helicopter plus somebody, a representative to thank us



October 20, 2002 in Libusin & Alytus

Redas Dirzys & Martin Zet  
ZCCA-Libusin  
P.O.Box 21  
273 06 Libusin  
Czech Republic

### Realisation of the Belfast Tour December 2002



Stills from the video recorded by Adina Bar-on (helicopter field and leaving the City hall), Sandra Johnson (meeting the Lord Mayor).



A gift from Councillor Alex Maskey, Lord Mayor of Belfast,

**Few anecdotal comments with four morals on FMZ!**  
**A-B-B-B-B Magical Mystery Tour. Part 2, Belfast**

Local chilling x global warming.

What to say in the beginning?

Maybe something about undeserving fame. After we arrived in Belfast we had no chance to finish saying our names during the introductions. We would open our mouths, pronounce just the initials and suddenly everybody was treating us like famous people: “So it’s you who wanted the helicopter?”

The moral is: “To be popular it is not important what you do or how good you are at what you make, but how much you ask for.”



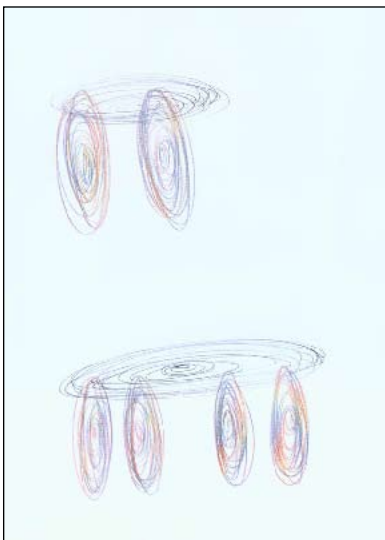
Actually the moment that persuaded us not to go on into the strip bar was the table dance committed by a policeman. No particular moral.

A very interesting switch happened when everything was over. The subject of sensation changed. The last days (and mainly evenings) people were asking: “so it’s you who met the Lord Mayor?”

The moral is: “It’s harder for people to imagine meeting politicians than flying in a helicopter.”

We also decided to change some things that were offered to us for another. For example, in place of going to strip bar we made a studio visit at the local University’s Master Degree program studios.

When people asked Redas Dirzys why a helicopter, he answered: “Because it is the most direct way up.” (Here we come to the point that reveals the inner logic of our collaboration. The whole spectrum of perceptions is already guaranteed by the basic life points of view. If, as Redas Dirzys writes in the beginning of his book *Los Artistas Unidos Jamás Serán Vencidos!* (2001 Vilnius, Alytus, Libušín), “I’m not trying to cross the limits, I just don’t see them” then all of Martin Zet’s book *Los Artistas Unidos Jamás Serán Vencidos!* (2001, Libušín, ISBN 80-238-7822-0, English mutation, ISBN 80-238-7821-2, Czech mutation) is about seeing, suffering from or appreciating and enjoying the limits.)



