

想像

DEATH

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AND LIFE

OF

死而復生

FICTION

MODERN MONSTERS /
DEATH AND LIFE OF FICTION
TAIPEI BIENNIAL 2012

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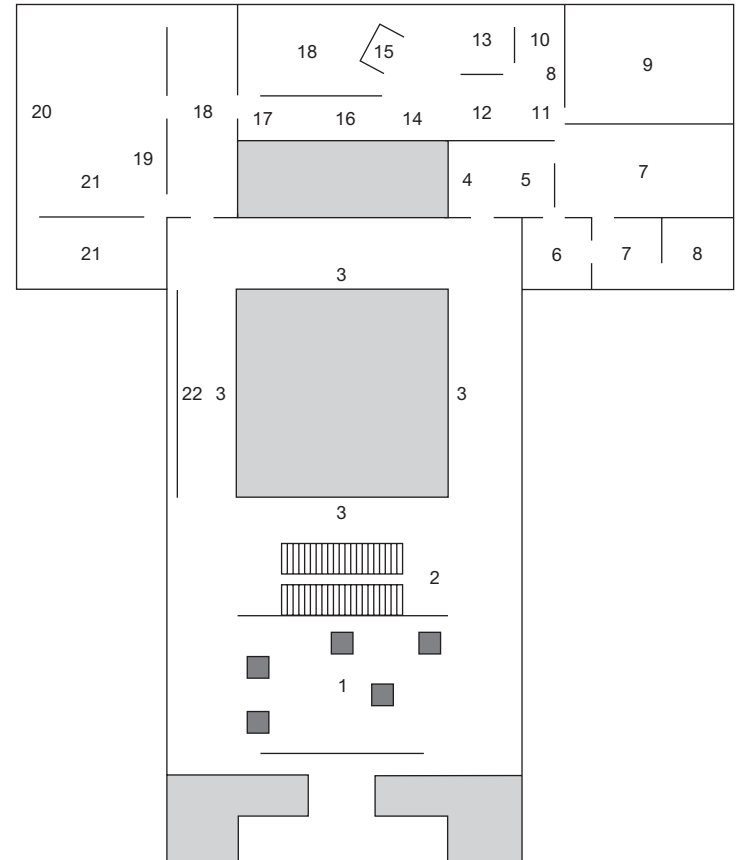
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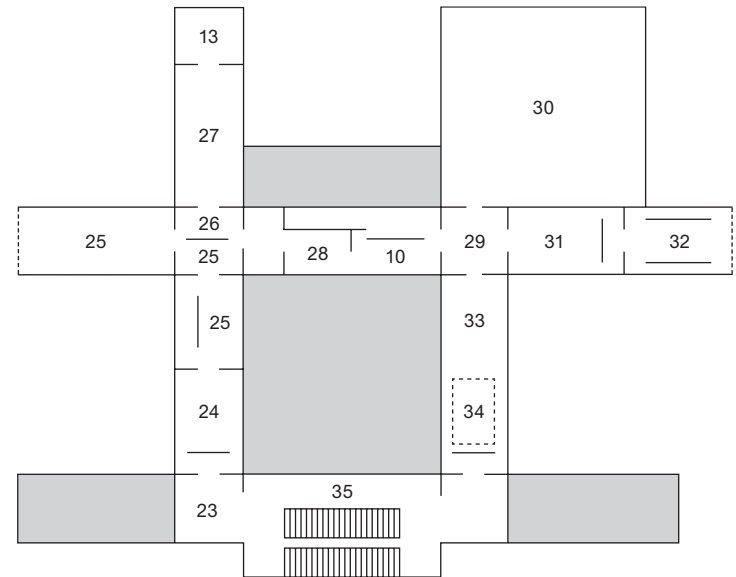
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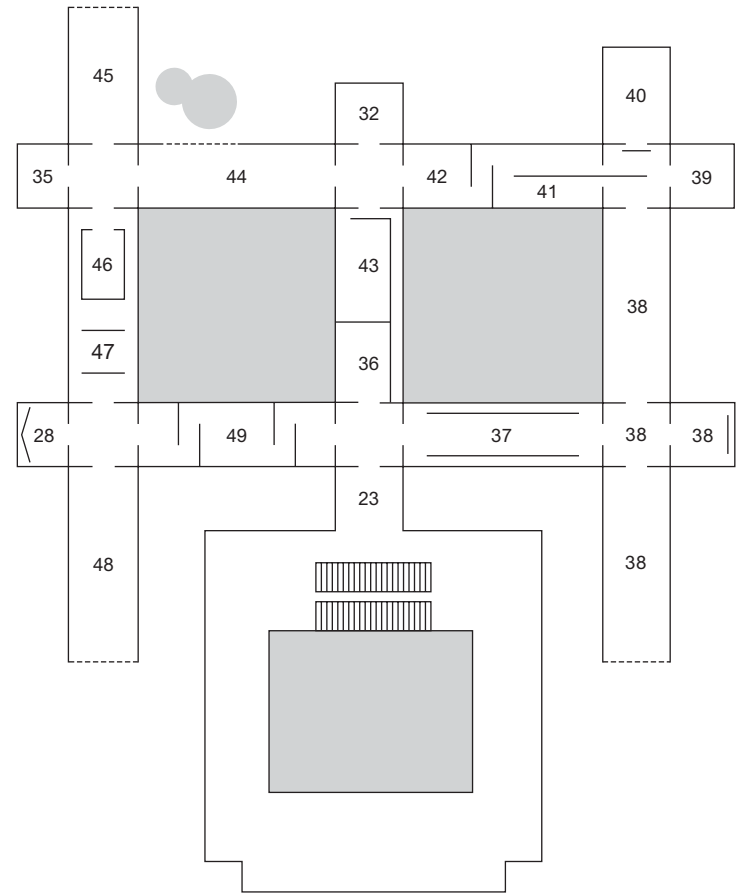
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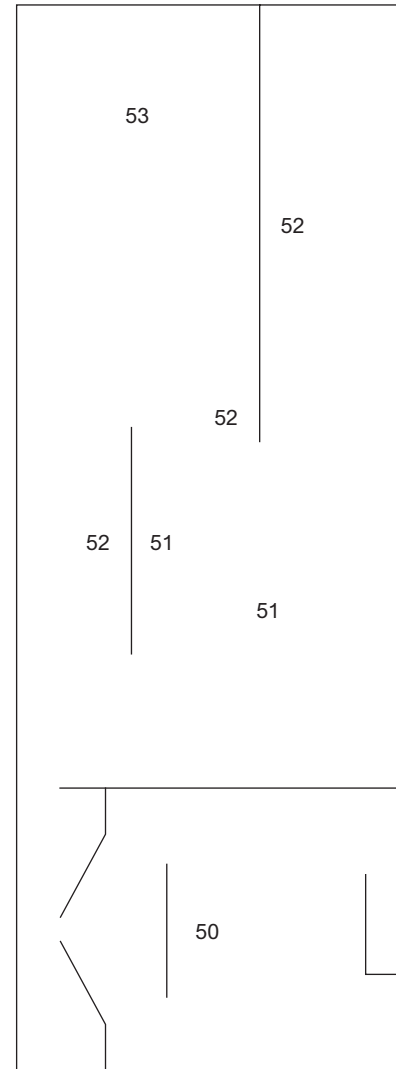


