

A journal  
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# Ctrl+Pdf

J o u r n a l o f C o n t e m p o r a r y A r t

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It is with great pleasure that we announce *Ctrl+P Journal of Contemporary Art* has been invited to participate in *documenta 12 magazines*, a “journal of journals” project. In his letter of invitation, project director Georg Schöllhammer wrote, “documenta 12 initiates a dialogue between around 70 magazines, journals, on-line and other media from all over the world to create a network to explore and discuss topics of current interest and relevance, not only in the framework of documenta 12. The focus lies on the following three questions: Is modernity our antiquity?, What is bare life?, and What is to be done? These debates will be later compiled and published in a series of three thematic digital and printed publications, offering a forum for contemporary aesthetic discourse. In turn, the documenta 12 magazines project will also form part of the documenta 12 exhibition in Kassel, Germany to be held from June to September 2007. As a starting point for the dialogue, participating magazines will publish contributions in their own medium, but they will also be invited to re-publish and discuss contributions by other participants, thereby initiating a multi-lingual, cross cultural dialogue.” *Ctrl+P* looks forward to devoting its first three 2007 issues to *documenta 12 magazines*.

In our last issue, we focused on the praxis of curatorship and promised to do the same in this third issue. To get an idea of how curators theoretically frame their projects, we publish three conceptual/curatorial frameworks: Georg Schöllhammer on *documenta 12 magazines*; *Ctrl+P* co-founder Judy Freya Sibayan on *600 Images/60 Artists/6 Curators/6 Cities: Bangkok/Berlin/London/Los Angeles/Manila/Saigon*, a photography exhibition she conceived and organized as lead-curator; and critic and independent curator Marian Pastor-Roces in collaboration with dramaturge Rustom Bharucha on the international symposium *The Politics of Beauty*. Also, two artists reflect on their projects as co-curators of exhibitions: Sue Hajdu on her multiple positions as artist and co-curator of *My Father Laszlo: Hungary 1956* and Katherine Olston on *No Man's Land*, an online exhibition co-curated with Varsha Nair whom we welcome as our third Editorial Board Member.

All five projects mentioned above are co-curated. Co-curating projects and exhibitions has become an expedient and a key practice in ensuring the success of undertakings the magnitude of projects that aim to problematize the production, circulation, and reception of art—the production of culture—within the context of globalization. *documenta 12 magazine*, *600 Images/60 Artists/6 Curators/6 Cities* and *No Man's Land* for example would not have been possible were it not for the involvement of a network of artist-curators/curators-at-large. We also attribute the configuration of contributors to this current *Ctrl+P* issue to this very same praxis. Finally, in Sibayan's interview of peripatetic and independent curator *par excellence* Hans Ulrich Obrist, we hear from someone who believes in art that is highly informed and cross-fertilized by other domains such as science, architecture, music, philosophy and literature. Obrist is incredibly prolific precisely because he works with great ease, openness and trust in collaborating with artists and designers, architects, writers, physicists, musicians, mathematicians, urban planners, filmmakers – exciting thinkers, practitioners and visionaries – in getting his many many projects ideally realized.

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*documenta 12 magazines* works together with more than 70 print and online periodicals throughout the world. These journals and magazines will discuss the main themes and theories behind *documenta 12* with particular emphasis being placed on reflecting the interests and specific knowledge of the respective local contexts entering into a dialogue with *documenta 12*. These debates will be compiled and published in a series of publications. This “journal of journals”, so to speak, will represent a forum for contemporary aesthetic discourse. This platform will in turn also form part of the *documenta 12* exhibition in Kassel.

Art magazines and journals represent a central interface between the production, discussion and criticism of art. Various positions taken in the discourse are developed here and subjected to ongoing discussion. These periodicals thus play an important role in translating such positions into terms that can be understood and made use of by either a specific audience or a broader public. The journal, and more specifically the art and culture journal, is a medium uniquely devoted to reflecting the relationships between art and theory and between art and the public, as well as dealing with the issues involved in artistic practice and theoretical work. With this project, *documenta 12* will enter into a dialogue with journals worldwide. The means by which this dialogue will take place can be understood within the context of how it will relate to local configurations and translocal intentions. Not the size of the medium is significant here, but rather its relevance. The project will therefore spread its activities among media of different sizes, ranging from micropublications in relatively uncommon languages to leading transnational media, with the aspiration of becoming a platform for the transfer and discursive consolidation of specialized knowledge.

Editors, critics, theorists and artists take part in transregional workshops and electronic working symposia in which the conceptual and theoretical leitmotifs of the various issues of *documenta 12 magazines* will be developed in the form of a dialogue. Each of the journals participating in the network will devote an article or text, section or even an entire issue to one of the themes, utilizing various formats: interviews and essays, features and fiction. By virtue of the autonomous editorial departments participating in the project, the discourse will already be embedded in the local context and conveyed to the corresponding public. It will thus be able to reach very specific audiences all over the world. This will also ensure that disparate local and editorial approaches become discernible. The texts and contexts, as well as the discussions in the workshops and in the individual journals will form the basic material used to put together the *documenta 12 magazine*. This material will be supplemented with pivotal texts on the concept and context of *documenta 12*. Each publication will thus offer a general introduction to one of the core themes of *documenta 12*, providing a reader that addresses not only a specialist public, but the interested layperson as well. The first issue of the *documenta 12 magazine* will be published in winter of 2006 appearing in German and English.

Every response to a question, every theoretical debate, will raise a whole series of further issues: What does cultural transmission mean? Where are the boundaries between theoretical assumptions and actual aesthetic practice? What form do discourses take in alleged centres as opposed to putative peripheral areas? Which shifts in thematic emphasis and changes in paradigm can be ascertained between various disciplines? How does the concept of artistic work differ from other kinds of work, if at all? How does artistic theory differ from practice, and from other kinds of texts, for example from literature and politics, etc.? *documenta 12 magazines* will open up a lasting dialogue.

The project is not about a theoretical self-appraisal carried out by *documenta 12* itself, but rather about the process of developing theories and juxtaposing these with ideas currently circulating in the art discourse and among artists in the international, local or other specific contexts. The point of the project is thus not the role played by discourses in artistic practice, but instead the discursive practice itself, with its media, dialects and transformations in various contexts. Since the project is based in particular on transregional themes and motifs, it can help to elucidate the differences and similarities between local dimensions of aesthetic practice. With information being transmitted directly to particular scenes and editorial departments, it will be possible to involve precisely those persons and audiences around the world who are interested in the relevant issues in exhibition work.

Another objective is to gain broader insights into present-day transformative processes: What kinds of mentalities have evolved in various regions? What kinds of discussions are taking place on the changes occurring in the various economic, social, intellectual and artistic milieus? Which impulses can be derived for the international discourse from these regional self-concepts? An important aim of the network is to provide a broader forum in which authors, theorists and artists who work on the local implementation of discursive practices can expound on their experiences, and compare these experiences with those of people in other situations and contexts. The creation of long-term international cooperations and excellence networks beyond the scope of the project itself should provide inspiration and ideas for local and regional cultural milieus. The project will also endeavour to open up new channels for independent distribution networks, and to encourage flexible forms of translocal communication. Particularly interesting here will be the long-term effects of the project well beyond the period of *documenta 12* itself, such as the development of sustainable information infrastructures, databases and other communication tools.

## 600 Images/60 Artists/6 Curators/6 Cities

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JUDY FREYA SIBAYAN

Cities, curators, artists and art spaces involved in *600 Images* ● Bangkok: Gallery F-Stop@Tamarind Café; Varsha Nair (curator); Artists: Liliane Zumkemi, Jerome Ming, Pinaree Sanpitak, Sutee Kunavichayanont, Montri Teomsombat, Tintin Cooper, Pratchaya Phinthong, Savinee Buranasilapin and Thomas Dannecker, Nabwong Chuaychuwong, Manit Sriwanichpoom ● Berlin: Prenzlauer Berg Museum; Karla Sachse, (curator); Artists: Susanne Ahner, Joerg Borg, Reiko Kammer, Thomas Ness, Peter Oehlmann, Christine Radack, Joachim Richau, Maria Sewcz, Matthias Wermke, Ulrich Wuest ● London: The Great Eastern Hotel; Sara Haq (curator); Artists: Marcus Kern, Margareta Kern, Raimi Gbadamosi, Eldina Begic, Bill Blanco, Saki Satom, Wanda Hu, David Ramkalawon, Ivan Coleman, Miranda Gavin ● Los Angeles: The Brewery;

This project explores the potential of digital networking specifically in co-curating entirely through the internet an exhibition of no mean magnitude to be held simultaneously in six cities around the world and mounted with the modest of resources.

