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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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Issue Editor
Varsha Nair

Editorial Board
Flaudette May V. Datuin
Varsha Nair
Judy Freya Sibayan

Publishers
Flaudette May V. Datuin
Judy Freya Sibayan

Ctrl+Shift

To be in control is to be in charge—to have the ability or authority to manage or direct things. Shift literally speaks of a move, a change in position, direction, and composition or circumstances. For the 7th issue of Ctrl+P and considering the controls and shifts that impact our lives, I invited contributors, artists, authors and curators, to speak about straddling places/teetering on the edge /being caught in-between; from rural to urban; rooted one moment, uprooted the next; between torment and pleasure; between in/out.

To be informed is to be in control; but no matter how well informed we may consider ourselves, there are occurrences, either self-created or driven by the world around us, that result in obvious or subtle shifts, physical and/or psychological. Then, there are the events in life that remain beyond our control altogether; gradually or in a flash of a moment they shift our core-being in a tectonic way and change some things forever.

Negotiating these shifts, big and small, and finding a way of being, is to engage in a process that involves searching, re-learning or gaining new information and knowledge—all essential in providing us the choice to shift position/place/locations in order to maintain a balance, re-gain equilibrium, thus have a measure of control of things in our day-to-day lives. The negotiations—the shiftings—presented here are the personal journeys of individuals and of individuals documenting journeys undertaken by others.

Estelle Cohenny-Vallier's essay, which stems from her own connection and involvement with stateless individuals, is in the form of an interview of two displaced women living in refugee camps in locations in Thailand. *Alice and Rosy in Wanderland* highlights what travel means to these women. The first journey they made was a clandestine one when they left home not knowing when, if ever, they could return; the second journey was officially sanctioned—they were invited to attend a gathering that involved others in a similar situation as themselves. The subtext of the interview presents physical and mental shifts that are forced upon them, an intrusion into their dreams, hopes and way of life itself. The lack of being in control of their own destiny is due to another kind of control, that of the junta from which they escaped and of the authorities of the country in which they have found refuge. Their reality is also one where much is blocked out and where little information is made available, and Cohenny-Vallier deliberately presents the essay with key information blacked out or censored, not only to protect these individuals' identities but also to highlight their sense of disempowerment, of being "non-persons".

Author Mona Bur presents a short story that also talks of gaining official sanction or permission to travel. Finding herself traversing between Cairo and Canada for "a hearing with an immigration judge...a meeting that I had no choice but to attend...a meeting that again resulted in no decision,..," she penned the story that involves friends and family who are either dreaming of leaving or find themselves returning to Cairo, a place that is also home. Thus "Pleasure in life is reduced to this", encapsulated in and somewhat defined by the small space occupied by a visa stamp in one's passport.

Barbara Campbell and Karla Sachse present highly personal reflections that they continue to distill having experienced the painful loss of loved ones. Sachse chronicles the last 12 years of her life, years that have been punctuated with the death

of colleagues and members of her family, including her partner. She combines this with simple frottages, gathered from rubbing rocks and stones in locations around the world, to “seek out faces.”

The introduction to Barbara Campbell's *1001 Nights Cast*, a web-based durational performance reads, “In a faraway land a gentle man dies. His bride is bereft. She travels across continents looking for reason to keep living...” Embarking on this particular journey triggered by the unexpected death of her partner who was killed in an accident, in what is an open call seeking comfort and healing Campbell invites contributions of stories. Taking a cue from that great compendium of Arabian tales: *The 1001 Nights*, Campbell sets out to perform and broadcast a story each night for 1001 nights. She provides a prompt each day for storywriters to follow, which is garnered from news stories pertaining to current events in the Middle East. Here, she contributes 3 short texts, 2 of which are edits of scripts of performances already presented and the third, specially written for this issue, in which she shares the poignant nuances of accepting her partner's passing.

Toeingam Guptabutra's essay presents stories and statements by HERS, a group of women artists in Bangkok active since 1996. Caught amidst various scenarios, including that of being somewhat marginalized by the local art world, the members of the group have at times struggled to continue as artists. Guptabutra's essay introduces chronotope to experience the different characteristics of time and space as presented by the artists via their stories.

According to Guptabutra, chronotope literally means time space and author Adania Shibli succinctly draws our attention to both in her essay *Out of Time*. The space she speaks of can be divided into two distinct physical areas—of being in Palestine, her homeland, and of being outside the country. Here, time, as marked by her watch, defies its precision time-keeping duties and follows its own rhythm as if to comfort her, or comes to a complete standstill and refuses “to count the time that is seized from my life, a time whose only purpose is to humiliate me and send me into despair,” as Shibli traverses the complex and troublesome situation of the every-day reality of life in her homeland.

The Smokey Mountain in Manila and the concrete skeleton of an unfinished building in Bangkok both present man-made situations that result in unsafe, subhuman structures, yet ones within which communities find ways to not only make a living but also to reside in. Marlyne Sahakian's essay presents a community-based recycling program at Smokey Mountain, Metro Manila and highlights the work done by one particular cooperative “that collects, sorts and sells trash, but does this in a way that builds on extraordinary core values that take into consideration social and environmental factors in addition to the economic bottom line.”

Jerome Ming tracks the traces left by construction workers and their families who have made their homes in the carpark area of an unfinished building in Bangkok. Spending a considerable amount of time scanning a takraw (a traditional game played with a small rattan ball) court marked out by the squatters for recreation, the background of this now abandoned game is the economic crash of 1997, the recent coup and a failed art project. And, as Ming explains in his accompanying text *Unfinished business*, “Players have to be extremely agile in competition. This game has a point of completion,” it seems engaging in a nimble game of *takraw* is when one has absolute control over ones body and mind, and the harmony of well-coordinated movement.

And finally, Liliane Zumkemi's contribution of the drawing *Options On*, which led her to develop a performance entitled *Brain Control*, talks of controls and manipulations within and without ourselves, “the many obvious, forced or hidden choices we face in our daily lives,” and the resulting shifts and adjustments we must make enabling us to find a way of being and to manage and direct the varied facets of our life-journeys.

Alice and Rosy in Wonderland

ESTELLE COHENNEY VALLIER

Post Tales

Name: Rosy

Profession: Community worker

Address: **XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**

Feelings upon return/changes: On the way there I was so afraid I would be arrested, but on the way back I wasn't because nothing bad had happened. I am very happy with the gathering because I learnt a lot. I met women from many other ethnic groups, which made me realize there were many kinds of people from our country, and we can work together, have a network, be friends. Back here though, I do not feel any changes because I am still afraid to go from one place to another and be arrested by the police.

Why?

I do not have a migrant card.

Would you travel if you had a card?

Yes.

If you had a card, would it be a good thing?

Yes. I could travel.

Isn't it amazing that such a small piece of paper can change how you live your life?

Yes.

*When you still lived in **XXXXX**, did you travel?*

Yes, I went to **XXXX**, **XXXXXXXX**, **XXXX**, and many places. All the small villages around the **XXXX** state.

How did traveling affect your perception of the world?

I cannot remember, I was too young but now the world feels very narrow. Especially with the **XXXX** attacks in the **XXXX** area, the safety is decreasing.

How do you feel about not being able to travel?

Very sad. I have to stay at home all the time.

Would you go back home if there is democracy?

Yes. I would make sure first that it is true, that the government has really changed. After confirmation, I would go back.

How would you travel back?

Here, there are no trains or planes, but the border is so close, I would walk, or get on a truck.

How far is your home?

One-week journey away.

Would you travel after you got home?

I might. I think I'll work and earn some money.

If you had money, would you travel again?

Yes.

How do you define yourself?

I'm a refugee.

What is a refugee?

Some one who has problems, no home, no territory, and no money, nothing to eat.

There are many people in this situation who are not refugees. Why do you call yourself a refugee?

Where are these people?

In slums, in the streets. When did you become a refugee?

I don't remember. When I left home.

Your parents named you Rosy, who named you a refugee?

If you stay in a refugee camp you are a refugee.

The day you left home you became a refugee?

I had to leave because there was no place to stay and work. It became too hard.

How would you define yourself when you lived at home?

I don't know.

Were you a person?

Yes.

What would turn you back into being a person?

A house, a place, security, work.

Woman joining in: Well, you can get that in a refugee camp!

What makes you a refugee when you are in the camp?

Not having the right to travel.

What makes you feel like a person is the right to travel?

Yes.

The other woman: We want the right to be a person.

What do you mean?

I mean that if refugees can travel, they can find work, take care of their families. Then they'd be human beings.

Name: Alice

Profession: Medic

Address: **XXXXXXXXXXXX**

Feelings upon return/changes: On the journey I was so afraid I didn't even dare go to pee. When I arrived in **XXXXX**, I was very scared. I'd never been there; we arrived very early so no one was there to welcome us. They arrived a bit later. They showed us how to use everything. I learnt about women's rights and politics. It is important for young women to get this kind of exposure. Until now I only knew about health. Now I know that women from **XXXX** can be involved in women's rights as well. Family planning is not only women's responsibility! On the way back, I was not afraid, I could even go to the toilet! I have a card but before, I never went anywhere alone.

And now?