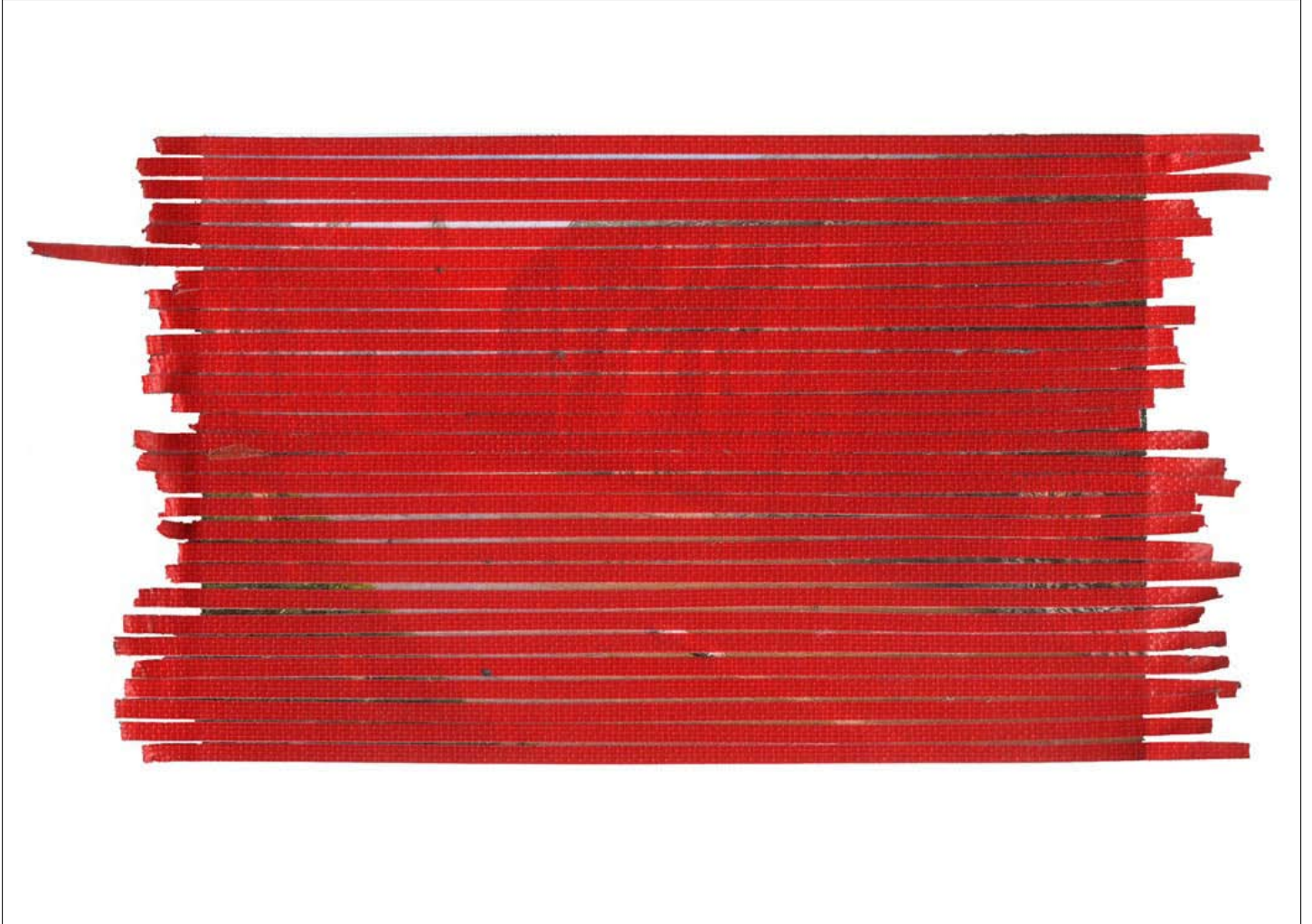
A study of the movement of one pair of eyes and the propeller and the study of the movement of two pairs of eyes and the propeller. (M.Z. December 13, 2002).

The truth be told, we got so high in the helicopter that at one moment Martin Zet exclaimed: “I would never believe it, but I am starting to love performance festivals!”

We got so high and love possessed during the flight and also Paul, the pilot of the helicopter was so sweet that when he said that dropping the flyers over the city of Belfast could cause him problems, we, without speaking about it, decided to favour the human over the “artistic” and in the end we didn’t drop anything. We also got so high that we forgot about it.

We got more than we expected in Belfast. Actually we had also experienced in the past that sending a similar project description could cause the cancellation of our participation, as happened for the Subotica festival in 2001—*Forbidden Fruits of Civil Society*. After obtaining the project description, they never wrote back.

Maybe the following moral could be coming out of this experience: “When you prepare something that is beyond the expected edge, it is very good to know at least one of the organisers (best if it’s a director—sorry, Helen) personally.”



A postcard to myself.

I have with me a postcard. A scenic image of the Three Gorges. Somewhere not too far from Wushan. I decide to cover it with red tape. I think about making a performance.