With the current boom of blockbuster exhibitions such as international biennales, triennales and thematic travelling exhibitions held in many cities that are often in urgent need of economic revival, the project of attracting economic capital with social and culture capital as instruments has required that economic capital itself be infused into these international expositions; rightfully so considering the massive infrastructure required to house and install these expositions and the gargantuan task and cost of insuring and transporting hundreds of artists and art works into these places and spaces and back again to the source. Inevitably, only institutions and organizations which are part of the formal apparatus of global capital have the power to produce such events/expositions.

And on the matter of geographies of globalization resulting from these transnational engagements, an imaginary of centers and peripheries, international/global and local, are constructed locating and fixing points of emanation, reception and circulation of ideas and meanings. In the process, a hierarchy of power reinforcing the dominance of these leading institutions is continuously being established and maintained.

Maryrose Cobarrubiazs Mendoza (curator); Artists: Annabelle Aylmer, Kierilyn Barber, Jack Butler, Rachel Fermi, Bia Gayotto, Victoria Martin, Yong Soon Min, Mark Nelson, John O'Brien, Alan Valencia ● Manila: Lumiere Gallery Restaurant; Judy Freya Sibayan (Lead-curator of the project); Artists: Paulo Alcazaren, Poklong Anading, Eddie Boy Escudero, Mark Gary, Neil Lucente+Claudine Sia, Jezer Maducdoc, Jose Enrique Soriano, Neal Oshima, Yumi Roth, MM Yu ● Saigon: The Juice Bar; Sue Hajdu (curator); Artists: Hoang Duong Cam, Phuong M. Do, Ryuzo Fukuhara, David Hodkinson, Nguyen Nhu Huy, Fabrice Lecouffe, Bui The Trung Nam, Rich Streitmatter-Tran, Ngo Dinh Truc, Motoko Uda,

1. Saskia Sassen. "Counter Geography of Globalization," <http://absoluteone.ljudmila.org/globalisation.php>  
2. Ibid.

*600 Images* in Berlin, Bangkok, London, Los Angeles and Manila opened almost simultaneously in early June 2005. Due to difficulties with government policies on foreign exhibitions, *600 Images* in Saigon opened at a much later date.

For the not-so-powerful and not-so-dominant agencies and even individuals needing to take part in the crucial project of production and circulation of meanings and ideas in this era of globalization, what course of engagement and praxes are open to them? Given a network of friends who are cultural workers living and working all over the world, how does this network of individuals undertake a project that can happen simultaneously in several cities and art spaces around the world? How to involve 60 artists creating 600 images, producing 6 exhibitions curated by 6 curators? How can these exhibitions happen with not a single one of the people involved ever travelling to any of the other cities to get the project done; with not a single one of the artworks needing to be insured, and considering the scale of the project, without any huge funding to mount 6 simultaneous exhibitions in 6 cities in different parts of the world?

Saskia Sassen notes that "Globalization and digital networking have contributed to produce a new spatiality for politics, for art, for cultural workers. In doing so they are contributing to the production of countergeographies of globalization."<sup>1</sup> *600 Images/60 Artists/6 Curators/6 Cities: Bangkok/Berlin/ London/Los Angeles/Manila/Saigon* takes advantage of the internet as a dematerialized and democratic space allowing for 1) borderless crossings; 2) freedom from the tyranny of real space and real objects; 3) digital information to be rhizomatically transmitted, trafficked, circulated and networked to all parts of the world and 4) great speed of access amongst a vast number of actors who "inhabit multiple localities but intensely engaged digitally."<sup>2</sup>

What is being proposed is an exhibition developed by six curators living and working in six different cities. Each curator will choose ten photographers whose subject matter is their city. Each artist contributes ten images. The images will be photographed in analog or digital format. All 600 images will eventually be converted and formatted digitally at 240 to 300 dpi black and white jpeg files. In undertaking this project, all communications will be done through the Net. All images will be transmitted through the Net.

Eventually, what this project involves are individuals, not institutions, not nations; restaurant/café galleries and alterantive spaces, not super-museums. The participants will look for project sponsors. And all work will be done gratis. Thus, it involves the use, production and circulation of only social and symbolic capital made possible with near-zero funding. This project does not define places and spaces as in the binary notions of the local and the international, centers and peripheries. Thus, no hierarchy of power is established or maintained. All 6 cities are local. All 6 cities are centers.



600 Images in Berlin at the Prenzlauer Berg Museum



600 Images in Manila at Lumiere Gallery Restaurant

MARIAN PASTOR ROCES  
IN COLLABORATION WITH RUSTOM BHARUCHA

## *Description*

The symposium seeks to focus on critical reflections and theoretical work on beauty both within—and against—the postcolonial reality of Empire. It attempts to build on the critique of liberal humanist lineages of beauty, in order to reflect on its transformative potential in a world marked by the violence of wars, fundamentalisms, and new forms of brutality. Considering beauty in volatile relation to the human condition today, the symposium will examine the dyadic, contrapuntal and oppositional relationships of beauty and power in an imagined intellectual space, informed by, but resistant to the dominant purview of current cultural studies and postcolonial theory. To explore its agenda, the symposium will bring together intellectuals and artists from different disciplines with deep investments in the political production and radical deployment of the beautiful.

## *Conceptual framework*

Beauty was evacuated from libertarian discourse during the last quarter of the 20th century with strategic effect. Jettisoned together with culturalist explanations, formalist habits of mind, and attachments to vestiges of notions of the beautiful in humanism, beauty became the non-topic that highlighted the imperial infrastructure of humanist art, culture, and aesthetics. However, as beauty receded as a useful topic, a great many signs of beauty as instrumentality—or of beauty itself as a phenomenology—within political fields, also became imperceptible.

It is beauty, for example, that at present appears to fill the gaps of the dangerously simplistic outlines of existing and emergent fundamentalisms, thereby igniting their explosive potential. The stark, non-negotiable outlines of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, as proselytized by fundamentalist agencies to millions of believers, are figures fleshed out—substantiated by—incendiary notions of perfection, transfiguration, and ecstasy. At times these tropes are embodied, and carried forth into spectacular deaths.

Beauty has the capacity to locate, to choreograph, to camouflage, to soften, and yet, to trigger perverse articulations of problems of enormous proportion. Horror today is often horror precisely because some form of beauty is experienced spectacularly, with all the protagonists sharing excruciatingly a heightened awareness of a moment of extinction. September 11, for instance, has been visualized and verbalized in the aestheticized imagery of High Modernity. Likewise, international art exhibitions are often defined by the spectacle of appropriating human suffering into art; art that, on one hand, offers insight into that suffering, but which nonetheless also collapses beauty, history, death, and the trafficking of rarefied experiences, into each other's trajectories and narratives.

It is not necessary—and indeed, it would be counter-productive—to regard beauty at this point in time as a privileged site of reflection. The humanist discourses on beauty proved dangerous precisely because of valorizing imperatives that were embedded in the very dynamic of transcendence. The politics of beauty will seek neither to update these discourses in light of conflict today, nor to discern the persistence of these discourses in current power arrangements.

The symposium is being held to complicate the relation between beauty and catastrophe, in ways that recognize the political force of the transcendent and the sublime, which are at once questionable, desirable, and perhaps even detestable in their diverse manifestations and relationships. Against the ethereal assumptions of the transcendent

and the sublime, we would like to engage with the premise that beauty cannot possibly be a bloodless term. And yet, neither can beauty suffused in blood be regarded admirably, in a world in which the scale of catastrophe has rendered intellectual response trivial and inept.

The politics of beauty claims no more than the modest objective of gathering individuals who prioritize complexity in their own fraught relationships with beauty. Such complexity offers no 'antidote' to the horrors of the world, but it offers a possible ground of engaging theory with confrontation politics, beginning with the actual investments of beauty in intellectual and creative work. From this difficult site of personal investments in beauty, the confrontation of war as conflict over beauty will clearly be only one trajectory in the articulation of a demanding activist praxis. But it is a trajectory worth considering, because the critiques of belligerent religious rhetoric, nationalisms, nativisms, and Empire itself, are likely to emerge from precisely the kind of complexity that can anatomize and reconfigure the politics of beauty in our times.