Well, I came here alone! I am quite a confident person but after coming back from **XXXXXXXX** I feel more confident. Before I didn't know what to say to the police in case something happened, now at least I can think about what to say.

*You where in **XXXX** camp before coming here?*

I have always moved around a lot.

How did it make you feel to move so many times?

I did not enjoy it because I had to be afraid all the time, I could not finish school, I missed my parents. I had to leave my parents when I was 7 or 8. There are things I do not want to talk about.

Did you enjoy the gathering?

A lot.

*Why did you enjoy the trip to **XXXXXX** when you did not enjoy moving before?*

In **XXXX** we had a lot of freedom; we could do what we felt like; meet other ethnic groups, see people wearing different traditional clothes, meet different people. It was done in a natural way, women just being themselves.

In the past, was it your choice to move?

As an adult I chose, but as a kid I would have rather stayed in each of the places I lived.

Did you choose to be a medic?

Since I was a child I wanted to be a nurse or a doctor.

How do you define yourself?

I am a person who wants to be useful to my country, and work for myself too.
Did you think of yourself as a refugee, a migrant, an internally displaced person?
 I think of myself as an illegal person. In this country it is easier for people from my ethnic group to stay. The government makes it easier.
Is this the reason why you do not see yourself as a refugee like Rosy, although you are from the same ethnic group?
 I think of myself as an illegal person because if there was democracy in **XXXXX**, I would go back. As a child I thought of myself as a person in hardship. I would not have come here if I hadn't needed to.
Could you explain the reason why you have a different sense of who you are than Rosy?
 A refugee is someone who lives in a camp, who cannot go anywhere, and one who has no rights.
What about you, Rosy?
 I think I am a refugee because of the place I belong to. Where ever I happen to be, my house and my family are in the refugee camp, therefore I am a refugee.
Alice?
 I don't have a home. My home is where I am at that particular moment.
How important is traveling for you?
 If we don't travel we will not know anything, if we travel we can learn and see new things, meet new friends. I really want to travel every day, and to go abroad.

Women in Transition, Tale of the Making



A few months ago I was invited to do a creative workshop with women from **XXXXXX** at the **XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX** in **XXXXXXXXXX**. I chose to do a video film with the women on the theme of the gathering, Women in Transition. My aim was to introduce the participants to a technology that they would normally feel unqualified to engage with. Often women's groups request and rely on men to use this media to tell their stories for them.

For most women, attending the gathering was the first time they had traveled inside **XXXXXX**. I asked them to write a storyboard structured by the questions - how much do you travel in your everyday life? How did you feel when you heard you were coming to the **XXXXXXXXXXXX**? How did you prepare for the journey? What did you pack? What happened during the journey? And, how did you feel on arrival? The next day the women brought their luggage to the gathering. I asked them to unpack and place the items on a table. One woman slowly packed her bag again while another took photos with a digital camera. We repeated the process for each area they had come from. On the last day I demonstrated how to load the pictures into a video editing program and we recorded each woman's voice telling about her journey.

The video ends with photographs of the international women's day march in which all the participants in the gathering took part. In between, stills and footage of driving through **XXXXXXXXXX** is used.

To write this article, I interviewed a couple of the workshop participants on their thoughts upon return to their camps. I would like to thank my translator, Paw Htu Htu, who is waiting for relocation for the sake of her children's future.



Estelle Coheny Vallier. Video stills from *Women in Transition*, 2007.

To Alif, Gopali and Riham, Another Visa Pleasure in Life is Reduced to This

MONA BUR

Alif returns with cheerful tatters and an exorbitant amount of joy that cannot remain hidden from the contours of her face, nor from the movement of her body. Feet flutter ceremoniously cautious, manoeuvring around shards of broken glass, fruit skins and plastic bags while her fingers strenuously clutch her purse, made most valuable by its contents. A visa to another country.

Between Gabriel and Addis Ababa, Alif considers the density of another woman in the arms of her beloved. Sometimes, when a new day begins, you are reduced to an orifice. Your return to Cairo is tumultuous as a result. Sometimes, you are liberated by your lover's infidelity.

Across the Atlantic, Riham realizes that she does not like hierarchies, nor prisms, and works towards improving her relationship with Allah. The ability to return to Cairo open-hearted poses itself as a profound challenge (like the dragonfly that dove into Mizou's warm cup of marmariya in absolute, total surrender). Progressive, under a false impression, she considers her return to Cairo.

On Gopali's occasional Zamalek dinners, she stops to buy three daffodils, careful not to crush the petals amidst the wreckage of her purse. The best way is to insert the stems between the pages of a book, wrapped in tissue, with petals pouched on the outside.

The best way to remain in Cairo, is in between, Gopali agrees with me. I cannot bear to remain in Cairo for an extended period of time. Nine months by the most, she says. No more. Then you leave. Breathe a different air, see a different sky, and return for more. For nothing can abuse you more than the love of Cairo.

Your other sister Sada, not only is she a red moon, but an erudite lover. A universe greets her with damask zeal, whored with kohl and midnight blue. For weeks we discoursed on lightness and weight, dualities that fade with time. While you faced me with rules and regulations I proceeded with lavender picked by my mother from a factory in Boucherville. They will let you know in 30 days if you are welcome in their country.

Travels through 1001 Nights Cast

BARBARA CAMPBELL

Edit of script for performance # 17 of *1001 nights cast*
Performed at 9:56PM on 7 July 2005 from Paris

Alone in Paris, she was without guidance. No one here could assure her of a risk-free path. She was out of her own country and found it difficult to make decisions. But today the problem had to be confronted. How to go about it? She was too shy to stop a woman in the street and have to struggle with the language: so hard to convey the precise meaning, especially when it came to the important matter of where to get a good haircut.

She perceived from the number of well-groomed men in the area that here, in this small section of the city, perhaps more than any other, appearances mattered. She walked the narrow streets, peering into shop-fronts, looking for the right constellation

of visual cues. She passed by several salons, which may have been acceptable but for that ominous beast in the corner: the retro hairdryer helmet on wheels.

She came across a tattoo parlour. Surely if you were in the business of body adornment, she thought, you would know about the masters and mistresses of hair in your immediate environment. It was a shame the woman at the counter spoke such little English. From the recesses of her own unreliable vocabulary, she found all that was required under “c”: chercher, les cheveux, couper, cette arrondissement. It wasn’t really a recommendation but the young woman pointed further up the street, towards the Beaubourg.

She scanned the shop through the plate glass. No blow dryers on wheels, only men: men in the chairs, men wielding scissors, men talking to other men via mirrors, one man sweeping, another one shampooing, and right in the front a sweet looking, slightly-built Asian man at the counter. One last sign clinched it for her and that was the sign on the window itself. Just one word—an invitation to engage in life itself: “Sing”.

He assured her he could fit her in that very afternoon. Nor was he fazed by her already short hair. There was just one thing: she wouldn’t permit him to use the electric clippers—as short as possible but by hand only. She knew it would be stretching both

time and talent, but the display of manual skill was the thing she enjoyed most about this ritual. Besides, at that time, she needed physical contact, even if it were only at the hands of this stranger.

She knew she made him nervous. She could see her own taut expression in the glass. But it wasn’t often she put her trust in the hands of another man, another cutter, that is. When the cut is this short, each hair counts. Round and round he went, checking, cutting, sculpting, thinning, refining. Gradually her facial muscles relaxed, her breathing became deeper and she started to ask him about himself: she’d seen so very few Asian men in Paris.

It was his shop. He’d been here eight years. He’d been in Paris thirty years. He came with his parents. They escaped from Cambodia. They’d been refugees. The name of the shop was in fact his name. His name was Sing. She would be back.

Barbara Campbell, *1001 nights cast*,
writing prompts for performance
#17 watercolour; about 7.2 x 10.4 cm.;



Edit of script for performance # 66 of *1001 nights cast*
Performed at 8:49PM on 25 August 2005 from Paris

No story has come in and now, with an hour or so to go, something must be conjured from the ether. I discover when I retype my prompt back into Google that back in 2000, *Behind the Curtain* was a project in which bloggers recorded a day in their life.

Although that project has ended I think, why not take that very simple idea as a way of manufacturing a script for tonight’s performance? For I am the man, well, woman, behind the curtain of this particular project and this is a day in its life.

Since this is a narrative, I’m obliged to start at the beginning of the day.

The alarm clock in my head goes off at 7.30 am, as usual, no matter how much sleep or wakefulness or nightmares or good creative thoughts have filled it in the preceding eight hours. At this particular 7.30 it’s raining and so even harder to swing the feet off the bed and onto the floor, but I do, because the show must go on, it’s the contract I’ve signed with you, my audience. I shuffle over to pick up the old blue pottery mug I use as a water container and on my way to fill it from the bathroom I turn on my PowerBook G4. By the time I’ve shuffled back with the water, the computer is booted up and my eyes are preparing themselves for reading.

I launch straight into the *International Herald Tribune* link to stories from the Middle East. There's more news from Gaza but for the Western media outlets, it seems like we're coming to the end of that particular episode of the narrative. The Palestinians are happy for now, the evicted settlers unhappy but resigned. So today I turn my attention to Iraq as it struggles to draft a new constitution by a mysteriously contrived deadline. There seem to be big issues still to be ironed out, like federalism and the role of religion in the law and this of course is contrasted with the daily experience of the citizens who must focus on the reality of no water, electricity, security, medical supplies and so on.