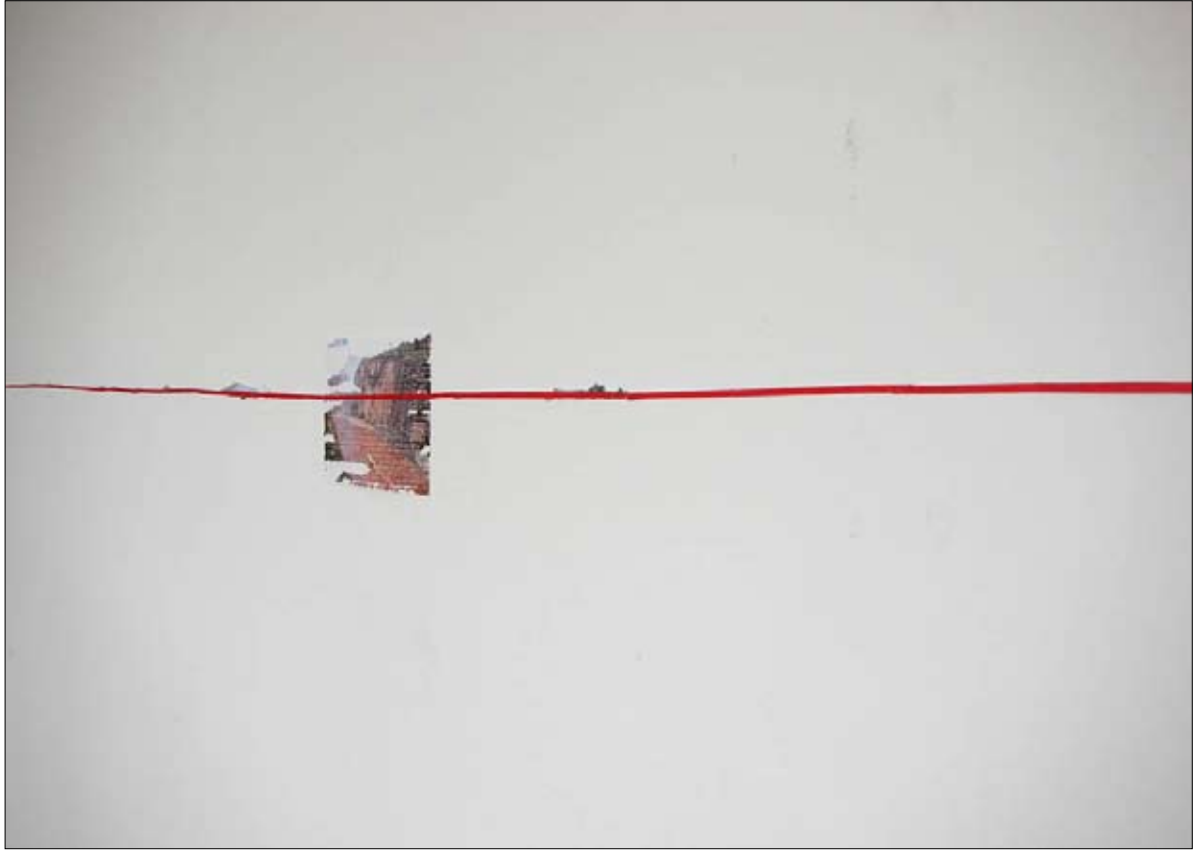
What is there to think about? I just did the performance. I have my postcard with red tape.

A souvenir. A reminder of my experience in China. A reminder of what once was.



Postscript:

I return to Phnom Penh and remove the red tape from the postcard. I think of my time in Wushan and Wanzhou. The two towns I visited as part of “The Sudden Change” project. And I remember the Sichuan earthquake. I had just arrived in Chengdu the day it happened. I recall the haunting sounds of the fog horns from the ships the following week. A memorial to the dead. I was standing beside the Yangtze river at the time.



Abbreviated notes for tributary 2.

Heavy machinery pounds the road throughout the night. Paving development in Wushan.

A river town. This is the gateway to the Lesser Three Gorges. A tributary of the Yangtze river.