### *Spectrum of possibilities*

The paired terms beauty/politics can provoke meditation on a great many possible domains of experience. The spectrum may include: the body of the suicide bomber blown-up in a beautiful conflation of heavenly and earthly transcendence; the obscene beauty of death machines (i.e. Terminator gear); balletic dances in violent video games; ugliness collapsed into beauty (for example, the simultaneous genealogies of the A-bomb blast and butoh); the relationship of genocide and the sublime; tropes of perfection in bio-engineering; the political uses of utopia, and so forth.

The politics of beauty will pay particular attention to the violent formulation, 'clash of civilizations', which is undergirded by an equally violent and simplistic polarity of ugliness and beauty, indeed imagined to be physically manifest in distinct cultures. (News reports, for example, celebrating Miss Afghanistan's replacement of her burka with a bikini is only one manifestation.)

In addition, as bodies of knowledge that may be considered resistant to the timbre of current events, the traditional aesthetics underlying the Indian concept of *rasa* (juice, flavour) and the Japanese ideal of *hana* (flower), for example, can be exhumed from internment in civilizational discourse, to activate a critical review of 'civilization' itself. But it is expected that the participants will extend this list of possible interventions in entirely unpredictable directions.

The symposium *The Politics of Beauty* was held at the National Art Center, Mt. Makiling, Los Banos, Laguna, and Batangas City, Philippines in January 27-29, 2006.

Participants: Andries Botha (South Africa); Paul Carter (Australia); Mai Ghoussoub (Paris); Simryn Gill (Sydney); Laleen Jayamanne (Sydney); Lee Weng Choy (Singapore); Trin T. Minh-ha (Berkeley, California); Goenawan Mohammad (Indonesia); Gerardo Mosquera (Havana/New York); Kumar Shahani (India); Paul Willemen (Ireland); Marian Pastor Roces (Manila); Rustom Bharucha (Kolkata)

## No Man's Land

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### KATHERINE OLSTON

The project *No Man's Land* invites sixty-five participants from diverse locations and backgrounds to utilise cyber space as the primary platform to present works addressing the territorially imagined line of the border, its powers of inclusion and exclusion, and its ability to simultaneously promote both unity and conflict.

An initiative of Bangkok-based collective *Womanifesto*, *No Man's Land* creates a kind of web gallery where visitors entering the site can scroll down a list of participants' names and choose to view a specific work. Works include short video pieces, single or multiple still images, sound pieces and text. The site will also include a web-board where participating artists and site visitors can post comments about the work or any other related issues. Active since May 2006, the project will continue to develop and

evolve as participants up-load their work throughout the year. It is hoped that the project will be widely accessible online to a diverse range of people in numerous locations.

In light of the current global political situation where borders and nations are so evangelistically defended and too often bloodily contested, Varsha Nair and I as co-curators decided to mount a project reflecting these issues. All one needs to do is turn on the television, pick up a paper, listen to a story of a family member or a friend, or even just to step out of your own front door to be reminded of the effects of nationalism on our lives. Furthermore, the project aims to establish a forum to generate intellectual exchange and communicate and raise awareness of other related experiences, creating a flow of information about how different social institutions, economic systems, cultures, religions and ethnicities co-exist in contemporary society.

Borders possess the capacity to create a sense of belonging and security, yet they also often promote a homogenous idea of identity and cultural value and therefore often may not allow for diversity, resulting in nationalistic narratives often being superimposed over ethnically diverse groups of people in an attempt to ignore or obliterate difference. In order then to embrace and to acknowledge difference, participants from diverse locations and backgrounds were invited to partake in the project and asked to create pertinent works reflecting upon contemporary and personal experiences of nationalism. Whilst the project will evolve as new work is added, the work currently contained in the website already acts as a map, reflecting the range of personal experiences surrounding the issues aforementioned.

Karla Sachse's four-image documentation of a real installation in Berlin, entitled, *rabbits at no man's land of THE WALL in Berlin*, draws our attention to an era now past, to a space that was neither East nor West, a no-man's land beneath the Berlin Wall where rabbits lived in burrows, oblivious to the politically-charged nature of the territory they occupied.

Built for perhaps similarly ambivalent creatures, *Babyklappe* by Kai Kaljo provides us with a glimpse of a different kind of 'no-man's land'. His eerie single, still-image shows us a picture taken at a hospital in Dortmund in 2006 of a special, purpose-built, baby-sized door where unwanted babies can be deposited, abandoned to the care of the hospital. The text accompanying the image reads, 'On the right side, there are instructions in German, Polish and Turkish, that say once you put the baby in and close the window you cannot reopen the babyklappe anymore. Some pens and paper can be seen on the left side, for notes one may want to leave. The locals say it is a relatively new thing in Dortmund.' Although not dealing directly with the physical site of the border, the work forces us to confront the implications of the displacement of peoples across borders as a result of war, persecution and/or financial hardship.

In a touching and multi-layered video work, *Great Expectations*, artist Renata Poljak takes us on a journey to her familial home in Split, a city on the shores of the Adriatic Sea in present day Croatia. The sunniest place in Europe, Split has recently been overcome with ostentatious holiday houses clustered around its coast. She narrates the story of her uncle, who upon inheriting the family home, promptly sells the land directly in front of his traditional old home for an immense profit. The new owners build a towering two-story mansion and the uncle thus forfeits his million-dollar view, having now only a view of the red tiles of the roof of the house in front. The video also includes a disturbing image of nationalistic football violence: Hajduk football fans setting fire to a car with the intent to burn its passenger alive. The work addresses concerns of property ownership and territory, and the way in which acts of violence may be committed under the guise of nationalistic ideals no matter how misguided or misinformed they may be.

In bringing together such a volume of works (there are presently 65 artists contributing to the project), *No Man's Land* presents an opportunity for participants and site visitors to explore and experience multiple view points surrounding the key issues of the project. Through the overlaying of sometimes radically different and at other times,

URL of *No Man's Land*:  
<http://www.womanifesto.com/en/events.asp>

Yoshiko Shimada, Barbara Lattanzi, Renata Poljak, Tejal Shah, Phaptawan Suwannakudt, Terry Berkowitz, Kai Kaljo, Dragana Zarevac, Roland Bergere, Mani Sriwanichpom, Susanne Ahner, Pisithpong Siraphisut, Patricia Reed, Mella Jaarsma, Mideo Cruz, Mona Burr, Manu Luksch/Ambient TV, Karla Sachse, Martin Zet, Wen Yau, Traci Tullius, Tintin Cooper, Jerome Ming, Estelle Cohenny-Vallier, Katherine Olston, Pinaree Sanpitak, Sutee Kunavichayananda, Lawan Jirasuradej, Sara Haq, Karen Demavivas, Nigel Helyer, Nilofar Akmut, Andrew Burrell, Pamela Lofts, Beatriz Albuquerque, Kirsten Justesen, Maryrose Mendoza, Hsu Su-Chen, Michael Bielicky, thingsmatter, Arahmaiani, Kate Stannard, Judy Freya Sibayan, Chaw Ei Thein, John Hopkins, Farida Batool, Baiju Parthan, Liliane Zumkemi, Noor Effendy Ibrahim, Tamara Moyzes, Ana Bilankov, Chakkrit Chinnok, Suzann Victor, Marketa Bankova, Sue Hajdu, Jim Previtt, Keiko Sei, Suvita Charanwong, Noraset Vaisayakul, Konrad, Reiko Kammer, Silvia Pastore, Felipe, Chitra Ganesh, Varsha Nair.



startlingly similar points of view, No Man's Land aims to challenge pre-existing notions surrounding nationalism and to highlight what it means to live in the increasingly globalised world of today.

From a curatorial perspective and considering the issue of borders, it is interesting to note the project has largely been administrated and curated over the internet. Participants were gathered through existing professional networks, and were invited to partake via email. As a co-curator to the project, it has been interesting liaising with artists who I have never met, and perhaps never, in fact will meet. My relationship with them is purely online and I realise that I do not know their gender, their age, or their nationality. Moreover, Varsha who is based in Bangkok, and I communicate almost exclusively through email and thus it makes little difference to the project whether I am in Chiang Mai or Sydney. The curation/creation of the project happens mostly within the borderless scape of cyber space, in yet another kind of no man's land. Indeed, the no man's land, in all its diversity, is a potent space deserving consideration in the increasingly globalised world of today.

## Surrendering to Alchemy: An Interim Reflection on Articulating Multiple Positions as Artist and Curator

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SUE HAJDU

I am currently at an interim point preparing an exhibition at Casula Powerhouse Arts Center, Sydney. The project, entitled *My Father Laszlo: Hungary 1956*, fuses my roles as curator and artist in working with my father's oeuvre on a what is becoming an increasingly personal art project.