I'm struck by one particular quote from a "man on the street" interviewed by the *New York Times* journalist. "I am not very convinced about what is going on behind the curtains," Shawkat Falih, 40, a Sunni street vendor in Baghdad said darkly. "The process should be visible and audible to the Iraqi people." So I choose "behind the curtains" and I wonder if Mr Falih knows that this is also a famous quote from *The Wizard of Oz*. You'll remember, it comes at the moment when Dorothy and her gang of three finally meet the Wizard. Toto pulls away a curtain to reveal a mere mortal at the controls of the phantasmagoria that is the Wizard – all smoke and mirrors, *son et lumiere*. So who is the Wizard – the man behind the curtain or the illusion? Plato asked it centuries before in his *Parable of the Cave* in *The Republic*. I don't suppose any of these illusions or allusions would be playing on the mind of Mr Falih in Baghdad.

I did the watercolour, photoshopped it and posted it onto the site as today's prompt. I also sent it as an attachment to the writer whom I thought might like to respond with a story.

Then followed the usual train of events—shower, breakfast, email writing and reading before I got down to the dreary end of the show: transferring the videos of the performances from tape to hard drive for editing and then back to tape for archiving. So cruel to have to hear one's fumbles in delivery and see the outbreaks of acne. I left it as often as I could to do the slightly more exciting things like cleaning and shopping and making social dates with other artists.

Towards five o'clock I started to get a little anxious that no stories had yet come in. I sent off a politely questioning email to the writer whom I thought was going to submit, but by six o'clock, when the writing deadline had passed, there was still nothing.

To complicate matters, I'd organised a little soirée this evening for artists from the Middle East who also have studios here. The first, and luckily only, guests arrived soon after 6pm—Nadjibi, a sculptor and painter from Iran with his young daughter Najarb. It soon became apparent that we had no lingua franca and as usual, it was the child who made the social exchange possible. She showed me some of her own creations and from her pressed clay mask I learnt the Farsi for eyes, nose and mouth. The other little clay face had a moustache like her father's and so that was added to my vocabulary. Of course now, only an hour after they've left, I don't remember any of these words but she graciously gave me one of the clay masks so perhaps the words will come to me in the night from the distorted clay mouth. With pained apologies from me, I had to explain to my guests that tonight I had no story and would now have to do something about it. A final cocktail of Iranian, French and English words was raised at the door and I turned to face the keyboard.



Barbara Campbell, *1001 nights cast*,
writing prompts for performance
66 watercolour, about 7.2 x 10.4 cm.;
2005-2007.

Now, just before I reach my word limit, I swivel towards the windows and notice the quality of the light. This afternoon's golden glow is what the émigré architect Harry Seidler once called an aberrant light, one that he wanted none of his modernist towers bathed in. I smile as I see Notre Dame à *contre-jour*, the tips of the plane trees just outside glinting and winking in the breeze.

Written for *Ctrl+Shift* on 29 May 2007 from Madrid

You do have to be careful of Mondays when you're travelling. Everyone has gone back to work but you are left stranded. They won't even open their museums and galleries for you, sometimes not even their shops. And so you wander into anywhere that promises comfort and a way to pass the time. Bookshops, for instance.

And there it was, on the first table of bestsellers: *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion. Friends had warned me not to read it at the time of its release: they were afraid I wouldn't be ready for it, that it would open up the wounds again. And they were probably right. But the Monday, the overcast day, the citizens and institutions and booksellers of New York had all conspired to send me a sign and so I bought it. Just around the corner I added grapefruit juice, bananas, olives, cheese and two bialis from the neighbourhood grocery store en route back to the capacious loft a friend had generously made available for this trip.

Didion's husband of nearly 40 years had died suddenly at home at the end of 2003. The magical thinking of the title refers to her belief that he would be returning and that when he did he would need his shoes and therefore she could not possibly throw them out.

Funny, I thought, how she put these two thoughts together: the fact that he would be returning and the impossibility, the unthinkability that the shoes could be thrown out. Both of these things I encountered in the years after Neil's death but they were separated.

I thought Neil would come back because he did not die at home. He died out in the world. He died near the border of the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales, Australia, after doing a few errands in the light-industrial Canberra suburb of Fyshwick. He did not return home. His car did not return. And so, refusing the certainty of his death, I had to believe that he was still out doing errands and that he would finish these errands some time. Now, I realise, I thought this way not just because I would never have to accept the truth but because it kept him in a state of usefulness, of engagement with the world he knew and loved. He was running art errands therefore he was productive. I know from certain pieces of evidence—the last “to do” list he wrote, the objects in the car, the receipts in his wallet, what these errands were. I know, for instance, that he went to a glass-cutter to pick up a drinking glass which had had a hole cut into the base so that he could make a new piece in his ongoing *Hydromancy* series (1993-2002). I know he went to a hardware store to buy a special file which would allow him to recondition the stone of his grinding wheel.

And the clothes. I have heard and read about the practice of disposing of the clothes of the recently departed. Friends and relatives will volunteer to pack everything up almost immediately and “help you” by taking them off to the local charity shop. The thinking is that it helps you “move on”. This idea appalled Didion for the reason that her husband would be needing them when he came back. It appalled me because ... why? ... because all of his clothes were a representation of him. The sheer mass of them could almost **be** him.

Neil had a limited colour range: blues, greys and blacks. When we first got together, I told him it was possible that he could wear one other colour—to match his blonde eyebrows and set off his blue eyes. We went shopping and for his first birthday in our relationship I bought him a light gold sweater. I was right. He glowed. I'm not sure he thought I was right but he was happy for me to make this change in him and he wore it often. It was the one high-key item in his wardrobe.

For nearly three years after his death I stayed in the studio/residence that we had shared for just over three years. When the time came to physically move on, to a much smaller place, back to my pre-marital city of Sydney, everything that he had acquired in the 18 years of living and working in that place, had to be handled, thought through, packed and distributed in a way that felt right to me. There could be no regrets. It was only in the last week of this operation, which took months of full-time labour, that finally, I could bundle up all those blue, black and grey textiles and take them to the local charity shops of Queanbeyan.

But some items had been distributed long before this point. In the first few days after Neil's death I had given his gold sweater to his brother to wear. Old tee-shirts were used as rags and packing materials. His leather Blundstone boots were buried in the holes dug for new tree plantings. I had also read somewhere that there is a ritual whereby the coats of a dead man are distributed amongst his friends. And so I dispatched big, soft parcels to men of all shapes and sizes in Victoria, South Australia, Northern New South Wales and locally in Canberra. The last one to go was a full-length grey woollen overcoat that went to our friends' very tall son who was about to step out into the world beyond high school and Canberra and travel solo to Denmark. Ever the champion of re-purposing and recycling, I think Neil would have been pleased with the distribution.

Before leaving the New York loft I selected a book from the shelf to read on the flight and in its place inserted the *The Year of Magical Thinking* for the next reader passing through.




Barbara Campbell, *1001 nights cast*,
writing prompts for performance
#686, watercolour, about 7.2 x 10.4 cm.;
2005-2007.

A Chronicle of My Last Twelve Years

KARLA SACHSE

soon after the fall of the Berlin wall
death invaded my life – it took away father,
closest friends, colleagues,
my beloved man



father was connected to me silently
– brave, he was living with various
afflictions – but when his diabetes took his
mobility, he was tired of life –
I knew he would die before
his golden wedding anniversary – as he did


I said goodbye to him on his eightieth
birthday – and agreed that he may de-
tach – to be able to let go

mother and Guillermo died on the same
night – she had enjoyed a last haircut
and we left each other having reconciled
– Guillermo survived two years with
cancer – we had worked and planned
and sorted together –
we were closest spiritual partners

he was only ten years older than me
– I went along with his dying
– but I do not accept it

Robert went a bit mad and painted wilder
than ever – suddenly he found himself
in the hospital – the liver – after he had
written a postcard to Joseph –
with regards to me, he laid down and died

he was twelve years older than me
– I knew that he could not grow old
– and sadly I accept it



Friedrich reported by phone that Kees
had been found dead in his kitchen – the
heart - he had planned to come to install
his worker's paradise again –
one week after his funeral, I received the
charming postcard he had sent

he was two years younger than me
– he simply passed away – of course
– I do not accept it

Joseph had a hard head, a wide heart and
a sense of humour which gave us a rich life
together for twenty three years and a
lovely son – until he tried to escape the
new social reality by depression
and finally by suicide



he was a year younger than me—
and although he left a message —
I do not accept it

Florian I had not seen the last two years
because art for public places was no longer
organised by open competitions — I knew
he missed that challenge and smoked more
than ever — suddenly I got the invitation to
attend his funeral

he was two years younger than me
— I miss his metallic soft voice
— and I do not accept it