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FOREWORD

The Taipei Biennial is a major event of international cultural exchange held biannually and supported by the Taipei city government. Maturing and expanding since its inaugural edition in 1998, the Biennial has become a vital cultural dynamo and asset for Taipei, if not all of Taiwan. At home and around the world, the exhibition has taken on special significance, and we look forward to each edition every two years with great anticipation and interest.

Numerous new works featured at the Biennial in recent years have been produced on site in Taiwan, many of which reverberate with the socioeconomic zeitgeist both internationally and locally—marking the exhibition with the traits of internationalization, localization, and closeness to social reality. The biannual event not only provides the local community insight into signature development in contemporary art, but also offers audiences a multifaceted viewing experience, while further acting as a vital platform of cultural dialogue between Taiwan and the international community. The expansion of this platform over the years will serve as a reference base for future key historical accounts.

Over its nearly 20-year history, the exhibition has not only endured as Taiwan's flagship contemporary art forum, but has had a huge impact on the creation and development of Taiwanese contemporary art. Each edition of the Taipei Biennial gives creative people across the cultural

community the finest creative prototypes and references at the moment, stimulating development across all sides of the cultural realm. This edition of the Taipei Biennial, the eighth, opens on Education Day in Taiwan, indirectly signifying the essence of the 2012 Biennial—that a biennial exhibition woven from numerous stories, documents, writings, videos and other media requires the audience's active participation and feedback.

I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to our curatorial team, led by guest curator Anselm Franke, and the contributions and efforts of the more than 80 participating artists. Further gratitude also goes out to all the institutions and partners that have supported the Biennial over the years. We are especially appreciative of the ongoing support of the cabinet-level Ministry of Culture (formerly the Council for Cultural Affairs) as well as the continued policy support and trust of successive city government administrations, without which we could not keep the biennials going. This abiding policy support in particular indicates a cultural approach to national administration and a global perspective. Finally, best wishes for another successful Taipei Biennial.

Wei-Gong Liou
Commissioner
Taipei City Department
of Cultural Affairs

PREFACE

The planning and presentation of the Taipei Biennial 2012 coincides with a time of tumultuous change in our world, as an unprecedented onslaught of natural and man-made disasters hit with great force. Drastic swings in weather due to climate change, rapidly melting poles, European debt and global economic crises, and skyrocketing unemployment are accompanied by earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons and flooding, while those areas not inundated with water can ignite into wildfires under the blazing sun. The earth and the people that inhabit her today, to borrow a Chinese phrase, are besieged under deep water and scorching fire.

And yet, like cats with nine lives, biennial exhibitions are going strong all around the globe. Not only have they seemingly remained strong in quantity, a number of second-tier cities are even eagerly preparing biennials of their own. And so it seems that the biennial continues to act as an important “voice” raising a city’s profile, and participants in various capacities imagine and anticipate biennials in myriad ways. As the worldwide biennial phenomenon and its contexts exert a strong impact on the development of contemporary art, what can a biennial contribute amidst the deep waters and scorching fires around the world? Recent editions of the Taipei Biennial have endeavored to respond to this question.

The Taipei Biennial 2012 is curated by Anselm Franke, who enlisted the participation of more than 40 artists and collectives. Somewhat another 40 artists are featured in the “mini museums” Franke proposed, around one-third of whom conceived new commissions for the exhibition. The largest edition to date, the exhibition spans the Taipei Fine Art Museum’s first three floors, extending down to The Paper Mill in nearby Shilin. This biennial seeks to reflect various issues and processes over the course of modern history from Asian perspectives, exploring our truly global historical experiences with the open-mindedness of contemporary art, and investigating questions as true universal historical experience.

All major exhibitions and events are the product of collective energy and wisdom. Taipei Biennial is shaped by the action and will of many people from all backgrounds and positions, without whom it could never take place. With this in mind, I would like to firstly thank all of the artists for their great efforts and contributions. Special gratitude goes to all the institutions and organizations that supported the exhibition, including the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa) and Mondriaan Fonds in Amsterdam, the International Artists Studio Program in Stockholm, the Goethe-Institut Taipei, and the British Council Taiwan. Additional

thanks are due to the Taipei city government and Ministry of Culture for the ongoing support that enables the Taipei Biennial to claim a unique position in the Asian and global contemporary art realms.

In closing, I would like to thank Anselm Franke for his multi-layered curation, complex in process and significance. We hope that the exhibition will provide local viewers and artists a unique exhibition in-the-moment experience. If we can note another record of sorts, Anselm Franke displayed intense interest in local culture while working on the exhibition, and the huge amount of time and energy he invested gives the Biennial

an additional dimension. Such an investment demands feedback and effort from viewers to truly bring out its effectiveness.