The nearby hills are being levelled. Earth excavated.  
An endless procession of trucks circle the landfill.  
Reshaping the riverbank.

Within a year the river is expected to rise to 175 meters. Traces of what once existed will be erased. Covered-up by a blanket of concrete. Protecting the new town from sliding into river.

These changes boost the local economies. Providing fresh opportunities for many. The benefits clearly tangible.

Uninhabited houses litter the hillsides.  
Newly built homes, unpainted and windowless.  
Local farmers gambling on the future.

# Staging Identities, Performing Plurality

## Ming Wong's *mononoaware*

ELIZA TAN

MK Galerie, Berlin  
September 5 to October 18, 2008

A multi-lingual smattering of expressions whose cultural resonances can be at best but palely translated into English—*Filem-Filem-Filem* (the term for ‘films’ in Malay), *Sehnsucht and Angst Essen* (German for ‘Longing’ and ‘Eat Fear’), are some of the descriptions which Singapore-born artist Ming Wong tags to his works. *Mononoaware* (Japanese for ‘the pathos of things’), a showcase of videos, posters and a series of photographs, questions approximations of identity and authenticity, ‘foreignness’ and ‘local-ness.’ World cinema and its popular development from the late 50s to 70s is the device that Wong deploys as a performative strategy by which to engage communicative disjunctions which occur across cultures. *Mononoaware* begins with *Four Malay Stories* (2005), which comprises re-enactments of four films directed by little remembered Malay-Muslim showbiz icon P. Ramlee from the pioneering era of cinematic history which flourished during the late 50s and 60s in Singapore and Malaysia. Deriving from Wong’s theatrical background and typical of his oeuvre, the artist features as the sole actor who plays the entire cast of 16 characters, crossing demographics of age, sex and ethnicity.

Wong’s performative stance has multiple folds. One the one hand, his all encompassing role attempts to resuscitate, through his own subjectivity as an actor of Chinese descent—and one not unfamiliar with the textbook rhetoric of multi-racial Singapore, the regional affect which Ramlee had generated. The director, who gained ubiquitous popularity during his time, came to be heralded as a beacon for cultural pluralism and racial harmony although authorities have since ironically censored scenes deemed to portray vice and immorality in line with religious sentiment. Wong quotes precisely a selection of scenes and lines in which social and sexual taboos of the time were frankly expressed, but this is far less a statement made in the offensive as it is an attempt to analyse how perception may or may not have permutated across time and through language. Many of the chosen lines Wong performs are those which have entered the popular lexicon of Malay society today.

That Wong is seen assuming 16 ‘other’ personas and performing them based on his limited knowledge of Malay is a confessional and self-reflexive demonstration. He critically refrains from subscribing to an unproblematised view of multi-racality, of being able to so conveniently acquire genuine empathy towards, and with respect for the nuances of an ‘other’ culture. Is one really, so to speak, able to proverbially ‘place oneself in another’s shoes’ without stuttering? In repetitive takes of the same scenes, Wong is seen repeating his lines in Malay over and over again, the meaning of these lines transcribed too literally into English subtitles as in a foreign language instructional video. Learning a foreign language, another culture and acquiring empathy is perhaps more a strenuous labour of love for the social auto-didact than it is an instant pill that can be swallowed by the self-professed cosmopolitanist.

If this is a love that must be melodramatic, then Rainer W. Fassbinder’s humorous profession that “I don’t believe that melodramatic feelings are laughable, they should be taken absolutely seriously,” resounds in Wong’s *Angst Essen / Eat Fear* (2008). A tribute to Fassbinder’s *Angst Essen Seele Auf* (*Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, 1973), which lays bare the shadows of xenophobia, Wong re-enacts the tragic melodrama of Ali, a Moroccan foreign labourer in Germany and his older wife Emmi, a local cleaner. Wong once again plays all the parts in order to act out a breakdown of demographic categories, save for

a key scene early in the video when the couple have their first dance at the bar where Wong interchangeably employs two other actors in proxy for his roles as Ali and Emmi respectively. When asked why he had chosen to play all of the parts rather than calling for a cast, Wong explains that a casting process would implicate precisely considerations of race, sex, age and acting ability—denominators he circumvents by being his own actor.