Thomas had been a calm and intelligent
colleague — he always had a smile and vice
versa — even for his public naps - he agreed
rather late to accept therapy for
his obesity — one day before
his first session, he was dead

he was five years younger than me
— although I created a memory room for
him — I do not accept it

after Friedrich handed over Kees' suitcase
he disappeared far West because he had
found love and a job — suddenly a blood
vessel flooded his brain — he did not wake
from the coma - ten days
later the respirator was switched off

he was ten years younger than me
— even though distanced we were
connected — I do not accept it

a month before cancer was found
in Gunnar's body - he was a social worker
and a punk — we shared many experiences
of caring for our students — he entered the
fight and lost it a year later —
short before his thirty-ninth birthday

he was seventeen years younger than me
I cried for his loss of resistance
— and I do not accept it

Horst told me standing next to Speiche,
who had just survived a car accident short
before his sixtieth birthday, that Emmett
was dead — he still continued
as a fluxus artist in his eighties —
and we occasionally flirted with lit eyes

he was much older than me
— oh, how I regret not having seen him
lately — but I accept it

even knowing that they are not lost
in the universe, I miss their company
on earth and since they have gone,
I rub stones around the globe
and seek out faces



Toeingam Guptabutra:

I love reading stories as I enjoy discovering temporal elements expressed through language. To clarify how time in narratives can be perceived, I would like to introduce the term 'chronotope' by Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (2000), and to present stories written by five women artists who along with myself, are members of HERS Group. Their stories are different from one another, some talk about their art and some are about their personal situations. All of these stories are crowded with different types of temporal indicators.

Firstly, I introduce chronotope. Chronotope literally means 'time space'. Bakhtin borrows the notion of an inseparable connection between space and time from Einstein's theory of relativity, to invent a conceptual framework of chronotope in historical poetics. He introduces chronotope as a key to explore several forms of time in historical poetics explaining that:

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 84)

The fusion of temporal and spatial indicators is developed sophisticatedly and relates to the wholeness of narrative. Time relates to people and can be perceived in a way that relates to artistic values of written expression; space relates to the progressions of time, plot, and history within narrative. Altogether, I propose that the time and space of chronotope offer an interconnected ground that allows characters, plot, and history to relate to one another in order to give shape to a whole novel.

My observation is that the characteristics of the temporal indicators in chronotope can be viewed through language expression, and perceived in an artistic way. Bakhtin presents three types of ancient novels: firstly, the Greek Romance, secondly, the adventure novel of everyday life, and, thirdly, biography and autobiography. In this essay, I shall focus on only the temporal indicators in the Greek romance or adventure novel of ordeal.

The temporal indicators in the Greek romance shall be explored with reference to the following:

There is a boy and a girl of marriageable age. Their lineage is unknown, mysterious... They are remarkable for their exceptional beauty... They meet each other unexpectedly, usually during some festive holiday. A sudden and instantaneous passion flares up between them that is as irresistible as fate, like an incurable disease. (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 87)

The temporal indicators can be observed through language expression. *They meet unexpectedly* describes that a situation takes place at just that moment of time. It reveals their feeling of being surprised, as there is no indication of the present incident before hand. ...some festive holiday refers to a period of time in a social sphere in which people gather and celebrate and when people take time off from their everyday regularities. Lastly, *A sudden and instantaneous passion flares up between them* reflects a special period of time shared by two persons, providing their intimate feelings towards each other to develop fast. It can be seen that the temporal indicators can be observed through the characters' actions.

It is possible that temporal indicators can be observed with reference to letters or language expression. I, therefore, will apply this point of view to the ways I observe time in all narratives written by the members of HERS Group based in Thailand. HERS

Group is composed of six women artists, including myself. We have known one another for nearly 17 years. I have witnessed their creative development as well as ones in their personal life. Their narratives that I am going to present here connect to our past and illuminate our future. For me, their narratives are the evidence of our nowness indicating who and where we as a group.

Watchporn Yudee:

I have recently challenged my own ways of engaging every square inch on canvas, which originally demonstrated crowded elements especially lines, colors, and shade. These elements covered the entire white space of the canvas.

Space is one of the important art elements. Even though it is formless, but we can feel its existence. Professor Chalude Nimsamer (1991) indicated in his book entitled *Composition of Art* that:

Normally, space on a piece of paper or canvas is neutral or zero. When something appears, the space reacts to that thing immediately. This reaction causes powerful movement. I would like to give some graphic examples. The space is like surface of water, silence, and darkness. When a piece of stone hits the surface of the water, we can see clearly reaction or powerful movement. The surface of the water moves away from the center in a circular pattern until the power of the moment fades.... When a noise takes place in the silence, the pattern of sound wave is active in the air... When a light takes place, the darkness reacts to brightness suddenly.” (Nimsamer, 1991, p. 79)

The space in my imagination is like a vast field in which I can stand and look up to the vast blue sky, while the soft movement of the wind provides relaxation. In this imaginative space, my feelings could be lonely and sad.

My imagination towards the space along with my feelings becomes a source for my practice. My latest paintings depict the growth of a tree, branching, blossoming, and bearing fruit. The growth underlies the endless circle of life. The implication of space in my paintings has been greatly developed. The sky in my paintings does not refer to the real sky. But, it refers to the space implying emptiness. No other elements exist in this space. It is the space in which my audience can rest his/her visual exploration.

The emptiness of the space in my paintings reflects my personal attempt to live peacefully. In the society in which I live, I often experience people showing verbal aggressiveness in the public sphere. Without realizing, I have gradually become one of them, getting upset, and complaining about every little thing all the time.

I have engaged the space in my paintings as a way of training myself to leave alone the unpleasant surroundings and to concentrate on developing emptiness to occupy a space in my mind. I believe that my engagement of space to some degree can help me to live peacefully.

On-anong Krinsiri:

The work I am developing now comes from roles played by and ways of life of two different groups of people. However, they are in the same situation, which is enforced, interspersed with a certain type of pressure relating to moral assessment from social, cultural, and religious points of views.

I have followed the development of AIDS treatments, along with its criticism in Thailand. Many developments draw a lot of public attention and, at the same time, present challenges to what is acceptable according to Thai norms and traditions. One of the movements is by a group of monks at Prabaht Numpu Temple in Lopburi Province. The monks admit AIDS patients deserted by their family in the temple and take care of them. Additionally, the monks seek help by asking lay people to donate money in order to buy medicines and equipment necessary for treatment of final-stage patients. The public, both agree and disagree with this. Those who disagree think that what the

monks are doing is considered as “too worldly” and against *Sila* that refers to Buddhist principles of ethical behavior. There are many levels of *Sila*. The one that corresponds to monkhood is *Vinaya*, which is the specific moral code for monks. *Vinaya* consists of a set of 227 rules to be followed by monks. If the monks’ behavior is against the rules, they have to leave monkhood. And should this happen, it brings embarrassment and disgrace to their family. In this respect, I can see that the monks’ behavior and circumstances at Prabaht Numpu Temple is not only controlled by the 227 rules, but also by the public.

The monks’ situation is made even more critical and difficult, as they have to live with the AIDS patients who are viewed as unpurified by society at large. The *Sila* that corresponds to lay people is the five precepts, or basic morality. Many of the patients are homosexual, male and female prostitutes, and drug addicts who are seen as having gone against two out of the five precepts, which are to refrain from immoral sexual behavior and to refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness. From my view, they are physically suffered already, and I do not understand why the public further punish them by perceiving their body that is inflicted by AIDS, as a sign of sin.

To me, the monks and the AIDS patients are two opposite groups of people, like darkness and brightness, who have to be in the same critical situation at Prabaht-Numpu Temple. Their morality is critically assessed and tested by the public.

I will address this situation to present a mix-media installation. My aim is to raise awareness of treatment of AIDS in Thailand, and to question about the appropriateness of social and religious morality and assessment.

Piyanuch Pochanapan:

I am currently working in an advertising firm and am proficient in graphic design. It is a profession that I have been enjoying for years. In normal practice, I need to identify as many questions as possible, for example what is a product, which group of consumers does the product target, what is the age of the targeted consumers, and how to persuade them? To ensure that future consumers will purchase the product, it depends on my advertising design that is presented to the public. My design must be in line with precise answers to the above questions. This process constructs my ideal identity and particular style of creating a piece of advertising.

When I was invited to create a piece of art, my advertising style initially applied to the process of art-making. Questions were identified. They included “If I create this, will my audience like it and to what extent they will understand my creation?” I have found that the advertising style initially did not fit into the art-making process. I tried hard to alter my ways of thinking. I have discovered that to ask questions about what I was going to do is still necessary, but answers can be less logical compared to those in the world of advertising.

The two working styles are different. At the beginning, this generated conflicts in my mind, causing repetitions and delays in my art-making process. I took time to think carefully. Then, I discovered the best and simplest way. I just created what I wanted and, later, could identify ways of merging graphic art with fine art. I depicted my thoughts with reference to graphic design elements. The result brings me satisfaction and happiness, something which money cannot buy.

Porntip Chaipimansri:

Not great. Not important. But very special.

Chiang Mai:

Sometime ago, I chose to live peacefully away from the big city. I was happy to live in a new natural environment and amid the local culture of Chiang Mai. Even though I lived in the countryside, people around me, including myself, enjoyed and welcomed new technology. This allowed me to experience the co-existence of the old and the new, which makes Chiang Mai truly unique and interesting.