Hai-Ming Huang

Director
Taipei Fine Arts Museum

DEATH AND LIFE OF FICTION OR THE MODERN TAOWU

The ancient Chinese monster *Taowu* has been described as a vicious creature that is always making the best of its own life, due to its ability to see both future and past. In his book *The Monster That is History*, David Der-Wei Wang describes how somewhere in the course of Chinese history, writers and historians began to identify the monster *Taowu* with history itself, since it could thwart and undermine human intentions. *Taowu* thus represented the human failure to master history and occupied the blind spot of the respective historical rationales. But Wang suggests that in fact *modern* Chinese history lends itself to a reading through the *Taowu*. The Chinese experience of the twentieth century, then, can be characterized as a raging *Taowu*—an experience not merely of hitherto unheard of evils and suffering, but an experience of undermined human intentions, seeding not reason and liberation, but waves of repression and countless inhuman and irrational terrors committed in the name of humanity, rationality, or a social order that must be installed or defended against all threats. The Taipei Biennial 2012 takes Wang's suggestion as its starting point. At the same time, it takes the

Taowu beyond the realm of literature and historiography and also tests the proposition beyond the limits of the Chinese experience. It explores whether *Taowu* is a possible *common* experience of all modernity, and it uses the monster as a figure through which we encounter contemporary artists' engagement with modern history. The modern *Taowu* we imagine here sits not merely on the prescribed road of history, but also at the meridian point of dialectics—the point where opposites meet, originate, conflate. Like all monsters, it is a dialectical figure, a symptomatic mirror of actual relations. Just as it guarded the empire's frontiers or imperial tombs in ancient times, it now inhabits the borders of political and social control, the horizons of aspiration, the lines of division, and the distinctions that structure social life and the order of knowledge. Situated in the middle between dividing lines, the *Taowu* is a constant reminder that both sides of a division mutually constitute each other—that all relations, even the most asymmetrical, stem from such a meridian point of reciprocity. Its monstrosity is the very form through which it reminds us of what we have in common with what we exclude.

If there was a particular *experience* of modernity represented by the modern *Taowu*, it is the experience of structural violence and the double binds that tie victims to perpetrators, slaves to masters, the minor to the major. The *Taowu* also represents the experience of being entrapped by an anonymous, faceless system and the experience of terror-as-rationality, as in disciplinary or “educational” violence (*this will teach them a lesson...*). But above all, the *Taowu* stands for the monstrous modern story of power, whose vicious character, intelligences, and stupidities the monster epitomizes; for it is the dynamics (and so-called pragmatics) of power—the mastery over people as well as nature—that have notoriously thwarted the modern schemes of progress, emancipation, and liberation.

This biennial dedicates itself to the death and life of fiction. Modernity has unleashed fiction on a grand scale—as colonial projection, commodity driven economy, and desire. It has ghettoized fiction in institutions and disciplines (such as “art”), but out there in the really-real world it has waged a holy war on fiction, a holy war on beliefs, superstitions, and whatever is suspected of non-compatibility with rationality and the reality principle, in the attempt to replace these things once and for all with modernity’s knowledge, its hard facts. Historically, this effort has been a powerful,

monstrous fiction itself. When killed in the name of facts, fiction grows bigger; it is usually the first attacker who falls prey to the new monstrosity thus created, the power of which stems from the fact that it no longer knows that it is fictional.

Yet what we call fiction is not merely manifest in those imaginary creations of monsters. It is in the stories we tell and the images we use to interact and make sense of our environments, of which only a very small part are “fictional” in the conventional sense—that is, false or made up. Rather, fiction—or the imaginary—nests at the center of a reality. It is through fiction-as-figuration that cognition and recognition becomes possible. Fiction determines what we can think and do in the world, and above all, our horizon of possibility. Fiction is the glue that holds things together, the womb from which images and the imaginary are born, and the medium of which our relationships are made. There is hence nothing outside fiction, no other or beyond; there are only different *qualities*, different *grammars*. We call these differences in qualities *culture*. When cultures die, this glue no longer holds the real world and the real relationships together. In a similar way, this exhibition attempts to import monsters from the limits or frontiers back into the center, back “home,” into the core of normality and to normalize them, bring them close to us—in order

to enhance the awareness of the fact that it is we ourselves who produce and reproduce the very divisions from which the monster is born, so that we can stop falling prey to the *Taowu* at the border, which is the mechanism of monster-making: imposing our own evil as an objectified symptom onto others.

The death and life of fiction appears in this exhibition, just like the *Taowu*, in ever-changing identities. Sometimes it appears in the experience of colonial and political terror, as plain death that lurks behind powerful fictional projections. Fictions die in the resulting destruction of cultures, but they live on as fragments animating the broken links—they live on as ghosts, or in the imagery of trauma, or in rituals of commemoration. The life of fiction is hence not identical with striving illusions, and the death of fiction not identical with the final arrival at a definite reality or truth. But the death of fiction indeed can also mark a realization, or the end of a narrative, an image, or an ideology, and the life of fiction can also mean fiction as a mask which diverts us from actual relations and realities. The life of fiction can refer to dreams and utopian projections or to ways of mediating alterity, but it can also be a life in fiction, in the sense of delusion, madness, and delirium. The death of fiction, on the other hand, can simply refer to the end of a dream, or less simply, to an immobilization as

experienced in states of depression: the absence of dialogue, the absence of transformative power, the absence of alterity. It is through this reflection on fiction that we become aware of limits and boundaries and our *systemic implication* in them: they are not “out there,” but within our social bodies, within our cognitive and aesthetic apprehension of the world, like dialogic membranes. Fiction in this sense tells us how our borders are guarded and how they can be opened or even dissolved; and the Taipei Biennial suggests that we use both the aesthetics of monstrosity and the economy of fiction as essential for a *realism* whose subject is the making and un-making of cultural boundaries.