My father, Laszlo Hajdu born in 1929, was an amateur photographer living in Budapest at the time of the Hungarian uprising of October 1956. As a very talented enthusiast who had spent 17 years photographing, his instinctive reaction to the outbreak of this popular revolt against Soviet domination was to take up his camera. For the 12 days of the uprising he documented urban destruction, symbolic gestures of nationalist sentiment, the dead and the living on Budapest's streets. In all, he produced 140 negatives at great physical and political risk, a risk that was repeated when he escaped to Austria in December 1956 with the 12 rolls of film.

The negatives came in to my possession in 1996. Since then, I have worked with them in the creation of my own photographic work, in curating exhibitions of my father's work, and in writing about his work.<sup>1</sup> As the power and significance of my father's photographs became increasingly evident to me, I became convinced of the need to research them thoroughly. I undertook a series of oral history interviews with my father and we also visited Budapest together in order for us to find the exact location of his photographs on streets still imprinted in his memory after 44 years. This experience is one of my most joyful memories, partly because history and photography are passions that we shared, and also because the process created a generational link of mind and body between us. The photographs have become a part of my memory and my being. The poignancy of this knowledge is doubly intense, as my father's death last year means that I am now the sole custodian of his history as a photographer of those events.

As a lasting testament to my father's work and to the event itself, I wanted to create a book of his images coupled with texts, drawn from my interviews and research.

1. *Acceptance: on 1956: desire and the unknowable* can be viewed at <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/ojs/index.php/portal/article/view/86>

(Note: The above URL brings you to the page of the abstract where you can click on the full PDF file)



The vision of a father-daughter collaborative project became a passionate driving force and I proposed an exhibition of the work to Casula partly in the hope that it might be easier to produce the book in the context of an exhibition.

Writing with sincerity is always demanding. Drafting the text for the book was a challenging personal endeavor, as it involved examining my own feelings towards this event that had a direct impact on my identity as Hungarian diaspora living in Australia, and also a close psychological scrutinizing of my father. This took me through a spectrum of emotional reactions from awe to disappointment, not to mention rather sharp self-reflection about the not-so-flattering similarities that I found between us.

The dream to publish the book washed ashore like junk from a shipwreck last year. My father's unexpected death in February coincided with professional and financial crises, resulting in multiple psychological blows. In the ensuing period of depression, I lost the moral and psychic resources to pursue the project, the courage or desire to even open the draft of the book, and the creativity or confidence to create my own work. Dry, empty, mute and confused, all my energy was taken up in simply surviving the grief. Life became a void. As I slowly emerged from the depression, I desperately sought to fill up this void with a frenzy of teaching and management of *a little blah blah*, the artists' initiative that I co-direct.

This was my first experience of death. What can I say of it other than that I have found it to be profound, mysterious, highly individual and alchemic. Producing any art during this period was impossible; nevertheless, while I hibernated the artist in me matured. Perhaps it was the alchemy of death, perhaps the strange confidence one gains when one has lost so much and there is no more to lose. Or perhaps it was the result of the quality of the work that I was being exposed to internationally in the meantime, due to the much more active art management role that I had taken on. The solo work that I subsequently produced in early 2006 was drier, wittier, more risk-taking and more abstracted than previous work. I was now willing to work with realpolitik rather than resisting it. More than anything, my experience of grief meant that there were now psychological places to which I was no longer willing to venture; places such as art that is heavy, dark, or obsessively self-focussed.

*My Father Laszlo: Hungary 1956*, then, is being created in the wake of barrenness and ruin. As a project, it has come together under strained circumstances. Quite frankly, I was ready to abandon the project, despite having secured public funding in 2004. I was not doing what I had really wanted to do, which was to produce the book. I did not welcome the thought of returning to the subject of my father—of re-opening recent wounds. The title of the show had not even been my decision, but it was too late to change it. I felt like a mother cat which had abandoned her kittens.

In the ensuing discussions with Nick Tsoukas, who had recently joined Casula as artistic director, we re-negotiated a new framework: co-development of the project while I undertook a residency in the lead-up to the exhibition. Nick's contribution as co-curator is vital in supplying emotional and critical distance, and also flows into one of mentor or sounding-board as I fluctuate between positions of co-curator and artist.

This raises the question of how I conceive of these two roles—can I keep the strict division of a dual role, or is my role necessarily hybrid? The situation is, of course, much more complex, as can be appreciated from the detailed background that I have provided above—for my position in such a project is multiple and sometimes conflicting. I am also the daughter, fellow photographer, member of the Hungarian diaspora/community, the critic, the custodian—the child and the adult. As pointed

*Amateur History Lessons*  
*My Father Laszlo: Budapest 1956*  
September 23- October 21, 2006 at  
Casula Powerhouse Centre/Artspace,  
Sydney. (composite details)



out most delicately by Nick, one of the challenges in this project is how I negotiate a voice within this schizophrenia.

Thus, this project presents immense personal and professional challenges. Due to the psychological difficulties involved, I feel that I have no alternative but to work on the conceptual development of the project in the organic and instinctive way that I sometimes work as an artist, rather than the more decisive, procedural and rational way that I tend to work as a curator. For the moment I am keeping that personality at a distance—and allowing the personalities of artist/daughter to slowly return to the material and merge into it without the pressure of urgency—although I am very aware that this curatorial attitude will have to kick in shortly if I am to realize the project in time.

In the constant kaleidoscopic re-appraisal of my roles in this project, I wonder how precisely I can characterize myself as curator, beyond the practical, managerial manifestation of this role, and the other obvious manifestation as the “carer” or custodian of my father’s work. I beg to differ with the last issue of *Ctrl+P* in which Yumi Roth Janairo and Reg Yuson’s projects were presented as “self-curated.” I feel that such a descriptor diminishes the activities of artists, who are constantly organizing and successfully realizing their own solo shows in their capacity as artists. The infiltration of the concept of curation into this equation strikes me as another example of the infantilization artists can undergo in the power dynamic that has emerged between artists and curators in the past two decades. If a particular artist’s show is to be described as “self-curated” then the curatorial role must represent some kind of “added-value” beyond that of project management. It is this “added-value” of my approach as curator in this project that I am currently attempting to articulate.

These are questions that I imagine I will be able to answer more clearly in a few weeks time. In the meantime, there are many lingering questions, possibly much more significant, which in the chatter of my mind I am constantly asking my schizophrenic personalities: How to work with passion in the ruins of a dream? How to ‘give voice’ when I am feeling mute? How to avoid presenting a complex and unresolved history as a neatly packaged explanation? How to negotiate between art and museum paradigms? How to return to a terrain of ‘heavy art’ and stay true to the spirit of my father’s work without losing the ground that I have gained as an artist? How to present the unfinished, when what I am actually longing for is transcendence? How to surrender to the contingencies of this project and allow the possibility of further alchemy?

## Hans Ulrich Obrist is Interviewed by Judy Freya Sibayan

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**Judy Freya Sibayan:** This is a daunting task, to interview someone who has done and published more than 500 interviews of scientist, writers, musicians, architects and pretty much everyone who matters in the artworld; and who, although formerly connected institutionally as the curator of the *Migrateurs* Exhibition Program of the Musée d’Art Moderne de la ville de Paris since 1993 and now Director of International Projects of the Serpentine Gallery in London, is also considered the peripatetic independent curator *par excellence* having worked on exhibitions and other projects in some sixty cities all over the world.

Let me therefore begin by asking about the beginnings of your journey as a nomadic curator. Edward Said wrote “A beginning is not only an action; it is also a frame of mind, a kind of work, an attitude, a consciousness<sup>1</sup>...beginning is *making* or *producing difference*...difference which is the result of combining the already-familiar with the novelty of human work in language...this interplay between the new and the customary

1. Edward Said, *Beginnings. Intention and Method* (London: Granta Publications, 1984), p. xxi.

without which (*ex nihilo nihil fit*) a beginning cannot really take place...beginnings confirm, rather than discourage, a radical severity and verify evidence of at least some innovation – of *having begun*.”<sup>2</sup>

I began reading your work in 1997 right after having received your email invitation for me to contribute a work for *Cities on the Move*, the massive traveling exhibition you co-curated with Hou Hanru. The very first thing I read was “Mind Over Matter: Hans Ulrich Obrist Talks with Harald Szeemann,” published in *Artforum* in November 1996. Interestingly enough besides both being Swiss, you and Szeemann also share a history of being self-created curators with Szeemann curating his first show in 1957 and you in 1991. If Szeemann, who died only last year and who, as one of the most formidable curators of the last century, virtually invented the role of the independent curator and is best remembered for his seminal exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form: Live in Your Head* 1969, his *Happening and Fluxus* 1970, *Documenta V museum of 100 days* 1972 (exhibitions embodying the advent of process as art), what would you consider your innovation away from the work of curators of Szeemann’s generation – of you having begun as a curator?