Bangkok:

Too many swift changes in the metropolitan city effects its residents' ways of living, presenting uncertainties and causing many to negative. Somehow, I think that this uncertainty can be viewed positively—as freedom. Therefore, I imagine myself as a small living creature and having a short circle of life like that of a butterfly. If I were a butterfly, I would not be afraid of uncertainty because my life is short. Instead, I would not hesitate to quickly seek my destiny that would not take a long time to discover. Lastly, if I were a butterfly, I would let things around me be as they are. Here comes a point at which the butterfly plays a role in my thinking and my art practice.

My experiences of living in Chiang Mai and Bangkok make me always wonder how the quality of the same length of time in each place can be different. In Chiang Mai, time is not occupied and this particular time allowed me to experience peace in daily life. Time in Bangkok is occupied by hectic movements and keeps me busy with nothing, all the time. With respect to these temporal differences, I become interested in exploring various notions of time and space through relationships of things, for example, a relationship between a tree and time, that of my unstable hope and a butterfly, and that of promises and leaves falling to the ground.

Even though I now live in Bangkok, my time in Chiang Mai is a great source for my art practice. On second thoughts, perhaps, the butterfly may think that its time is long....We may be wrong.

Duanghathai Pongprasit:

At present time, life has duties that are to live, survive as a person in society and to create an identity in order to give shape and depth to my mind. As long as one is active and on a natural path, life clings to an unpredictable destiny. All phenomena on earth produce certain influences on lives and their feelings. This makes humans seek answers for questions mainly related to living and surviving.

I always explore and ask questions about issues based on life, for example, happiness, suffering, ignorance, as well as abstract emotions. At the same time, I investigate ways of living according to human thoughts, both of men and women. This makes me realize and learn a variety of worlds in which time is progressing uninterruptedly.

Someone told me that the fastest thing in the world is our imagination. It made me ponder, analyze, and explore my own self. I discovered that not only my own self, but also others' have delicate emotional and physical conditions. They are a true gift that nature gives to all.

A living form generates inside my body. I find that it is clear sometimes, and many times it is not. Sometimes it is sweet and soft, but sometimes it becomes powerful enough to drive all forces to unite. Being receptive becomes being proactive in creating something new.

A living form generates inside my body. This has been passed down, from one to another generation, perhaps without being realized. This situation makes me understand a relationship between two opposite things, for example power and weakness, certainty and uncertainty, suffering and happiness, and sin and ignorance. The relationship between these two polarities is phenomenal as it encourages me to generate living forces. Additionally, the relationship makes me understand myself and realize a connection between my inner self and my outer body.

The path of natural life is wonderful.

Toeingam Guptabutra:

The above stories allow me to experience different characteristics of time. Watcharaporn lives in the hectic time of the city and, from time to time, separates herself from this urban time to be with her paintings. Her time in front of the paintings becomes a specific, inner moment in which she develops the implication of space and practices

her mind to let alone the unpleasant environments. Onanong explores the monks and the AIDS patients whose time is different from each other. The monks' biological time is longer and healthier than that of the AIDS patients who carry the deadly virus. What is interesting for me is that Onanong's interest touches upon the characteristics of time that she cannot occupy. She cannot be a monk and she does not have AIDS. She is an observer of their time.

Piyanuch's time in the advertising business is of the regularity. The everyday tasks and responsibilities in her workplace are familiar to her. She knows how to deal with what her clients need. However, her regular time is intervened by another kind of creativity – fine art. At first, she could not combine the two different creative cultures. Later, she spent time to think, and, in this time, the two cultures have been fused. Pornthip realizes that time relates to space. Time in Chiang Mai and Bangkok produces different influences on her thoughts and imagination. Time in Chiang Mai has helped her to identify various creative relationships of things, for example that of promises and leaves falling to the ground. Probably, time in Chiang Mai has also helped her to live in Bangkok without losing herself in the big city.

Lastly, I see that Duangthai's interested involves time that suggests the condition of flux and the transformative process of life connecting to birth. This process shows part of the ongoing process of life, expressing the human's confrontation with the elements causing happiness, suffering, and leave taking. All of these continue constantly and implicitly along the time that is not meant to be called the past, the present, and the unseen future.

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Out of Time

ADANIA SHIBLI

(A REPRINT)

My little watch is the first to sense the change going in to and out of Palestine. On the way there I notice it on my wrist, counting the time down to the second, waiting for the moment when the wheels of the plane touch the airport runway, and I set it to local time so it goes on counting it with an infinite familiarity. And as soon as I go out of Palestine it advances listlessly, taking its time parting with the local time there, which ends once the plane touches down in a foreign land.

It may seem to some I'm slightly exaggerating in what I'm telling about my watch, especially as it is a very little watch. People often are amazed how it can tell me the time at all, being so small. I myself could have yet shared their doubts had I not found out about watches and their secret powers.

It goes back to primary school, during one of the Arabic literature classes. The curriculum back then was, and it still is, subject to the approval of the Israeli Censorship Bureau, which embraced texts from various Arab countries, except for Palestine, fearing that these would contain references or even hints that could raise the pupils' awareness of the Palestinian question. Hence, Palestinian literature was considered unlawful, if not a taboo, similar to pornography—except for one text, *The Time and Man*, a short story by Samira Azzam, which the Censorship Bureau found "harmless."

The story, published in 1963, tells of a young man preparing himself before he turns in, the night ahead of his very first day of work. He sets his alarm clock for four o'clock in the morning so as to catch the train in time to go to work. No sooner had the alarm clock gone off the next morning than there came a knocking at his front door. When he opens it, he finds before him an old man. He has no clue who this man is and he does not get the chance to ask him, as the latter turns and walks away, disappearing into the darkness. The same is repeated day after day so that the young man no longer sets his alarm clock. It is only after several months that he discovers who that old man

Adania Shibli presented the text *Out of Time* during the workshop *The Politics of Images: Practice and Approaches to Art in the Middle East and North Africa* organized by *documenta 12* magazines on November 20, 2006 in the Bruno Kreisky Forum Vienna. It was first published in the *documenta 12* magazines. This essay is being reprinted here with the permission of the author.

is, after a colleague tells him this man goes knocking on the doors of all the employees in the company. He wakes them up on time in order for them not to be late for their train and meet their destiny as his own son did, who had one morning arrived late at the station, while the train was leaving. He held on to its door, but his hand betrayed him and he slipped down, falling underneath its wheels.

At first glance, the story may seem simple and “safe,” especially before the censor’s eyes. Yet it actually contributed towards shaping my consciousness regarding the question of Palestine as no other text I have ever read in my life has done. Were there one day Palestinian employees who commuted to work by train? Was there a train station? Was there a train honking? Was there one day a normal life in Palestine? And where is it now and why has it gone?

The text, in turn, had engraved in my soul a deep sense of yearning for all that was—including the tragic—normal and banal, to a degree that I could no longer accept the marginalized, minor life to which we’ve been exiled since 1948, during which our existence turned into a “problem.”

Against this story and the multiple modes of existence it revealed to me, stands my little watch. And my watch is more similar to that old man in Azzam’s story than it is to a Swiss watch whose primary concern is to count time with precision. Rather, just as that old man turned from a human being into a watch in order for life to become bearable, my watch decided to turn from a watch into a human being.

In Palestine, it often stops moving. It suddenly enters into a coma, with which it becomes unable to count the time. On my last visit there, I set it as usual to local time the minute the plane touched down on the Lydd airport runway. It was ten to two in the afternoon. I headed to passport control. There weren’t many travelers and the line I stood in was proceeding quickly. I handed my passport over to the police officer, and she took her time looking at it. Then more time. Suddenly, two men and a woman appeared, who were a mix of police, security and secret service, and they took me out of the line, so as to begin a long process of interrogation and searches. Everything proceeded as usual in such situations— an exhaustive interrogation into the smallest details of my life and a thorough search of my belongings. Afterwards I was led into a room to run a body search on me. And while a woman walked away with my shoes and belt to examine them by X-ray, another stayed with my watch, which she held inside her palms and went on contemplating with intent and sincerity. A few minutes later she looked at her watch, then back at my watch. Then again at her watch, then at my watch. When the first lady came back with the rest of my belongings, she hurried over to her to tell her that there was something strange about my watch. It was not moving. Five minutes had passed according to her watch, whereas according to mine none had passed. They called the security chief and my heart beat started to bang violently on my chest.

I didn’t know how much time had passed before my watch, and then I were cleared of all suspicions and let go. But I discovered when I reached home that it was nine o’clock in the evening, while my watch was still pointing to ten to two in the afternoon. Maybe my watch was only trying to comfort me by making me believe that all that search and delay had lasted zero minutes. As if nothing had happened. Or perhaps it simply refuses to count the time that is seized from my life, a time whose only purpose is to humiliate me and send me into despair. A kind of time suspension, so as to obscure the time of pain.

Opposite to this malfunctioning in Palestine, my watch has not once stopped moving outside Palestine. It is never late to count every second of the other time. In fact, it many times moves slightly faster than it should, to a point where it seems to lose track of time. So fast it moves as if wanting to shake off this other time from it, one second after the other, so to catch up with the time in Palestine.