The question of modernity today is not primarily a cultural question. It is primarily systemic, machinic, and abstract, and its anonymous power overrides experience, values, morals, culture, and subjectivities. The systemic aspect of modernity is willfully ignorant of culture and human relations, and this is its strength and its anonymous monstrosity. It is technological, but in a wider sense: it embraces the kinds of fixations, inscriptions, calculations, and automatizations that stabilize and make events predictable—only in order to create a greater potential for other entities to be displaced, mobilized, and to circulate. Under the conditions of modernity culture is, on the one hand, only the unpredictable outcome of the logic

of division and hence its destruction; on the other hand, it is the outcome of the forces unleashed by the dialectics of objectifying control and hybrid entanglements. This systemic modernity does not differentiate between humans or commodities or things when it feeds its machines at the frontiers of “development.” To be on the side of the affixed or the mobilized is left to human concern.

In various ongoing waves of external and internal colonizations, the frontiers of this systemic, abstract modernity have long become global. Official ideologies increasingly act like farcical *Taowu* in that they conflate and subvert opposing positions along the *systemic necessities* of power, as shown by both the current financial crisis or the regime in the PRC. This globalization also means that there is no more outside (spatial, cultural, critical) to the matrix of this systemic modernity, which embraces what it negates in the contemporary deadlock of the inclusive exclusion. This means that there is no *simple* resistance nor simple negation possible, since these positions are already prescribed systemically. But the fact that the modern *Taowu* produces and embraces its opposition and hence distributes its subject positions does not mean that it is immune to the dialectics of power: it is forced to transform as the form of resistance changes. But this resistance always depends on culture as its resource: what it

needs are shared, horizons which unite people around a cause.

We live in a historical moment where all prevalent *understandings* of the world within the frame of “modernity” are in crisis. The crisis concerns narratives, rationales, ideologies. These things no longer provide us with common horizons that mobilize us, since any such aspiration is overshadowed by the fear of unleashing the negative force of the modern *Taowu*, or is already subverted by it in the form of capitalism’s spectacular mimicry. The spirit of modernity was powerful and contagious: in its various incarnations it mobilized people and changed both societies and the world irreversibly. This was a spirit of break-up and departure, a spirit of aspiration against the backdrop of the oppressive forces that first destroyed the memory of the otherwise. But this spirit of common emancipatory aspiration has died in a seemingly endless series of disappointments and monstrous revelations, which today cast their spectral shadow over the horizons of the present, and fuel systemic conformism, self-adaptation and self-modulation. The modern *Taowu* hence stands before us triumphant, petrifying us; it qualifies as perhaps the only universalist fiction of modernity that has not died. It has become the emblem of a modernity we can neither fully identify with nor leave behind. The lesson of the modern *Taowu* as we contemplate it today seems to dictate the reduction

of all forces of negation and negativity at all costs: its lesson is the (systemic) administration and management of the given—which at least is better than yet another wave of cultural destruction. But the price that is paid for this is the loss of common horizons, and hence the loss of a sense of alternatives, and of our basic autonomy, our productive powers of negation. Thus we have ever fewer narratives through which we imagine and negotiate our relations as *qualitative*, and fewer images capable of altering the present through an encounter with historical experience. This narrative-imaginary vacuum calls for a dialogue with the monster that is modernity, in the form of a re-narration which re-describes the modern divisions-as-relations, hence implicating us in the historical-narrative space we inhabit but no longer know how to navigate. And this requires a radical historicizing of all ideas to meet the challenge of relativism, and the making-strange of the systemic-normality of modernity and its self-descriptions and narratives. The task is to close the gap between the cultural and the systemic aspect of modernity, to unlearn to speak in the name of the system and lend it our human face. As a symptomatic mirror, the modern *Taowu* is a figure just for that purpose, the purpose of de-monstering.

Anselm Franke

Hannah Hurtzig

The Waiting Hall. Scenes of Modernity, 2012

The Waiting Hall. Scenes of Modernity is a discursive event taking place on the opening night of the Taipei Biennial 2012 in the vast entrance lobby of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, where subsequently it will remain as an installation and archive. About seventeen people—artists, theorists, activists—are invited to engage in dialogues, which take place in secluded, small office-boxes installed in the lobby. Five dialogues take place in parallel, and audience members listen to their dialogue of choice on headphones, but they can also register themselves to become a partner in one of the dialogues. The installation is conceived as a backstage area and a waiting hall in the image of a Kafkaesque narration of bureaucracy, inspection, and the pact between the one who waits and the one who keeps someone waiting. *Scenes of Modernity* creates a space for undecided modernities and their multiple “primal scenes.” Each conversation will last thirty minutes and revolve around an image or description of this chosen scene.

What is modernity? One of the characteristics of this notorious term is that among different people and different disciplines, there is strikingly little agreement about its meaning and definition, dates and origins.

Is this an epoch, a condition, a mental state, an idea, a method or a technique? There is a modernity of science, of art, of modern nation states, a technological modernity, a social modernity, a colonial modernity, a capitalist modernity, the modernities of the colonized, and the hyper-modernities of the contemporary capitalist cities and worlds. And yet, if there are multiple modernities, what do they have in common? There are modern mythologies, among them the myth of the one modernity with only one trajectory of “development,” one model of progress, the myth of the anti-traditionalist ultimate break with an archaic, non-modern or corrupted past—a once powerful picture in the imaginary of modernity that in the present has been deeply destabilized and has become uncertain, as no present is safe from the “returns” of the past.