*Cities on the Move* curators Hans Ulrich Obrist and Hou Hanru with Judy Freya Sibayan at PS1 Contemporary Art Center on the opening day of the exhibition in 1998. Sibayan performs her body gallery *Scapular Gallery Nomad*. On view at the gallery is Cecilia Avanceña’s *Sacred Heart*

**Hans Ulrich Obrist:** To begin with, the beginnings, the start of my curatorial work was an exhibition called *World Soup* in 1991, which took place in a kitchen in Switzerland. It’s very interesting that you quote Edward Said about beginnings not only being “an action; it is also a frame of mind, a kind of work, an attitude, a consciousness... beginning is making or producing difference.” I think *World Soup* had a lot to do with the beginning of the 90s and how it marked a break with the spirit of the 80s – a decennial shift of sorts. In the 80s the art world had grown a lot – things just grew bigger and bigger. I started my research in the mid to late 80s by talking to artists, having conversations with artists like Fischli & Weiss, Alighiero e Boetti—the late, great Italian conceptualist—discussing the necessity of exhibitions. Conducting research in this way felt appropriate, like having an exhibition in a kitchen, in a place where you least expect it. I felt it was a necessity, somehow. The domesticity and small scale of *World Soup* lent itself to types of work that might not have been well-suited to monumental spaces such as large museums, and this approach played a significant role in my subsequent projects. The kitchen show also has a lot to do with rumour, and in particular, of how awareness of exhibitions can actually spread through rumours and word of mouth.

Richard Wentworth explored this idea some years ago when he reran the kitchen show; the project was transformed from gossip to show, from the show back to gossip, into an event, followed by the catalogue material, its dissemination, more rumours and new projects. The kitchen show also has to do with the production of communities, of what Rem Koolhaas calls ‘bonding and intersecting of intelligences’ whereby exhibitions evoke spiraling references to other generations, fields of research, differing individual approaches, sensibilities and so forth.

Earlier you asked me about Harald Szeemann and how his practice has affected me. Naturally Szeemann has been a key influence, particularly through his exhibition *Der Hang Zum Gesamtkunstwerk*, which was an exhibition that I visited many times as an adolescent in Switzerland in 1983. I was excited by how he posited the exhibition as a form of knowledge production, and how exhibitions can function as a medium. In addition to Szeemann there are many others who have influenced my work—you could say that I have a promiscuity of heroes, or a promiscuity of influences. I think the late Willem Sandberg, director of the Stedelijk Museum in the mid 20th Century, was a great influence, especially through his radio programs and the idea of the museum as laboratory, connecting to the work of Alexander Dorner and his whole idea of the museum as *kraftwerk*. There’s also Johannes Cladders, director of the Abteiberg Museum from the late 60s to the mid 80s—his idea of the museum in a house was an incredible laboratory of its time, presenting some of the first exhibitions of artists like Lawrence Weiner in the 60s.



Hans Ulrich Obrist holding his *Nano Museum* with Gabriel Orozco's work on exhibit. Founded in 1994, it was carried by Obrist and many other people. As a travelling museum, it did not belong to any geography but was between geographies. (Based on Obrist's June 6, 2000 email correspondence with Sibayan)



Gilbert & George's exhibition at the *Nano Museum*.

Photos copyright Wolfgang Woessner

3. Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), p. 4.

In terms of other pioneers, Seth Siegelaub has always interested me, especially for the idea of books being exhibition spaces – one just has to think of his series of publications on early conceptual shows in the late 60s. And, of course, Lucy Lippard – her instruction-based and more conceptual shows were certainly a great influence for my later projects such as *Do It*. The whole of the 20th Century has been full of incredibly interesting curatorial models. We could go back as far as Herwarth Walden, El Lissitzky or even to Félix Fénéon, art critic, anarchist and closest ally of Georges Seurat. Fénéon talked about different ways of triggering or creating pedestrian bridges between art and its publics, which is very stimulating. Similarly, I admire the work of Harry Graf Kessler, a German pioneer of the Weimar years.

When thinking of pioneers, it's interesting to consider that what they achieve is not only about the new, but often also about memory. I was listening to Eric Hobsbawm in London the other day, and he suggested we should start an international protest against forgetting. I think that's definitely true for curating, and in order to produce this 'difference' that Edward Said refers to, it can also be useful to think about how memory can help us produce this difference by combining curatorial history with the search for what is vital or urgent in our own times.

If the kitchen show was a manifesto of sorts, it was equally a matter of self-organization, of not waiting until one is offered or asked to curate a show or to fill a space. My curatorial projects have never been based on the idea of filling space, but rather have derived from the desire to define a necessity and then to use the space according to this necessity. This took the form of a kitchen for *World Soup*, a series of international museums for a show like *Cities on the Move*, a biennale for *Utopia Station* or it could again be a living house for a show like *Retrace Your Steps, Remember Tomorrow* at Sir John Soane's Museum in London or *El aire es azul – the air is blue* at the Barragán House Museum in Mexico. The kitchen show served as the start of a series of exhibitions in domestic environments, including a show of works by Gerhard Richter in Nietzsche's living room in Sils Maria, Switzerland (where Nietzsche wrote *Zarathustra*) or the exhibition of works by Christian Boltanski in the Monastery Library in St. Gallen, also in Switzerland in the early 90s.

Later exhibitions in house museums such as *Retrace Your Steps, Remember Tomorrow* at Sir John Soane's Museum involved works by many artists, including Richard Hamilton, Cerith Wyn Evans, Douglas Gordon and Rosemary Trockel. For the show in Luis Barragán's house, the intention was to increase the dialogue between art and architecture in the 21st Century by inviting artists to re-inhabit or to reactivate the house. I'm currently working on a project that will take place in the Casa Lorca, Granada, in which art and poetry, art and literature will be put together in a contact zone, using the friendship between Lorca and Dali as a vehicle to create more of a dialogue between art and literature in our time. Artists invited to participate include Gilbert & George, Cerith Wyn Evans, Jonh Armleder, Tacita Dean, Pedro Reyes, Dominique González-Foerster, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Roni Horn, Cristina Iglesias, Leonora Carrington, Trisha Donnelly and Franz West. Once again, the vector for the project is a house museum.

**Judy Freya Sibayan:** Because we can now speak of a curatorial practice that is a critical praxis, I take liberty in framing this next question on curatorship within the history of criticism. The most self-reflexive critics have accepted what historically has been plotted as the function of criticism now thoroughly evacuated—now lacking social function and together with its object, now having “become marginal.”<sup>3</sup> To Hal Foster for example, the present decay of the project of the Enlightenment, in which practical criticism is founded is

due less to artistic transgression...or critical deconstruction...than to the “colonization of the life world” by the economic and bureaucratic, technical and scientific spheres, the former thoroughly instrumental, the latter not value-free

so much as value oblivious. In this administration both art and criticism...function “to represent humane marginality.”... This erosion in the place and function of art and criticism is no less due to the erosion of the bourgeois public sphere. Criticism emerged from this sphere as a form of resistance and consensus—of bourgeois class consolidation. When in the face of the demands of other classes, the bourgeois had to forego its own public values as political liabilities, ...this sphere was given over to capital and the state... This simultaneously reduced the role of culture as a form of consumption and control, the ultimate effect is that today art is regarded as mostly entertainment or spectacle (of interest to the public primarily as financial item) and criticism as so many opinions to consume... art is today the plaything of (corporate) patrons whose relation to culture is less one of noble obligation than of overt manipulation—of art as a sign of power, prestige, publicity... mastery of accumulation is not enough for this class; it must control signification as well... capital has now penetrated the sign thoroughly... In this situation the committed artist must not only resist the commodification of culture and “implosion” of meaning in the media but also seek out new publics and construct counter representations, and the committed critic historically suspended “between inchoate amateurism and socially marginal professionalism,” must use this out-of-placeness to speak precisely, impertinently out of place.<sup>4</sup>

4. Foster, pp. 4-5.

Eventually to Foster, criticism “enters with its object in an investigation of its own place and function as a cultural practice and in an articulation of other such psychosocial representations; as it does so, it seeks to separate these practices critically and to connect them discursively in order to call them into crisis (which is after all what criticism means) so as to transform them.”<sup>5</sup>

5. Ibid., p. 3.

Given this history and present reality of any critical practice, what should the committed curator do?