This device not only serves to retain a reflective space in which to re-examine the notion of ‘otherness.’ It also reserves, for the audience, contemplation for the fact that Wong’s performative insertion of himself as a unifying thread across race, sex and age is one enacted within the theatrical realm and within the artistic sphere of his production processes. This is a realm in which perimeters of identity, of ‘becoming,’ are as shiftable and as stageable as markers of identity can be depending on the variability of props and a costume wardrobe. Yet, one is invariably still haunted by the age old question of how much art might, further to proposing itself as a mimicry as often as an anti-mimicry of life and social reality, truly affect social praxis or to what extent it remains a grasping after utopia.

Wong is certainly not unaware of this; plastered on the left-facing wall of the gallery is a quietly unobtrusive installation of A4 printouts of what those who are familiar with filling up job applications in the United Kingdom might smile at—an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form (2008). The “Equal Ops” form, written under the Data Protection Act and ‘used in a confidential manner to monitor the recruitment process,’ is apparently a protective legal construct, also an establishment of diversity and equality rights. It is opaque what the language of such a form might refer to; if it is a civilising necessity, an act of inclusion, an inclusionary gesture, or one that simply remains, a gesture. Forgive the pun, but: Mono–No–Aware? There lies a tempered beauty in Wong’s gesture of detouring a casting and selection process to achieve the realization of a subject’s agencies while still retaining a critique of unbudging social prejudices and the subtle, systemic absorption of difference/s.

Perhaps the blurred spheres of art and life transfer into the production of performative dexterity because the constructedness and constructability of memory and identity implicates authenticity or originality as an illusory claim. *Filem-Filem-Filem* (2008), a

*Angst Essen/Eat Fear.*  
Image courtesy the artist





series of medium format Polaroid photographs of old cinemas in Singapore and Malaysia documents, if but ephemerally, a quasi-nostalgic portrait of identity as it is bound up in the construction of the past through images. That the work comprises a series of Polaroids with no negatives, admits a relation with impermanence, tourism and souvenir culture, allowing for the critique of the desirability and ‘uniqueness’ of Asian identity as a selling point for the promotion of economic trade and international relations. This is not to say that *Filem-Filem-Filem* does not take into consideration local film history—as is the work’s first intention. The work figures as a hopeful insertion, a formative means of tracing disappearing local landscapes rich with residual cultural memories as architectural identity in Singapore and Malaysia, with modernity as an axiom, continues to morph to the pace of global movement. If the staging of such memories through these snapshot compositions can be vehicular in aiding an awareness of local pasts in conjunction with the region’s modern determination, *Filem-Filem-Filem* may well hold its own place within a still sparse archival body of local cinematic narratives and be potentially presented as partial documents of the region’s rapidly growing film industry.

Inarticulable slippages continue to occur between the verbal and visual event, between languages and the quality of lived experience while socio-political nuances undoubtedly make complex the process towards actualising the possibility of a shared sense of narrative meaning, historical memory and the capacity to adequately or even accurately identify who or what is ‘other,’ what is ‘foreign’ and what is ‘local.’ Wong appropriates world cinema as both metaphor and device to this function. That the usage and reception of different languages is a vulnerable, unpronounceable cultural process that may just as readily yield to misunderstanding as it may register moments of empathy and recognition, admits to inherent social mores and assumptions which persist despite the embracing of global identity. If this is what evokes a very fragile pathos, Wong’s exhibition begs the question of what *mononoaware* might really mean. Who or what does the term name, and for whom?



Malay Stories. Images courtesy the artist.