In all cases, the question of just what constitutes “the modern” in modernity remains undecided and perhaps undecidable. But there is no scarcity, on the other hand, of “primal scenes” and myths of origin. The installation takes as its point of departure a primal scene of modern Chinese literature: in 1906, Lu Xun, then a student of Western medicine in Japan, saw a slide show in which a Chinese crowd idly watched as one of their compatriots was beheaded for spying on the Japanese army in the Russo-Japanese

war. Dumbfounded by this scene of decapitation, and in particular by the apparent passivity of the Chinese onlookers enjoying the spectacle, Lu Xun realized that before saving Chinese people's bodies, he first had to save their souls. He abandoned his medical studies and pursued literature. His short stories, poems, and essays are taken to mark the beginning of modern Chinese literature. Whether this event actually took place or is a myth retrospectively created by Lu Xun, “the case of the decapitation suggests that fiction and (private and public) history might have become inextricably confused, at the (textual) beginning of modern Chinese (literary) history.” (David Der-Wei Wang)

What qualifies as a “primal scene”? All scenes of modern origins appear to be scenes of “division”—whether this is the cutting off of a head from a body or an ultimate break from a tradition or a past. A “scene” or “scenography” also entails a relational diagram—a constellation between conscious actors, passive onlookers, and anonymous structural or systemic agency creating a complex moment in time, staging the paradox of modernity. All definitions of “modernity” have such “primal scenes,” events of rupture and myths of origin against which the very definition of just what counts as “modern” is measured.

The installation work of Hannah Hurtzig/Mobile Academy deals

with the notion of knowledge and non-knowledge and how they are used and transferred in the act of communication in public space. Hannah Hurtzig's Mobile Academy projects explore the rhetorics and gestures of conversation, of one-to-one dialogues, and new and old modes of assemblies. Each project is first a live event and later becomes an installation and an archive. In addition, each project is dedicated to a specific theme/subject and explores it in an encyclopedic manner.

Hannah Hurtzig, born in GDR, lives and works in Berlin

THE SPEAKERS

Iran: Mozaffar-al-Din Shah's Automobile

Bavand Behpoor is an art theorist, artist and critic based in Tehran and Munich. Part of his work on Iran's Martyr Museums is presented in the Taipei Biennial.

Channel 4, The People

Cheng Lu-Lin is a sociologist (economic sociology, developmental and organizational sociology), and Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taipei.

“Yao-yan” Films

Chen Chieh-Jen is a Taiwanese artist whose renowned videos and films are the outcome of collaborative processes, and address the aftermath of violence and imperialisms in the present.

Wushe Incident and Mona Rudo

Chiu Row-Long is an illustrator (*Manhua Bale*) and is particularly inspired by the history and culture of the Taiwanese aborigines. He lives in Taipei.

Introduction to a Disappearing Language: Kari Seediq Tgdaya
Dakis Pawan (Guo Mingzheng in Chinese) is a language teacher from the tribe of the Seediq Tgdaya, in Jin-ai-hiong in Nantou.

The Tilting Image
Anselm Franke is a writer and curator based in Berlin, and curator of the Taipei Biennial 2012. He is particularly interested in liminal aspects of culture, and the politics of mimesis.

John Akomfrah is a director based in London whose films dedicated to the experience of colonialism, diaspora, and resistance.

The Power of Party and Alcohol: Independent Music and its Opponents
Ho Tung-Hung is researching and writing in the fields of popular music, youth culture, cultural politics, and action research, Taipei.

Consequences of the Urban Renewal Act of 1998
Huang Hui-Yu is an art student, activist, and a member of the Taiwan Association for Justice of Urban Renewal, Taipei.

A Hole on the Wall: Why Paint Monochromes?
Luis Jacob, is working as artist, curator, and writer based in Toronto. His diverse practice addresses issues of social interaction and the subjectivity of aesthetic experience.

The First Picture of the Emperor Meiji, 1888
Chihiro Minato is an artist, writer, critic and professor for Fine Art at Tama Art University, where he is one of the founding members of the Art Anthropology Institute, established in 2006.

The Architecture of the International
John Palmesino is an architect and urbanist based in London. Together with Ann-Sofi Rönnskog he initiated

Territorial Agency, specialized in researching the relation between space and politics.

A Desire to Become a Forefather Respected by Generations to Come, as my Forefathers Have Been
Panai Kusui is a singer, song writer, and folk icon, collecting and preserving aboriginal song tradition. She lives in Taitung.

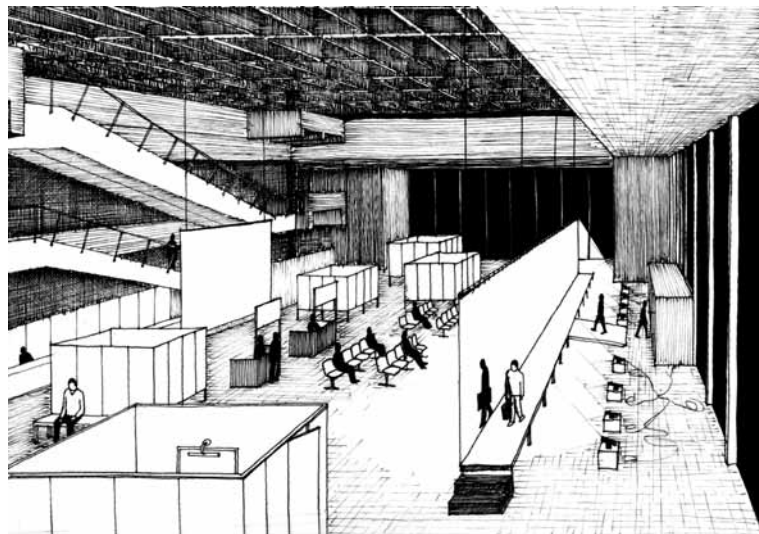
The Living Room Is The Factory
Teng Chao-Ming is a visual artist based in New York and Taipei. His current research is devoted to recent developments in neuroscience and our understanding of the self.

Metamorphosis of Funeral Service in Taiwan
Tseng Haunn-Tarnq, Professor at the Institute of Life and Death Education and Guidance at the National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences.