**Hans Ulrich Obrist:** In terms of this question and the economic implications, I would like to send you the following ping pong with Noah Horowitz with whom we discussed these issues earlier this year at length for a publication he made at the Courtauld Institute.

*Noah Horowitz:* Since your debut in the early 1990s, the economic stakes of exhibition making have risen dramatically. Have you advised any corporate collections? I’m equally interested to learn about the financial or administrative responsibilities you have undertaken to secure the production of your projects.

*Hans Ulrich Obrist:* I have been on boards of companies such as EVN (Energie-Veresorgung Niederosterreich), the Austrian electricity concern, and the FRAC (le Frac des pays de la Loire), but the former was a curatorial board—a think-tank of sorts—while the latter was a collection advisory position I held only for a half dozen years in the mid-1990s. Far more important are the conversations I’ve been having with private collectors to solicit funding for museums.

*Noah Horowitz:* I suppose this reflects the ongoing privatisation of museums and art institutions?

*Hans Ulrich Obrist:* Fundraising has become elemental to the curatorial repertoire: to raise the budget of one’s exhibition is key in terms of securing the continuation of programming autonomy. The American model of so doing often leads to a dependency on the trustees who finance the museum. Meanwhile, the model pursued by many publicly funded European museums has led to the



dangers of new political dependencies. To reconnect to the beginning of this discussion, it seems interesting to think about a ‘third way’ between the European and U.S. system capable of recombining positive attributes of the two, ultimately striving to preserve this autonomy of programming. Ida Gianelli’s Directorship of the Castello di Rivoli (Turin) offers an excellent example of how these negotiations can be successfully approached: the museum is part-public, part-private and it implements a proactive system of checks and balances to mitigate against conflicting interests. This is part of my work as well and I’m very interested in how we best do so without compromising the quality of exhibitions. In trying to reinvent exhibition formats, I’ve begun to appreciate the valuable role of archiving and would like to experiment with this down the road. Since the late 1990s, I’ve tested various aspects of large-scale shows (Laboratorium or Cities on the Move), monographic shows and shows in historical and house museums where one would not expect to find contemporary exhibitions. In other instances, as with the museum in progress or *point d’ironie*, I’ve tried to tweak the manner in which content reaches the viewer—it travels to them—while in virtual exhibitions like *Do It*, the content remains to be actualised. The virtual shows obviously do not concern objects and so possess an interesting affinity with time-based exhibitions such as the opera Philippe Parreno and I are curating for Alex Poots’ *Manchester International Festival* (Summer, 2007). As nothing remains of all this but books and documentation—or sometimes a libretto according to which a show can be restaged—I think it could be interesting to eventually reinvent the notion of a public collection; toward collections which are less about single objects than constellations; about collections of exhibitions. In terms of grand ensembles, it would be interesting to press the frontier of how non-objects and quasi-objects trigger new forms of sustained long-term situations. The Dia Foundation did this in a formidable way with Walter de Maria’s Earth Room (1977), for example.

The main problem is the moment a curator starts to think too much about the collection of his/her home museum, this influences, and even compromises, the projects therein. All of a sudden, work gets shown with an eye toward future acquisition and you risk weakening the quality of exhibitions. Exhibitions are exhibitions, everything else is everything else?

**Judy Freya Sibayan:** One last question about my dreaming you, e-flux, curatorship and utopia. I don’t know if I ever mentioned that my life-long performance the Museum of Mental Objects (MoMO) germinated from a dream where you figured prominently. In May 1999 right after we opened *Cities on the Move* at the Hayward Gallery, I had this dream where you were the only other character. You stand in one of the empty galleries at the second floor of a very white, very modern museum in some city in Europe and you throw a boomerang out into the cantilevered terrace of the museum. Strangely enough the boomerang does not return to you. Instead it lands on the floor of the terrace. I run to pick it up. White gauze has been tightly wound around it, covering it entirely. Written repeatedly on the gauze are the words : “the visible is made visible by the invisible.” Thus the enigmatic dream ended.

In 2004 you contributed to the *Exhibition as a Dream* issue of *MJ Manifesta Journal*. The blurb in *e-flux* reads: Dreams “have become one of the major cultural paradigms of the last century. They are a key concept in the Freudian understanding of the unconscious, a crossing point of the personal and social, and a compromise between desires and cultural repression. Moreover, the concept of dreams has an even more obvious social dimension as ‘social dreams’, utopian way of thinking. In both contexts, dreams are tightly connected to curatorial work [as they] point to the role of the curator’s unconscious.”<sup>6</sup>

6. From e-flux 11/11/2004 email announcement (www.e-flux.com )

A few nights ago, I went to sleep slipping easily into a dream state trying to work out the first statement of this third question. The next day at the office, I had to clean my e-flux mail box of some 1000 mails as far as 2004. They were causing my email to bog down. This meant I had to read each and every one of them again to see what I needed to save. It was not so strange therefore to come across the 2004 announcement of the MJ Journal where you contributed a piece on curatorship and dreams. After deleting about 60 e-flux mails, I decided to clean my spam mail box which I never ever open. And again it was not strange at all that it was here I found hidden the July 4, 2006 e-flux mail on your latest book *dontstopdontstopdontstopdontstop*. These two announcements two years apart, connect by way of sharing one significant word: utopia. Stefano Boeri reviewed your book and an excerpt reads:

Obrist has been working for years [...] scattered materials of contemporary art. He is working on the existing state of things with the obsessive singlemindedness of one who knows that he cannot help but travel the entire length and breadth and who is waging a utopian struggle—and this is indeed a utopia in its pure form—against amnesia.<sup>7</sup>

7. From e-flux 7/5/2006 email announcement ([www.e-flux.com](http://www.e-flux.com))

Please talk about your work as a curator in relation to the dream of and the desire and struggle for the impossibly ideal.

**Hans Ulrich Obrist:** In response to your question about dreams, desires and unrealized projects, the key issue really has to be that of pushing the envelope, of changing the rules of the game, or the production of reality—what Roger Penrose called ‘the road to reality.’ The whole idea of utopia in my curatorial practice has, I think, very much to do with what Yona Friedman calls ‘concrete utopia’. It’s not just about putting things where society often wants them to be, or to explore the unbuildable or unrealized for the sake of doing so. Rather, it’s about making those projects that are perhaps not possible within the general framework of art institutions and other existing structures by finding ways to make such things possible.

There are different categories of ‘unbuiltness’, such as projects not carried out as they were planned, or never really intended by their instigators to be realized. There are also projects that were begun but never completed. That is how it was defined by George Collins in *Unbuilt America*.<sup>8</sup> There are obviously projects that are too big to be realized, projects too small to be realized, projects that were forgotten, projects that have been censored or self-censored. The latter is an idea that Doris Lessing pointed out to me in a conversation – books that have never been written or artworks that were never made because of some degree of self-censorship or restraint. People can sometimes be afraid of pooling knowledge, of sharing material until they have reached the point that they wish to get to with it. Likewise, people can be afraid of undertaking certain projects for one reason or another.

8. *Unbuilt America: forgotten architecture in the United States from Thomas Jefferson to the space age*. By Alison Sky and Michelle Stone; introduction by George R. Collins, McGraw-Hill, New York. c1976.

Owing to competitions for commissions in the field of architecture, there is obviously a very strong practice of publishing unrealized projects, and in doing so, one effectively creates or produces a reality, which I find interesting. Unrealized projects by even the most famous artists are very often not published. So it strikes me as being a very strong reservoir of ideas. Since 1990 I have been archiving such forgotten, suppressed, lost or otherwise unrealized projects, and have come to see them as a kind of pool out of which the idea is to help bring them to light and in some cases to bring them to fruition. In 1997 Guy Tortosa and I published a book called *Unbuilt Roads*. We actually gathered about 107 unrealized projects by artists from all over the world, the result of an international research project, presented in the form of a book.

Again, there are all kinds of projects that we could list—public commissions, public artworks that for political, economic or technical reasons have not been realized. Then there are the ‘desk projects’ as I call them, which are developed by artists but



haven't been commissioned so remain in the artist's desk—they don't have anybody to realize them. Then there are failed projects, missed opportunities. As Cedric Price put it, "The failure of big ideas are sometimes more impressive than the successes of little ones."