Thus, had it been seven hours or zero that distance my little watch from Palestine, it remains the same for it, and only to comfort me; it leads me out of time, no matter where I am.

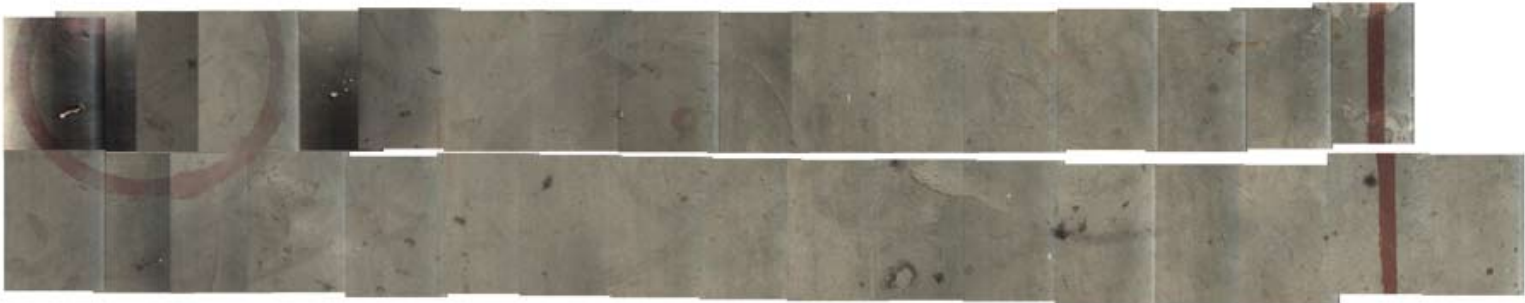
JEROME MING

Oh yeah. Bangkok International Art Festival? an *art project*. What was that about? Ha! Still, the work we planned was interesting. It evolved collaboratively.

Damn laptop battery kept running out. *technology*. I had enough battery *life* for about thirty scans per sitting. Odd. I wonder what the people living in the condominium opposite thought. *Unfinished business*. A building is left incomplete. A ghost of the Asian financial crisis. Doorways with no frames, and elevator shafts with no lifts. Just concrete. A *decade* has passed.

Crossed my mind it might have appeared strange to see an *international artist* (*read: farang*) with a laptop, a fold up stool and a flatbed scanner in an unfinished building, everyday for a couple of weeks, copying sections of the floor. Mind you, there was a three legged dog living in the building. I can't have stood out.

Where I *worked* was the last floor of what would have been the parking area before the building converges into office space. The outline of a takraw court is crudely painted on the floor of what would be the drive thru area. It's dimensions are *roughly* 1:1. *Perfect*. The cycle of appropriation continued, an abandoned building project, becomes a home to migrant workers, an abandoned game becomes part of an art project. But a *game* had already started long ago, before the festival organizers even led us to see the space, and even before the contractors staged their ground-breaking ceremony to begin construction.



Jerome Ming. *decade/decayed* 2007
Photographs found in the unfinished building

Takraw is played with a rattan ball, on a court the size similar to a badminton court. Three players a side have an objective to score points, using any part of their body except the arms and hands, to hit the rattan ball over a net. It is a fast and physical sport. Players have to be extremely agile in competition. This *game* has a point of completion.

I wonder if someone tried calling the authorities? I recall wearing army pants to *work*. There was the *bloodless coup* of course. Tanks on the streets. Wasn't that an excuse given to us why the Bangkok International Art Festival had to be called off? Or, was it postponed?



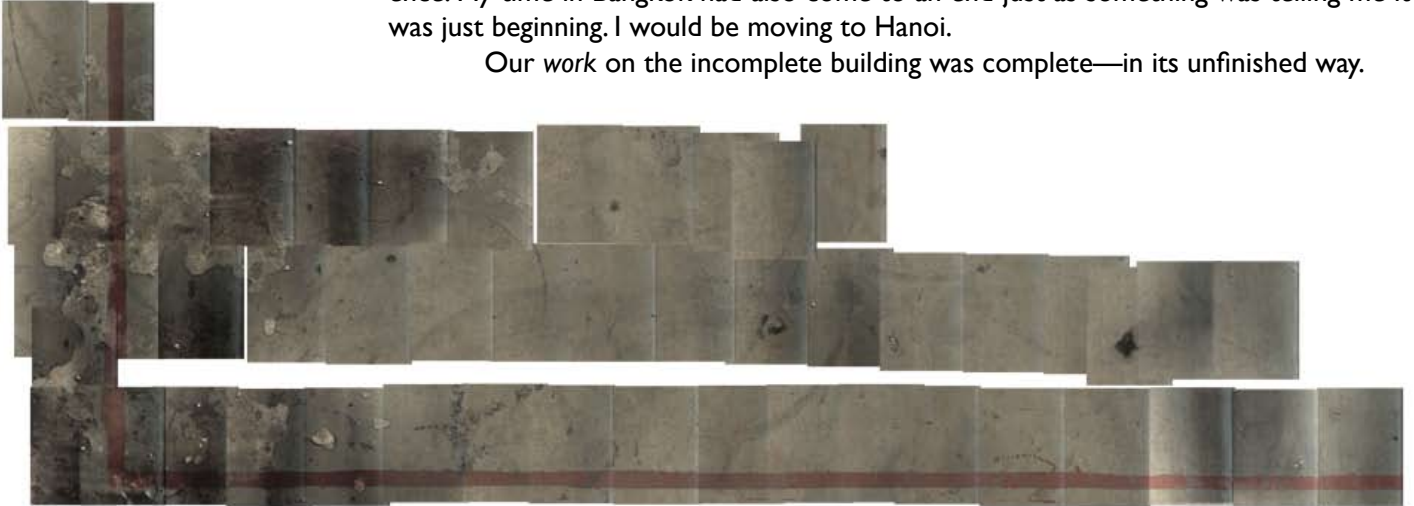
Jerome Ming. *decade/decayed* 2007
Photographs found in the unfinished building

Jerome Ming. *decade/decayed* 2007
Photographs found in the unfinished
building

Initially, the people squatting in the building were okay with us being there. We would have hated to compromise their situation. I mean, who would be pleased to have been evicted because of an *art project*? But still, there were tests to access the building. I would say we were reluctantly, but openly welcomed. There was the food stall checkpoint at the front gate and the three legged dog several floors up.

Just as I had figured a routine with the scanning, and squeezed as much battery *life* from the laptop as I could in the sessions, we were told it was too risky for them—for us to be seen spending time there. We would compromise the squatters with our presence. My time in Bangkok had also come to an end just as something was telling me it was just beginning. I would be moving to Hanoi.

Our *work* on the incomplete building was complete—in its unfinished way.



Causality (re)Cycles A Community-based Recycling Program at Smokey Mountain, Metro Manila

MARLYNE SAHAKIAN

Which came first, the squatters or the landfills? Starting in the mid 20th century, Manila experienced drastic urban expansion coupled with the exponential growth of city slums. In many cases, these slums grew next to or directly on open waste dumps, where squatters were able to scavenge trash to sustain a meager livelihood through recycling—often in the worst sanitary and health conditions. Smokey Mountain, located in Tondo, Manila, was the first dumpsite to exist in the city and, starting from the 1950s, all of Metro Manila's garbage was sent to Smokey. The alarm bell rang on the international level in the early 1990s when Smokey Mountain made the front cover of *Time* magazine's Asian edition. Images of families literally living on the landfills traveled around the globe. In the nineties, the landfill was partially cleared and the City delivered low-income housing to accommodate the growing community of over 30,000 people. It would seem that the world has now forgotten all about the Smokey Mountain community, they are only yesterday's media scandal. What was once a sleepy fisherman's village on the outskirts of the city remains a 2 million-ton pile of trash that still holds true to its name: it resembles a mountain and turns deceptively green in the rainy season, and still exudes some smoking gases in the hotter months.

At Smokey Mountain today, trash collection, not fishing, is the community's core competency, to use business speak. From the individual waste pickers to the junk shops, a whole chain of people and cooperatives are in the business of recycling solid waste. This article attempts to capture the story of one particular cooperative at Smokey Mountain that collects, sorts and sells trash, but does this in a way that builds on extraordinary core values that take into consideration social and environmental factors in addition to the economic bottom line. Before we talk about this particular cooperative, it would be interesting to understand the market forces, or to be more precise the economic incentives that are driving the recycling industry. Since I began working with Smokey Mountain through a non-governmental organization called Sustainable Project Management in 2005, I have been able to witness what can only be described as a growing recycling industry in the Philippines—and this is not only due to growing environmental concerns. Quite the contrary, recycling is very much a business where private interests, large and small, are busy carving out their piece of the pie. It is said that one man's trash is another man's treasure. In today's world market this could not be more valid a statement: by latest accounts, China is buying up over 9 million tons of used plastic or recyclable plastic every year. Petroleum-based plastics are certainly a coveted resource in a world market that is becoming increasingly aware of the limited availability of non-renewable resources. In Tondo, even a six-year-old child from a squatter community knows to collect a discarded plastic bottle from the ground, as he or she knows the monetary value of petroleum-based used plastics.