The Voice of Anti-Nuclear in Kungliao
Tsui Shu-hsin is an anti-nuclear activist and the General Secretary of Green Citizens Action Alliance in Taiwan. She lives in Taipei.

Modern Midwives for Cyborg Babies
Wu Chia-Ling researches in Medical Sociology; Gender Studies; Technology and Society and is an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, National Taiwan University.

A Co-production by Taipei Biennial 2012 "Modern Monsters/Death and Life of Fiction", Taipei Fine Art Museum and Mobile Academy Berlin



Hannah Hurtzig, *The Waiting Hall. Scenes of Modernity*, 2012, installation and performance. Sketch: Florian Stirnemann; Courtesy of Hannah Hurtzig/Mobile Academy Berlin

Anton Vidokle Hu Fang

Two Suns, 2012

This new film, a collaboration between artist Anton Vidokle and writer Hu Fang, is set in an abandoned concrete house in the Taiwanese countryside, situated between a forest and a highway. We watch the building slowly being clad by mirrors. In the process, the house gradually vanishes from sight, as it becomes a mirror, or rather, an image, of the surrounding environment. The film presents us with an allegorical picture that lends itself to multiple readings, yet is directed at a vanishing point.

This point reveals itself in moments of disappearance, situated between the physical decay of a ruin, the erosion of social meanings, and planning aspirations once materialized in the house, or as the title indicates, in the act of mirroring and reflecting.

The Chinese-spoken soundtrack is based on the text "A Collection of Portraits" written by Hu Fang. Sixteen characters emerge before our mind's eyes. Most of them are identified by their professions and by scenes from their everyday lives, while others appear only as poetic contours or projective aphorisms. The portrait as a genre is about creating an image; it is a mimetic mirror of a person, a self—and such a "self" is the very origin and vanishing point of any picture

of the world, since the world must first be mirrored in our senses to appear. Hence, the film's image and sound construct a dialectic relation between "portrait" and "mirror-building," "landscape" and "person/self," at times schizophrenic, at other times exchanging figure and ground, passive and active, ultimately dissolving into each other along this divide.

The English subtitles of the work, finally, form a third, overarching narrative told in the first person by Anton Vidokle. This narrative inscribes the work into the context of architectural modernism by telling the story of Vidokle's visit to the iconic Schröder-House designed by Gerrit Rietveld for his lover in the Dutch city of Utrecht. The first house considered to be "modernist," Rietveld's abode had no mirrors in it—because the mirror, in the architect's view, created a space that was beyond the control of the architect. The site where normally a "self" meets its image in every house is at the same time the blind spot of planning—a space that escapes human control.

*Anton Vidokle, born 1965
in Russia, lives and works
in New York; Hu Fang, born
1970 in China, lives and
works in Guangzhou*



Anton Vidokle, Hu Fang, *Two Suns*, 2012, HD video, colour, sound.
Cinematography by Marcello Bozzini

Pak Sheung Chuen

Taipei Notes:

2011.11.19–2011.11.28

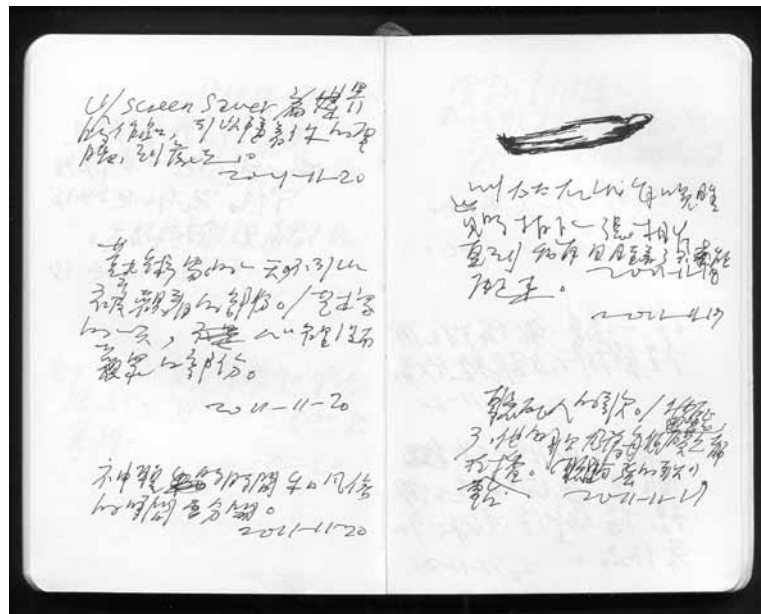
Pak Sheung Chuen's playful work slyly alters the experience of everyday life. He explores, on the one hand, the mental and social "space" between everything that is structured, routine, and stable in our world, and on the other, he investigates coincidence, chance encounters, the arbitrary, and the imaginative. In so doing, he reveals artistic moments in everyday life and brings to the fore the interwoven nature of reality and the imaginary. He prefers to use himself and his writings as a medium, conceiving his works as actions or subtle manipulations of the regular course of events. In most cases these performative actions have no audience; rather, they consist of journeys and self-experiments that engage with ever-changing environments.

In an earlier work called *Waiting for a Friend (Without Appointment)*, Pak went to the Hong Kong Airport waiting area and waited until someone he knew walked out. He has also created a large permanent installation in the New York Public Library. In this project, the artist folded page twenty-two of every second book in the library. Another work consisted of a five-day trip to Malaysia, during which he kept his eyes closed the whole time; he took pictures so he could discover

the country after he returned home. A similar project is *Alternative Tokyo Travel Project 2: Valley's Trip* (2007), for which the artist travelled from southern to northern Tokyo by walking only in the areas corresponding to the middle folds of his map. For his project *Going Home* for the Taipei Biennial 2010, Pak looked for people in the TFAM lobby who would allow him to accompany them to their homes.

His work in the Taipei Biennial 2012, *Taipei Notes: 2011.11.19–2011.11.28* is part of the L (Phase I), which consists of ideas and observations systematically written down in notebooks—a collection of "artistic gestures," the everyday birth of artistic "fictions." The notes come from a trip to Taipei that he undertook in November 2011 and are presented as text on the windows facing the internal courtyard of the museum.