## About Ctrl+P Journal of Contemporary Art

*Ctrl+P* was founded in 2006 by Flaudette May V. Datuin and Judy Freya Sibayan as a response to the dearth of critical art publications in the Philippines. It is produced in Manila and published on the Web with zero funding. Contributors write gratis for *Ctrl+P*. Circulated as a PDF file via the Net, it is a downloadable and printable publication that takes advantage of the digital medium's fluidity, immediacy, ease and accessibility. *Ctrl+P* provides a testing ground for a whole new culture and praxis of publishing that addresses very specifically the difficulties of publishing art writing and criticism in the Philippines. It took part in the *documenta 12 magazines* project, a journal of 97 journals from all over the world. (<http://magazines.documenta.de/frontend/>)

## About Ctrl+P's Contributors

Born in Serbia, **Ana Prvacki** lives and works in Singapore and New York. In 2003, Prvacki founded Ananatural Production, an innovation and lifestyle consultancy that combines conceptual concerns, contemporary issues and various methods of communication. (<http://www.ananatural.com>) ● **Thomas Berghuis** is a lecturer in Asian Art at the Department of Art History & Film Studies at the University of Sydney and a Consultant Lecturer at the Sotheby's Institute of Arts in Singapore. In 2006 he completed his PhD dissertation on Performance Art in China at the University of Sydney (Australia), following an MA in Sinology at Leiden University (The Netherlands). From June 2007 to July 2008 he worked as Senior Research Curator with the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre in Sydney. His book, *Performance Art in China*, has been published in 2006 with *Timezone 8*, Hong Kong. ● **Adele Tan** is a writer and critic. She is completing her doctoral dissertation at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and is Assistant Editor at the London-based journal *Third Text*. Her interests include discourses on the body, psychoanalysis and feminist practices. She has published widely in international journals and magazines on performance and contemporary art. She was the forum facilitator and moderator for the *Future of Imagination 5*. ● Born in 1978 in New Delhi, **Rohini Devasher** graduated with a Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking from the Winchester School of Art, UK in 2004. Recent exhibitions include *Filament*, Anant Art Gallery New Delhi, *Drawn from Life*, Green Cardamom Gallery, London. *By All Means*, Exhibition at the Scope Art Fair Basel, curated by the Thomas Erben Gallery, New York and the KHOJ International Arts & Science Residency, KHOJ Studios, New Delhi. She has been working with KHOJ since 2005 in the capacity of Editorial & Publications Coordinator. ● **Mok Chiuyu** is community cultural development worker, people's theatre artist and performance artist. He is chairperson of the Asian People's Theatre Festival Society, an organization that keenly promotes performance art. Apart from performance art festivals, he has been involved in many cross cultural theatre productions, theatre education conferences and inclusive cultural activities. ● **Dagmar Reichert** born in Vienna (Austria), studied cultural geography, sports and philosophy, runs a private consulting office in Zürich, Switzerland, leads interdisciplinary research projects, teaches cultural theory and curates exhibitions. [www.dagmar-reichert.ch](http://www.dagmar-reichert.ch) ● **Bina Sarker Ellias** is based in Mumbai, India, and is the founder and editor/publisher of *Gallerie Magazine*. ([www.gallerie.net](http://www.gallerie.net)) ● **Boris Nieslony** is engaged in the process of learning to keep his CV as empty as possible. ● **Martin Zet** used to work in parallel on several themes at the same time. About two years ago he abandoned this model. Now he tries not to work at all, or to focus on one thing for a longer period of time. This change has surprisingly increased his inner uncertainty. ● **Jerome Ming** has worked on *A River in Three Parts* since 2002. The photo-based project is on going and documents the changes of the Yangtze River affected by the Three Gorges Dam. Ming recently completed a two-year photographic project focusing on the Mekong River in Southeast Asia for the Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine (IRASEC). A traveling exhibition and a book are scheduled for 2009. He currently resides in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. ● **Eliza Tan** is a writer from Singapore currently based in London.