According to a 2004 study by the Asian Development Bank, Metro Manila produces approximately 6,700 tons of garbage per day of which 720 tons is retrieved for recycling and composting. The balance, some 6,000 tons, finds its way to the city's designated dumpsites, to illegal privately owned dumpsites, or to rivers, creeks and the Manila Bay. Collecting trash or basura (a word rooted in Spanish colonial beginnings) is nothing new but an ethical issue is raised—Who is collecting trash and in what conditions? The standard actors in the collection business include individual scavengers who work usually alone or with their children to gather recyclable waste directly from dumpsites. I met several scavengers and almost all of them seemed to be in unusual physical conditions—crooked fingers, stooped postures, etc. Nobody was able to tell me if they gain this condition from working on dumpsites or if their condition at birth gives them no other choice of employment. In any case, one can only imagine the health and safety conditions involved in working on a pile of trash each day. On average, what is more politely called a waste picker in Metro Manila makes approximately 1 USD a day. Many loan a tricycle or a cart for the day, at a cost of 50 cents. We can quickly get a sense of the type of population that is waste picking, what is often called the poorest of the poor although coming up with degrees of poverty is questionable.

By conservative Asian Development Bank estimates, 200,000 people in Metro Manila make their livelihood directly from trash collection. Today, there is a genuine frenzy of enthusiasm in the Philippines for recycling: beyond the individual scavenger or waste picker, a drive through Tondo towards Smokey Mountain reveals countless small junk shops or facilities that stock recyclables. Plastics tend to be the most lucrative form of waste that can be recycled, because of the added value that can be created through sorting and classifying by type and color of plastic. There is also a new law being implemented in the Philippines, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act commonly referred to as RA 9003 that stipulates a reduction landfill waste by creating more Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) at the *barangay* or local community level, MRFs that are designed to collect, sort and stock recyclables.

And yet, it is more efficient—energetically speaking—to reuse a bottle of water than to recycle it. There are three primary cycles that should be factored into the durability of goods: the reuse of a product, the repair of a product and/or its parts, and

the upgrading or restoring of a product. Recycling always contributes to a downgrading of material and energy and therefore should be seen as the last resort. In other words, even the economic activity of recycling succumbs to the two natural laws of thermodynamics: nothing can be created nor destroyed by man, and the degradation of energy is irreversible. A dilemma is therefore presented: the current waste management system in Metro Manila is focused on recycling, not reduction or reuse, precisely because there is economic profit to be made. Hungry China is buying up used plastics from the Philippines by the ship full. Hundreds of thousands of people are dependant on recycling as a means of creating livelihood, even if the job is ill paid and often takes place in dangerous health and safety conditions. Herein lies the butterfly effect or the causality cycle: as more people consume, more waste is created; as long as economic incentives exist, more people recycle (instead of reducing or reusing waste); for the current recycling process to be profitable, the manual labor must remain at a minimal cost.

It is by understanding this market-driven situation that we can better appreciate the work of one group in Smokey Mountain: The Samahan ng Muling Pagkabuhay (SMP), a church-based multi-purpose environmental cooperative based at Smokey Mountain that is composed of 150 families who work and live in the community. In his 1968 book *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, Gunnar Myrdal stated: “All knowledge, like all ignorance, tends to be opportune and to advance the cause of special interests—as long as the investigators fail to observe the necessity of working with specific and explicit value premises. There is a ‘convenience of ignorance’ ” that must lead to a careful scrutiny of our inferences and observations. As we will see, the success of this cooperative is very much based on making value premises explicit—to use Myrdal’s language—and not on conveniently ignoring the plight of waste pickers. Strong values and a collaborative approach is what transformed the situation of this cooperative: it is not just about recycling or making a buck, it’s about working inside a system driven by economic forces but with clear social and environmental priorities.

We began working with the SMP cooperative in 2005 and the role of our non-governmental organization, spearheaded by program director Anita Celdran, was to help improve livelihoods and take what is basically a business-minded approach to their recycling business, while keeping environmental concerns high on the agenda. First of all, this cooperative does not rely on individual scavengers or waste collectors to deliver trash, unlike other junk shops in the area. They have privileged relationships with corporate suppliers, such as Unilever, as well as with Catholic churches and schools. Their intention is to not continue to support the dangerous and unhealthy work of waste-pickers, but rather train and integrate these scavengers into becoming MRF sorters in their facility. Looking at their processes, it became fairly evident that they needed better accounting

practices to be able to manage cash flow: by placing an accountant in-house, their balance sheet came out of the red and the cooperative was even able to access a micro loan. Next came the business operations in themselves. Bert Guevera was invited to give his counsel, a *barangay* captain from Paranaque and one of the pioneers in community waste management in the Philippines (he helped place a focus on local implementation in the writing of the new law, RA 9003). By focusing only on plastic and organic waste, one could say that the cooperative gained an area of expertise. In plastics, as we have said earlier, you can gain more money in its sale when you have sorted it properly: distinguishing types of plastics, then colors, then washing the recyclables clean. With the help of Bert and his team, the operations were streamlined and became more efficient and therefore more profitable.

The new Material Recovery Facility being built in progress at Smokey Mountain, Metro Manila.



So far, we have only looked at what are the business aspects of this cooperative's operations. Here we are in Smokey Mountain, a notorious squatter community, and we are writing and implementing business plans, meeting agenda's, next steps, contractual agreements, loan requests, etc. The level of professionalism and organization that is brought to the table is no different from what might take place in a boardroom in downtown Makati, seemingly light years away from this context. In my experience, it is the core values of this cooperative that drive its success. We have already said that they are a faith-based organization and they have the support of a prominent Catholic figure, Father Beltran, to be more precise, and their founding articles or constitution talk about higher ideals and missions. But what is more impressive is how this is brought into daily work and life: at every meeting, it is made explicit: for SMP, the goal is first to help their community and the environment that they live in. While being financially sound is an important factor, driving profit is not the core value. For example, the cooperative began a community-wide campaign last September to get households to segregate wet from dry waste. Today, all 21 buildings are sorting their organic or wet waste (food waste), and placing it in receptacles outside of their buildings. The cooperative collects the food waste and creates compost—not a particularly lucrative waste stream as of yet, but a true community service. For women to be able to work from home, the cooperative has organized and trained about one hundred mothers to become craftswomen in the making of bags out of used paper. These beautiful handbags are being sold in Australia as well as other overseas markets, bringing in a suitable income for these women.

The goal of the cooperative is to hire more people from the community and create more employment. The greatest challenge was to find a new location for their waste sorting and storage, as their old facility was still operating out of no man's land in a pier in Tondo. In 2006, funds were allocated to the construction of a brand new facility right near their residential apartments at the foot of Smokey Mountain. A green architect, Clifford Espinosa, was invited in and came up with a historic Filipino design for the facility: bamboo flooring on the second floor allows heat to travel up and out of the roof; large windows and generous roof shade create a sensation of coolness on the inside; all of the wood used has been recuperated from old buildings; and the blocks that make up the walls are made from the residual waste of Unilever products mixed with concrete. Construction began in April 2006 and around 40 men in the Smokey community were trained as masons to help with the job at hand. The women of the cooperative began a catering service on the construction site. Today, the new MRF is very close to completion and will be able to employ 45 more people than in the past, including women who were unable to work in the dangerous location of the old site.