Pak Sheung Chuen, born 1977 in China, lives and works in Hong Kong



Pak Sheung Chuen, *Taipei Notes: 2011.11.19–2011.11.28*, detail of handwritten notes

Willem Oorebeek

Sea = Land, 2012

Mary Kelly BLACKOUT, 2009

Scéance BLACKOUT (London sofa), 2012

More ELLE, 2012

For twelve years, Willem Oorebeek has produced blackouts; he takes existing popular images, blows them up, and covers them with black ink so only the contours stay visible. In the Taipei Biennial 2012 he shows four works. *Mary Kelly BLACKOUT* is a blackout of a poster from an exhibition by the artist Mary Kelly called *Post-Partum Document*, mounted at the Generali Foundation in 1998. In this project Mary Kelly collected images of her son to serialize and historicize his growth process. Willem Oorebeek bought the poster to make it into a blackout and thus appropriate the images.

Scéance BLACKOUT (London Sofa) is a blackout of a poster showing the couch from Sigmund Freud's London apartment. Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, heavily influenced the development of thought and historical analysis in Europe. *Scéance BLACKOUT (London Sofa)* is mounted on a panel in eccentric position, hinting at the absence of something in the frame. According to the laws of visual organization in mass media, the empty space would be the space for a header, columns of text, and captions.

More ELLE is the print-over of two *Elle* magazines from the

People's Republic of China. The magazines were given to Oorebeek by his wife, who travelled in China, although he himself has never set foot in Asia. He is interested in the standardization of *Elle* covers as a sign of visual "globalization".

The gesture in *Sea=Land* is similar to the gesture Oorebeek uses when making a blackout. By crumpling up and then unfolding a historical map of Taiwan, he emphasizes the contours of information and the arbitrariness and politics involved when choosing what information is included in a map and what is not. A simple rupture in the way the map is presented echoes the representability of a standard whose reliability is generally left unquestioned.

*Willem Oorebeek, born 1953
in Holland, lives and works
in Brussels*



Willem Oorebeek, *More ELLE*, 2012, lithography on paper, mounted on dibond, 115 x 92 cm

Yu-Cheng Chou

AURORA, 206 B.C.–220

A.D./2012

The Forgotten Mr. E.P. Gao,
2012

**Mr. Po-Lin Yang with his
Bronze Sculpture**, 2012

“Things” derive their status and meaning from their context and the practices that reproduce and uphold them. They become identified through recognizable signs—just like in the social world. It is through language, gestures and style that we reveal our membership in particular milieus. But if detached and taken out of context, these signs and gestures lose their fixed meanings and identity.

It is through the method of de- and re-contextualization that Yu-Cheng Chou plays with the relation between source and product, meaning and materiality. In his work, he uses strategies and “tricks” of design to achieve subtle displacements of meaning, which produce moments of wonder and surprise, and initiate a reflection on the frames that define what we see and know.

His work for the Taipei Biennial consists of three such displacements and interventions. The first piece, entitled *AURORA*, is a cooperation with a company based in Taiwan that holds a world-renowned collection of Chinese antiques. A group of objects from this collection is shown in the Biennial exhibition, but it is displayed quite

differently from the way “antiques” are usually displayed. Rather than underscoring the status of the antiques as “treasures from the past,” Chou’s display renders them “spectacularized,” placed in a postmodern designed vitrine under moving lights. How is value produced through context and aura, and what does the evaluation—and de-valuation—of the past mean in the present? These questions are further enhanced by the content of the vitrine: figurines of servants meant to function as grave goods, or helpers of the dead in the afterlife.

Another work by Chou also highlights and subverts the role—and spatial “grammar”—of the gallery and the institution of the museum, as he places everyday objects such as drink bottles—as if left by construction workers—on the metal tubes of the air-conditioning system, one of the recent additions to the first-floor gallery in the TFAM. His third contribution is on the upper floors and consists of the placement, in two similar architectural spots, of two similar-looking sculptures by artist Yang Po-Lin, which are found in the TFAM collection.

*Yu-Cheng Chou, born 1976 in
Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei*



Yu-Cheng Chou, *AURORA*, 206 B.C.–220 A.D./2012, pottery figurine.
Photo: The AURORA Art Museum; Courtesy of The AURORA Art Museum

Simon Fujiwara

The Museum of Incest,
2009–2010

The Museum of Incest is Simon Fujiwara's fictive museum dedicated to the preservation and memory of incest practices throughout history. Composed of an architectural scheme that incorporates fragments of his own architect father's unrealized designs with landmark museum architecture, an overtly personal story is inserted into an otherwise grander narrative in a parody of an academic lecture.

The museum is said to be situated in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, the place where science has located the so-called Cradle of Civilization. Just as the development of humankind is based on a collection of historical remains, here the history and development of incest are pieced together based on objects from an imagined time when incest was prevalent or unavoidable. Though incest tends to be left out of most museums, here the artist approaches incest as a natural phenomenon in the development of mankind. The installation consists of two vitrines containing objects, a large mural, a video in which the artist introduces the museum, and a printed museum guide. Simon Fujiwara takes up the role of the designer of the museum.

The museum contains three parts: The Upper Galleries, the Pictures Gallery and the museum

café in the basement. The basement café is an integral part of the museum architecture for its focus on the meal as a family gathering activity. In the café, one wall is covered with a mural by Simon Fujiwara's father that depicts a family dinner. The artist zooms in on the relationship between the father and the son in the image. This painting is also displayed in the installation. By bringing his own persona into the incest frame, Simon Fujiwara makes apparent a negotiation between fact and fiction and adds to the fictional persona that he creates for himself as an artist.