And as you know, I have conducted more than 500 interviews over the last few years and there is only one recurring question that I pose in each of these interviews with artists, architects, scientists and musicians, and this question concerns their favourite unrealized project. That's obviously another archive of the unrealized. That was actually step two. The first step was the book you mentioned on dreams, on the unrealized projects about dreams published<sup>9</sup> for the Venice Biennale. We collected more than 100 artists' dreams in a small booklet, which were printed in a large edition of 50,000 as part of the 48th Venice Biennale and given away for free. Then the next chapter is *The Agency for Unrealised Projects* which Julia Peyton-Jones and I will develop in the coming years as part of our plans for the Serpentine Gallery in London, and which will be done in collaboration with e-flux.

What is interesting, as I said earlier, is that even the most famous artists' unrealized projects are very little known. For example, Gerhard Richter planned to exhibit a ready-made object, a 1.5 metre-tall motor-driven clown-doll that stood up and then collapsed into itself. And at that time in the 60s, it cost 600 deutschmarks and he just simply couldn't afford it. As Richter said, "I regret not having bought that clown."

It all comes back to the idea of the possibility of the impossible or the impossibility of the possible. In relation to this I'd like to mention the *Interview Marathon* that Rem Koolhaas and I organized this summer for the Serpentine Gallery. My interest in interviews was actually triggered originally as a student by two very long conversations that I read. One was by Pierre Caban with Marcel Duchamp, that took place over the course of three long afternoon sessions. The other was by David Sylvester with Francis Bacon, and was a conversation over a period of many years, subsequently compiled into a book. This served as the spark for my interest in the idea of sustained conversations, of interviews that occur over long periods of time. This naturally led to the *Interview Marathon*. These did not take the form of sustained conversations as I have been conducting with a variety of artists, from Gerhard Richter to Trisha Donnelly, spanning many generations. But rather it was a 24-hour interview marathon that attempted to create a non-stop portrait of a city.

There is a kind of impossibility when trying to create such a portrait of a city, whether through photography, painting or words, because the city has already changed by the time anyone tries to describe it. The sheer complexity of the city, I think, resists this idea of a synthetic image. So the *Marathon* was not intended as a form of talk show, but really as researched conversations developed with Rem Koolhaas. The intention was not just to document things that have already happened but somehow to help produce reality and to contribute to connecting the community. We very much saw it as ongoing research that can lead to exhibitions, books, buildings and all kinds of things. The people in the Interview Marathon in London were from all kinds of fields: art, architecture, science, literature and so on. This is the list of speakers: David Adjaye, Brian Eno, Charles Jencks, Sir Kenneth Adams, Zaha Hadid, Yinka Shonibare, Tim O'Toole, Hanif Kureishi, Ken Loach, Susan Hiller, Jude Kelly, Tim Newburn, Tony Elliott, David Greene, Sam Hardingham, Tom MacCarthy, Scott Lash, Michael Clark, Richard Wentworth, Marcus du Sautoy, Pedro Ferreira, Ron Arad, Jane & Louise Wilson, Cerith Wyn Evans, Squarepusher, Peter Saville, Roger Hiorns, Olivia Plender, Sophie Fiennes, Russell Haswell, Anat Ben David, Damien Hirst, Ant Genn, Shumon Basar, Markus Miessen, Abake, Iain Sinclair, Paul Elliman, Gilbert & George, Caruso St. John, Ryan Gander, Julia Peyton-Jones, Eleanor Bron, Giles Deacon, Katie Grand, Doreen Massey, Mary Midgley, Mark Cousins, Patrick Keiller, Jonathan Glancey, Gustav Metzger, Isaac Julien, Gautam Malkani, Richard Hamilton, Peter Cook, Chantal Mouffe, Eyal Weizman,

Hussein Chalayan, Tariq Ali, Marina Warner, Milan Rai, Doris Lessing. And then phone interviews by Eric Hobsbawm, Dame Marjorie Scardino and Denise Scott Brown. It was a sort of a Warholian time capsule of London in 2006. The idea for the format began last year in Stuttgart as part of the Theatre of the World Festival. I was invited to develop an evening program and decided to address the city itself by asking whether one can really map a city and its constituent parts by means of a series of conversations with the people there. Italo Calvino was a trigger for this in many ways, particularly as regards his ideas about the ‘invisible city’. It’s also about changing the rules of the game, of facilitating discursive events and exploring how to engage with discourse in a different way.

Considering the idea of different rules of the game in terms of exhibitions, it has very much to do with the idea of display features. We can often only remember shows in terms of collective memory, from key moments when new forms are invented, new display features, new ways of presenting art. In terms of discourse, events such as symposia, conferences and panels, unlike exhibitions, which have been investigated throughout the 20th Century, have followed a very standard format—two hours of talking, one and a half hours of roundtable discussion, a Q and A. Maybe someone will make a short speech, a longer speech; there are questions; there is a dinner. So I think it is interesting to apply this idea of changing the rules of the game for more discursive events in a similar way to what we have done for exhibitions. This is something we tried to achieve with *Art and Brain*, a conference I organized in Jülich, Germany, in 1994. The official conference was purposefully cancelled so that what actually took place was one long coffee break.

Another new project I am working on is called *Formula*. It’s a forthcoming book, a printed project with the working subtitle *Out of the Equation, Roads to Reality*. It is inspired by Roger Penrose’s groundbreaking publication *The Road to Reality, A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe*.<sup>10</sup> My project raises the idea of how formulas and equations play significant roles in contemporary culture, and was in part inspired by interviews I did with the Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann, who drew the initial formula of LSD in ’43, and with Benoît Mandelbrot, whose formula for fractals was presented in 1982, and includes a range of formulae and equations, from big bang theory to the unraveling of the secrets of DNA. The idea is that artists, architects, scientists and all kinds of participants are invited to submit an A4 page. It can be image or text-based and include or refer to a specific formula or equation. This project has only just begun.

Judy, I’m really happy that our conversation continues. I’ve been missing our conversations and hope that after this funny indirect, direct conversation via email, FedEx and DVD cassette, we can soon meet again somewhere and continue the conversation. All the best.

10. Jonathan Cape, UK, 2004.

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### **About Ctrl+P Journal of Contemporary Art**

*Ctrl+P* was recently founded by Judy Freya Sibayan and Flaudette May V. Datuin 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. Circulated as a PDF file via email, 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/praxis of publishing that addresses very specifically the difficulties of publishing art criticism in the Philippines.

### **About Ctrl+P’s Contributors**

**Georg Schöllhammer** is a writer and curator who lives and works in Vienna. He is Editor-in-Chief and co-founder of *springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst* since 1995. He was also editor for visual art at the daily *Der Standard* from 1988 to 1994. From 1992 to 1998, he was a visiting professor for theory and contemporary art at the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz.