## About Ctrl+P's Editorial Board Members

**Flaudette May V. Datuin**, is Associate Professor, Department of Art Studies, University of the Philippines (UP). Co-founding editor of *Ctrl+P*, she is also author of *Home Body Memory: Filipina Artists in the Visual Arts, 19th Century to the Present* (University of the Philippines Press, 2002). The book is based on her dissertation for the PhD in Philippines Studies (UP, 2001-2002). A 2008 Visiting Fellow at the Humanities Research Center, Australian National University, Datuin is also recipient of the Asian Scholarship Foundation and Asian Public Intellectual fellowships, which enabled her to conduct research on contemporary women artists of China and Korea (2002-2003) and Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Japan (2004-2005). She is curator and organizer of an international art project called *trauma, interrupted*, which was launched through an exhibition held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in June 2007 ([www.trauma-interrupted.org](http://www.trauma-interrupted.org)).

**Varsha Nair** lives in Bangkok, Thailand. Her selected shows include *Still Moving Image*, Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, 2008; *A Proper Place*, Ryllega Gallery, Hanoi, 2007; *Art as Environment: Cultural Actions on Tropic of Cancer* 007, Taiwan; *Exquisite Crisis & Encounters*, NYU, New York, 2007; *Subjected Culture-Interruptions and resistances on femaleness*, venues in Argentina 2007-2008; *Sub-Contingent: The Indian Subcontinent in Contemporary Art*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy, 2006; *In-between places, meeting point*, Si-am Art Space, Bangkok, 2005; *Video as Urban Condition*, Austrian Culture Forum, London, UK, 2004; *With(in)*, Art In General, New York, 2002; *Home/Dom*, Collegium Artisticum, Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina, 2002; Free Parking, Art Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 2002. She performed at *On the Move*, Hong Kong, 2008; Khoj Live Performance Festival, Delhi, 2008; *Saturday Live*, Tate Modern London, 2006; *National Review of Live Art*, 2006 and 2004; *National Review of Live Art Midland*, Perth, Australia, 2005. Since 1997, Nair has also curated and organized *Womanifesto* ([www.womanifesto.com](http://www.womanifesto.com)) and other art related activities, and has been invited as speaker at various international symposia. She was the Bangkok curator of *600 Images/60 artists/6 curators/6 cities: Bangkok/Berlin/London/Los Angeles/Manila/Saigon*, an exhibition that was simultaneously exhibited in all 6 cities in 2005. Born in Kampala, Uganda, Nair has a BFA from Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayaji Rao University, Baroda, India.

**Judy Freya Sibayan**, co-founding editor of *Ctrl+P*, has an MFA from Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design. She is former director of the erstwhile Contemporary Art Museum of the Philippines. She performed and curated *Scapular Gallery Nomad*, a gallery she wore daily for five years (1997-2002), and is currently co-curator and the *Museum of Mental Objects* (MoMO), a performance art proposing that the artist's body be the museum itself (<http://www.trauma-interrupted.org/judy/writing1.pdf>). Although Sibayan's major body of work is an institutional critique of art, she has also exhibited and performed in museums, galleries and performance venues such as Latitude 53, Edmonton, Canada; PEER Gallery Space, London; Privatladen in Berlin; The Tramway, Glasgow; the Vienna Secession; the Hayward Gallery, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, The Farm in San Francisco; Sternersensemuseet; The Photographers' Gallery, London; ArtSpace Sydney; The Kiasma Contemporary Art Center, The Mori Art Museum, The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center, Fukuoka Art Museum, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Hong Kong Art Centre; Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila; and at the capcMusée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux. She has participated in two international art biennales, the 1986 *3rd Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh* and the 2002 *Gwangju Biennale*. Also an independent curator, she curated *The Community Archives: Documenting Artists Collectively, Openly* held at Latitude 53 (Edmonton, Alberta Canada). She also conceived and was lead-curator of *xsXL Expanding Art* held at Sculpture Square, Singapore in 2002 and *600 Images/60 Artists/6 Curators/6 Cities: Bangkok/Berlin/London/Los Angeles/Manila/Saigon* in 2005. The latter two projects investigated the possibilities of developing large scale international exhibitions mounted with very modest resources. She currently teaches as an Assistant Professor of the Department of Communication, De La Salle University ([www.dlsu.edu.ph](http://www.dlsu.edu.ph)) where she has taught for some twenty years.