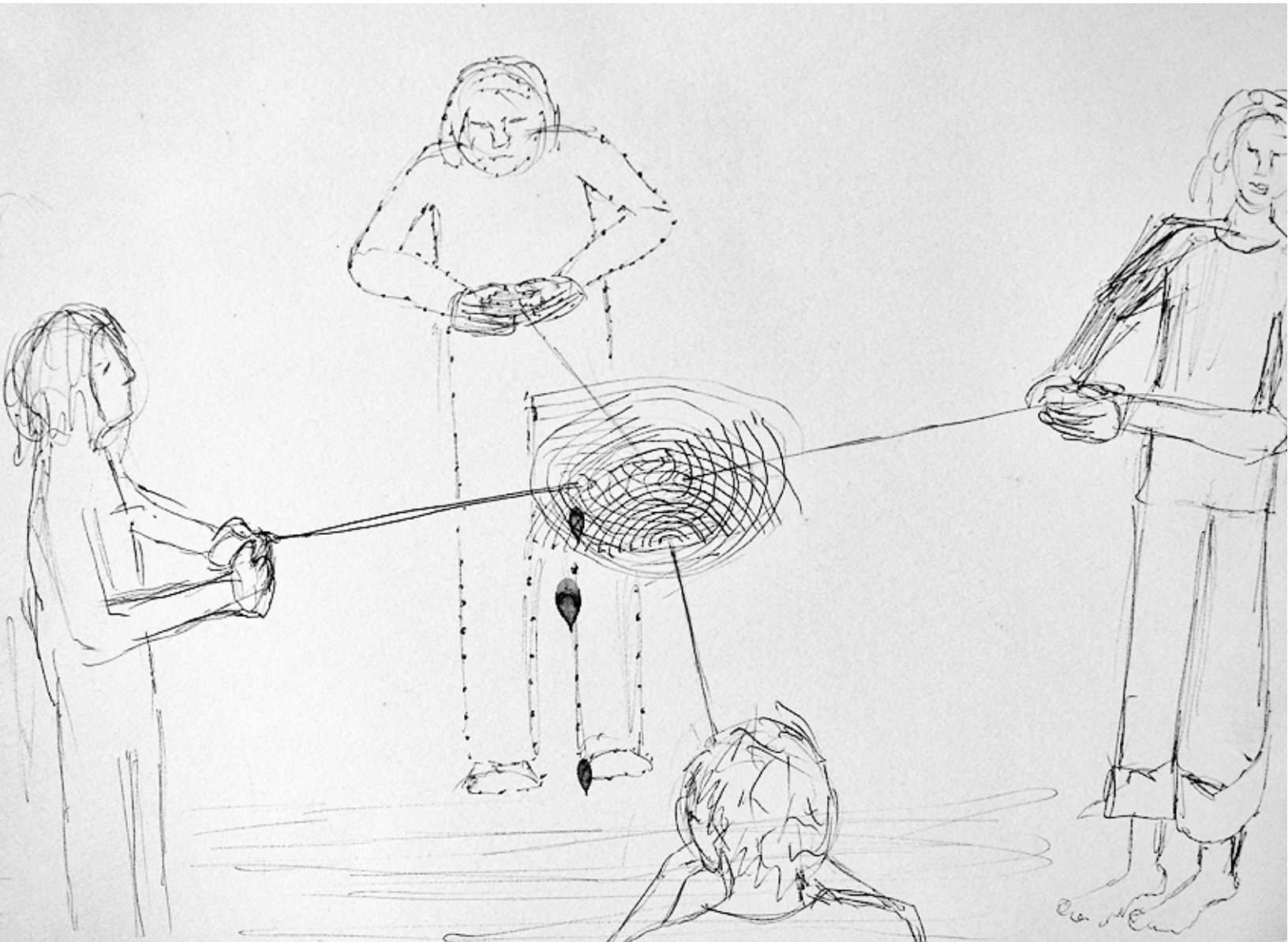
Right in the heart of Smokey Mountain, a stone's throw away from the remaining landfill, this small and beautiful facility embodies what can be achieved by what many may view as a destitute, impoverished squatter community. In guise of a conclusion, this essay hopes to present recycling not as a glorious solution to environmental problems but rather as an economic industry that is playing out at a national level in the Philippines. One very small player within this system is being held up as an example of positive causality cycles: with the right core values in place and a collaborative approach, the self-perpetuated positive outcomes seem endless. While a majority of us worry about how much things cost or how long things might take, this cooperative has decided to ask different questions: How many people can we employ? How can we make their work environment more secure? What will have the smallest impact on our natural environment? How can we help the community we live in? If the people of Smokey Mountain can look at economic profit while keeping environmental promotion and social justice top of mind, we certainly have some precious lessons to learn from their endeavors. Perhaps it's not the poor we should be worrying about, but the rich.

The new Material Recovery Facility taking shape.



LILIANNE ZUMKEMI

During a flight from Zurich to Bangkok, I was thinking about the many obvious, forced or hidden choices we face in our daily lives. The drawing "Options On" was later transformed into a performance installation entitled "Brain Control". The viewers could partake in "Brain Control" and were given a radio remote control to steer silver and gold colour brain-shaped objects on wheels. In Silver and Golden Color: (www.geocities.com/lilianezumkemi/brain.html)



About Ctrl+P Journal of Contemporary Art

Ctrl+P was founded in 2006 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. 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 is currently part of *documenta 12 magazines project*, a journal of 97 journals from all over the world (<http://magazines.documenta.de/frontend/>)

About Ctrl+P's Contributors

Since 1998, **Estelle Coheny Vallier** has been working with migrant children and women. She will soon start her masteral studies in Fine Arts at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. The topic of her research will be on "metamorphosis and statelessness." ● **Mona Bur** a cultural worker based in Cairo, Egypt. was raised in a Russian-Sudanese home. She aims to connect people and ideas throughout the world through writing, music and design. ● **Barbara Campbell** is a performance artist from Sydney who has worked with the contextual properties of all kinds of sites since 1982: galleries, museums, stairways, atriums, piers, and now the internet through her ongoing durational performance, *1001 nights cast*. (<http://1001.net.au>) ● **Karla Sachse** was born in East Germany in 1950. Since 1982, she has made exhibitions, mail art, street events, visual poetry, installations and language rooms. She has undertaken numerous international collaborative projects such as those at the Alvar Aalto Museum in Finland, and at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds. She now lives and works in Berlin. ● **HERS** is a group of women artists in Bangkok active since 1996. ● **Adania Shibli**, born in Palestine, teaches at the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of Nottingham. She is a PhD Candidate at the School of Social Science, Media and Cultural Studies, University of East London. In addition to her academic work she has been writing. ● **Jerome Ming** collaborated with Varsha Nair and Preenun Nana (curator) on a project for the Bangkok International Art Festival. After delays of more than a year, the festival was eventually staged in early 2007, without their participation. ● **Marlyne Sahakian** lives in Geneva and works for the Swiss NGO, Sustainable Project Management. She has a business background and is currently completing her Masters in Development studies with a focus on ecology. Marlyne also curates contemporary art shows and is a contributing writer for various art reviews. (www.spminternational.com) ● **Liliane Zumkemi** is a Swiss born artist living in Bangkok, Thailand. She has exhibited her work internationally, particularly in Asia. Recently she showed her series "Bangkok Smell Project" for the Fête de la Francophonie in Yokohama, Japan. (<http://www.sikart.ch>)

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 EWHU University, Seoul, which she writes about in the second issue of this journal (<http://www.trauma-interrupted.org/ctrlp/issue2.pdf>) She curated and organized the international and interdisciplinary exhibit-conference-workshop called *trauma, interrupted* held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP). 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 *Exquisite Crisis & Encounters*, New York, 2007 (www.apa.nyu.edu); *Subjected Culture-Interruptions and Resistances on Femaleness*, venues in Argentina till 2008 (<http://www.planoazul.com/default.php?idnoticias=1390>); *Sub-Contingent: The Indian Subcontinent in Contemporary Art*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy, 2006; *EMAP - media in 'f'*, 5th EWHU Media Art Presentation, Seoul, Korea, 2005; *In-between places*, Si-Am Art Space, Bangkok, 2005; *Video as Urban Condition*, Austrian Culture Forum, London, 2004; *From My Fingers-Living in the Age of Technology*, Kaohsiung Museum of Art, Taiwan, 2003; *With(in)*, Art In General, New York, 2002; *Home/Dom*, Collegium Artisticum, Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina, 2002; *Free Parking*, Art Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 2002 (www.thingsmatter.com/project.php?proj=0234&mediaID=13) She performed at Saturday Live, Tate Modern London, 2006; and at National Review of Live Art, at Tramway in Glasgow, 2006, at the Arches in Glasgow, 2004 (www.newterritories.co.uk), and at National Review of Live Art Midland, at the Railway Workshops in Perth, 2005 (www.swan.wa.gov.au/nrla/) Nair has co-organ-

ized/co-curated various art events and projects; she was also instrumental in setting up the Womanifesto website in 2003 (www.womanifesto.com). The last three projects for Womanifesto: Womanifesto Workshop 2001, Procreation/Postcreation 2003 and the recently completed net-art project No Man's Land, were conceptualized by her. She was the Bangkok curator for 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. She was invitee speaker at the conference Public Art In(ter)vention, Chiang Mai, 2005; Women's Art Networks: Varsha Nair and Wu Mali in Conversation, Taipei Artist Village, Taipei, 2004; Presentation for EMAP, 5th Media Art Presentation held in conjunction with 9th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, held at EWHA University, Seoul, Korea, 2005; Art and Public Spaces by SEAMEO-SPAFA Regional Centre for Archeology and Fine Arts, Bangkok, 2002; Asia Now: Women Artists' Perspectives, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2001; Exhibition symposium Women Breaking Boundaries, Hillside Forum, Tokyo, 2001; co.operation, a conference on feminist art practice and theory, Dubrovnic, Croatia, 2000. Her writings have been published in art and architecture journals such as *n.paradoxa*, *Art AsiaPacific*, and *art4d*. Born in Kampala, Uganda, Nair has a BFA from Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayaji Rao University, Baroda, India.

● **Judy Freya Sibayan** 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. The City of Manila where she lives and works awarded her the *Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinagan sa Bagong Pamamaraan* Award in 2006. 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 of the *Museum of Mental Objects* founded in 2002 with writer and editor Matt Price. MoMO is a performance art proposing that the body of the artist be the museum itself. 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 PEER Gallery Space in London, The Tramway, Glasgow, Vienna Secession, Hayward Gallery, PSI Contemporary Art Center, The Farm in San Francisco, Sternersemuseet in Oslo, The Photographers' Gallery in London, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Artspace Sydney, Kiasma Contemporary Art Center, Helsinki, The Mori Art Museum, The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm, Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center in Copenhagen, Fukuoka Art Museum, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark, Hong Kong Art Centre 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 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) where she has taught for twenty years.