He is currently project director of *documenta 12* magazines. He has curated numerous exhibitions and projects and published extensively on contemporary art and architecture. ● **Marian Pastor Roces** has been developing a critique of international art exhibitions, that analyzes the spaces currently being constructed to present and produce these events. Arguing that these spaces and events are conservative creations, ideologically tied to the 19th century universal expositions. Pastor Roces seeks to expose the structures by which the libertarian and avante-garde claims of artmaking are rendered inutile. The essay *Crystal Palace Exhibitions* in the anthology *Over Here* (MIT Press, 2005, and the 2005 Power Lecture, Sydney University, entitled *Biennales and Biology*, pursue her interest in the subtle domains where art is absorbed in tenacious imperial imperatives. Her recent curatorial work includes the major contemporary art exhibition *Science Fictions* which investigated truth systems validated by science, in four venues in Singapore: Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore Art Museum, Earl Lu Gallery and the Esplanade. *Sheer Realities: Power and Clothing in the 19th century Philippines*, was presented by the Asia Society of New York City at the Grey Art Gallery of New York University. The corporation which she founded – *edge* – develops social history museums with the involvement of conceptual artists. In 2006, she convened an international roundtable discussion on *The Politics of Beauty*, funded by the Prince Claus Fund. ● **Rustom Bharucha** is an independent writer, director and cultural critic based in Kolkata. Trained as a dramaturge at the Yale School of Drama, from where he received his doctorate in Dramatic Criticism, he is the author of several books spanning the fields of interculturalism, secularism, globalization and minority cultures. These books include *Theatre and the World*, *The Question of Faith, In the Name of the Secular*, *The Politics of Cultural Practice*, and *Rajasthan, An Oral History*. He just completed a new book entitled *Another Asia* which deals with the relationship of Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin in the larger context of Asia, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and friendship. In addition to his cultural studies, Bharucha has conducted a number of workshops involving underprivileged communities like the Siddi of the Manshikeri district in Karnataka with whom he has worked on issues relating to ‘Land and Memory’ at the Nisanam Theatre Institute in Neggodu, Karnataka. He has also been involved in site-specific performance projects such as a reenactment of a massacre inflicted on the people of Lonoy, Bohol, in the Philippines, during the American occupation. This reenactment involved the entire community as actors. ● **Katherine Olston** graduated with a BA in Sculpture, Installation and Performance from Sydney College of the Arts in 1998. Since then she has exhibited throughout Australia and internationally and also completed an internship in gallery administration at the Asian Australian Arts Centre, Gallery 4A in Sydney (2001). In addition, she has worked as both performer and costume/props designer/maker for Sydney based theatre company EARTH Visual & Physical Theatre. In 2000 she was part of the design construction team for the Sydney Olympics, where she also performed in the Opening Ceremony. In 1999 she undertook a nine-month artist-in-residence at Chiang Mai University, and in 2003 received an Asialink Performing Arts Residency grant to develop the collaborative performance installation *Beauty Suit* at Chiang Mai University Art Museum. Recent exhibitions and projects include *Beautyform Unisuit* (collaborative fashion show as part of Navin Rawanchaikul’s *Fly With Me Project*) at the Jim Thompson Gallery, Bangkok (2006), *Mirror Room* (collaborative performance/installation) at the *National Review of Live Art*, Glasgow, 2006, and *Jing-jo!* (solo installation) as part of *Brand New 05* at Bangkok University Gallery 2005. Olston is currently co-curator of Womanifesto’s web-based project *No Man’s Land*, member of Chiang Mai-based artist collective *Beauty Suit*, and is undertaking her Master of Fine Arts at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Australia. ● **Sue Hajdu**’s activities as a curator were initiated by exhibiting her father’s photographs of the 1956 Hungarian uprising. More recently, she was assistant to Yamano Shingo at the *Yokohama Triennale 2005*, and took part in *The Multi-Faceted Curator*, a workshop organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation and Goethe-Institut Jakarta. She has also curated various projects through *a little blah blah* (albb), the artist’s initiative which she co-directs in Ho Chi Minh City. Sue Hajdu holds a Masters of Visual Arts in Photomedia from The University of Sydney and exhibits using a range of media including photography, installation, video and performance. She also lectures in Multimedia at RMIT International University, Vietnam and makes regular contributions to magazines and art publications. ● **Hans Ulrich Obrist** is the author of *Leni Hoffmann*, *Ubik* (co-authored with Konrad Bitterli), *Pipilotti Rist* (co-authored with Peggy Phe- lan and Elizabeth Bronfen), *Daily Practice of Painting: Writings and Interviews 1960-1993* (co authored with Gerhard Richter), *Hans Ulrich Obrist: Interviews Volume 1, Do It*, and *dontstopdontstopdontstop*. Former curator of the Migrateurs Exhibition Program of the Musée

d'Art Modern de la ville de Paris, he is currently Co-director of Exhibitions and Programs and Director of International Projects of the Serpentine Gallery in London. He founded the *Robert Walser Museum* in 1992 and the *Nano Museum* in 1994.

### **About Ctrl+P's Editorial Board Members**

**Flaudette May V. Datuin** is Associate Professor of the Department of Art Studies, University of the Philippines. She is the 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 doctoral dissertation in Philippines Studies. Datuin is the 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 in 2002-2003, and Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Japan in 2004-2005. On her way back from Japan, she curated the Asian section of a video exhibition at EWha University, Seoul, which she writes about in *Ctrl+P* second issue (<http://www.trauma-interrupted.org/ctrlp/issue2.pdf>). She is currently curating and organizing an international and interdisciplinary exhibit-conference-workshop called *trauma, interrupted* to be held in multiple venues in 2007: the Metropolitan Museum of the Philippines, Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), National Museum of the Philippines and Liongoren Gallery. The first major exhibition she curated in 1999 at the CCP *Women Imaging Women* featured women artists from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines, a result of her initial research in these countries from 1994-1997. Before she left for her Nippon Fellowship in 2004, she curated *balaybay@kasibulan.net* held at the CCP to celebrate the 15th anniversary of KASIBULAN, a group of Filipina artists in the visual arts. Datuin currently teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on the contemporary arts of Asia, art theory and aesthetics, gender issues in the arts, and special topics on hypermedia and art, among others. ● **Varsha Nair** lives in Bangkok, Thailand. Her selected shows include *Saturday live* at Tate Modern London, 2006; *Sub-Contingent, The Indian Subcontinent* in Contemporary Art, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy, 2006. She performed at the *National Review of Live Art* at the Tramway in Glasgow, UK in 2006; and at the 2004 ([www.newterritories.co.uk](http://www.newterritories.co.uk)); *In-between places, meeting point*, Si-am Art Space, Bangkok, 2005 (solo-show); *Video as Urban Condition*, Austrian Culture Forum, London, UK, 2004 (<http://www.video-as.org>). Nair is also co-curator of *No Man's Land*, a web project for Womanifesto 2006 ([www.womanifesto.com](http://www.womanifesto.com)). Her writings have been published in art and architecture journals such as *n.paradoxa*, *Art AsiaPacific* and *art4d* (Thailand). Born in Kampala, Uganda, Nair has a BFA from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayaji Rao University, Baroda, India. ● **Judy Freya Sibayan** has an MFA from the Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design. She is the recipient of the *Cultural Center of the Philippines 1976 Thirteen Artists Award* and is former director of the erstwhile Contemporary Art Museum of the Philippines. The City of Manila where she lives and works, recently awarded her the *Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinagnan sa Bagong Pamamaraan Award*. She performed and curated *Scapular Gallery Nomad*, (<http://www.asa.de/magazine/iss4/17sibayan.htm>) a gallery she wore daily for five years (1997-2002), and is currently curator and the *Museum of Mental Objects* (MoMO), a work proposing that her body be the museum itself. Although Sibayan's major body of work is a materialist and institutional critique of art, she has also exhibited and performed in museums, galleries and performance venues such as The Tramway, Glasgow; the Vienna Secession; the Hayward Gallery, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, The Farm in San Francisco; Sternersmuseum, The Photographers' Gallery, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, 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; and at the cap-Musée 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 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. Both 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 twenty years.

### **A note from the editor on the configuration of contributors and editorial board members**

The rhizomatic movement of artists, writers and curators making up a network is always worth plotting based on the productive connections that are constantly being made. In the case of the

configuration of contributors and board members of this journal, one can begin with a friendship made some thirty years ago. I met Marian Pastor Roces in 1976. We worked as curatorial staff at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Museum. In 2001, she introduced me to Rustom Bharucha who invited me to work on Jean Genet's *The Maids*, which he directed and staged in Manila. Years earlier, in 1994, I met artist Simryn Gill again through Marian. In 1997, I invited Simryn to exhibit in my *Scapular Gallery Nomad*. She recommended me to Hans Ulrich Obrist for the *Cities on the Move* exhibition which had its premier opening at the Vienna Secession. I met Hans Ulrich in Vienna in 1997. He introduced me to Chitti Kasemkitvattana who was working with him then and who was helping run About Art Related Activities Gallery in Bangkok. Chitti invited me to have a show at AARA in 1998. This was the time I met Varsha Nair in Bangkok and again in Singapore in 2000. We both took part in the *Text and Subtext* exhibition at the Earl Lu Gallery. Marian recommended my participation. She and May Datuin delivered papers during the symposium.

In 2003, Binghui Huangfu, curator of *Text and Subtext* and Magnus Fiskesjo, Director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, invited Marian, Varsha and me to deliver papers in the symposium *Asia Now – Women Artist Perspective* held at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm where we met Keiko Sei, a writer based in Prague who also read a paper. In 2005, Keiko now based in Bangkok, started working as one of the regional curators of *documenta 12 magazines*. She wrote asking for recommendations. I recommended *Pananaw* and *Transit*. This year May and I co-founded *Ctrl+P*. Although we had published only two issues, Keiko and Georg Schöllhammer agreed that *Ctrl+P* was worth inviting to their journal of journals project.

I conceived *600 Images* in 2004 and pitched the idea to Varsha and other friends. Varsha invited Sue Hajdu to curate the Saigon participation. Katherine Olston, Varsha and I performed at the *National Review of Live Art Festival* in Glasgow last February. Varsha organized the Asian women artist participation in the festival. – JFS