*Simon Fujiwara, born 1982
in UK, lives and works in Berlin*



Simon Fujiwara, *The Museum of Incest*, 2009–2010, mixed media installation, performance and guidebook. Courtesy of Simon Fujiwara and Collection Filiep and Mimi Libeert, Belgium

Yervant Gianikian Angela Ricci Lucchi

Triptych of the 20th Century,
2002–2008

Violence, 2012

Oh! Man, 2003

The Wounded Body, 2004

“For us the past does not exist, nor does nostalgia, only the present does.” Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi are pioneers of an avant-garde cinema that departs from found footage and the cinematic ready-made, as they work with lost and salvaged images from archives, above all those documenting colonialism and the wars of the twentieth century. Working together since the early seventies, their films are overtly political in nature—meditations on the way violence and terror have come to shape the present and our imaginary, and counter-ideological calls for universality in history. They possess their images as scholars and collectors just as much as they are possessed by them. They re-film everything they use in their work, steeping those images in colors and manipulating them into sequences, thus folding past into presence.

Triptych of the 20th Century is a five-channel video installation that is built from three parts: *The Wounded Body*, *To the Defeated*, and *Terrorism*. Together, these three parts show the consequences and horrors of war. The one-channel

projection *The Wounded Body* examines the direct effect of war on the human body by showing a close-up of a brain surgery, but the artists also zoom in on the less visible psychological effects of war, like nervous disorders. *To the Defeated* is a two-channel projection that places opposing images side by side. On the left-hand side, a woman is cooking duck in a hyper-modern kitchen—a typical image of American post-war consumerism—while on the right-hand side, we see images of people devastated by hunger due to war. The controversial title points to the cause of the difference: the “winners of history” are here juxtaposed with those whose defeat was terminal. The third part, *Terrorism*, also consists of two projections. They show the downward spiral of economic deprivation and cultural destruction that people get trapped in during war. The images show the effects of years of hunger and homelessness, and people turning into ghosts of themselves. These pictures are juxtaposed with images of various religious motifs, suggestive of the role of institutionalized belief in provoking as well as compensating for the actual violence.

Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi, born 1942 in Italy, live and work in Milan



Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi, *Triptych of the 20th Century*, 2002–2008, 5-channel video installation, colour, sound, 4 min 50 sec

Maryam Jafri

Avalon, 2011

Independence Day

1936–1967, 2009–ongoing

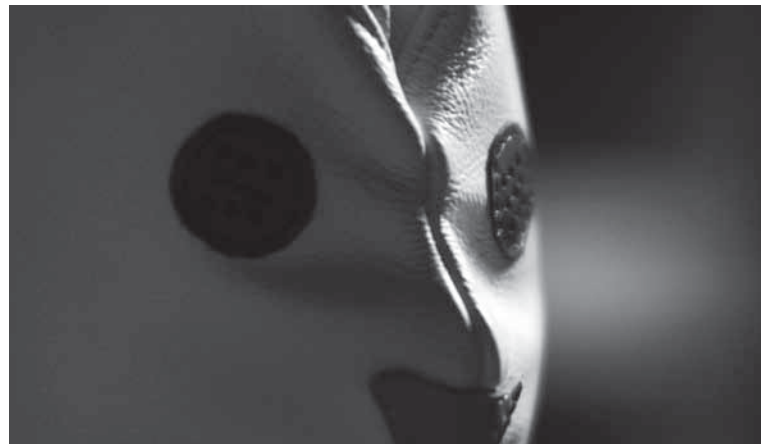
Avalon starts with an interview with an entrepreneur in an unidentified Asian country. The man started a business that secretly exports fetish wear to the West. We learn that he ended up in the business not out of a personal interest, but for economic reasons, as he found that there was a demand in Europe and America that was not being met. So he started catering to the needs of the West.

In the video, several people talk about how they hide parts of their identities in private or in public life, and which roles they take up in order to either fulfill their psychological needs or to be an accepted citizen in society. The work features interviews with a leather fetish clothing designer and with people who use the items in either their professional or private lives. The power relationship and the center and the periphery shift constantly throughout the video, as it becomes clear how much power is in the hands of the one who fulfills the needs of the other. This upside-down power dynamic resonates in geopolitical relationships as we zoom in on the personal stories of two people who occupy opposite roles in a role-playing game.

Independence Day 1936–1967 shows a series of photographs taken on the first Independence

Day of a number of nations in Africa and Asia. The images all have a similar, recognizable setup, including a leader who takes over a nation, a leader who gives over a nation, and a declaration that is signed. Maryam Jafri emphasizes the identical formal staging of these events and the images of them as a symbol for the way the Western nation-state model has been desired by and exported to the ex-colonies. The photos are arranged on the wall as a storyboard and a grid, a formal mold, in which the new nation-state takes its place. Maryam Jafri is interested in this in-between moment, the twenty-four-hour twilight zone between a territory being a colony and it becoming a nation-state.

*Maryam Jafri, born 1972 in
Pakistan, lives and works
in New York and Copenhagen*



Maryam Jafri, *Avalon*, 2011, HD video, colour, sound, 11 min 44 sec

John Akomfrah

The Unfinished Conversation, 2012

John Akomfrah is the director of numerous award-winning films dedicated to the experience of colonialism, diaspora, and resistance. He is one of the founders of the Black Audio Film Collective, which was active between 1982 and 1998, and whose groundbreaking activities placed racism and black identity on the public agenda in Britain.

His new work, *The Unfinished Conversation*, is devoted to Stuart Hall, a theorist of cultural identity and difference who exerted great influence on Akomfrah and the collective movement in which he was involved. Hall arrived in the UK from Jamaica (then still a British colony) in the 1950s, graduated from Oxford, and went on to become a decisive voice on the New Left alongside other intellectuals such as E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams.

The Unfinished Conversation is a three-screen "narrative construction" of the multiple realities of one of the world's most eminent thinkers—a thinker who is a product of both Europe and the Caribbean, and whose interests and concerns include Marxism, nuclear disarmament, culture, race, television, cultural politics, and diasporic identities. *The Unfinished Conversation* focuses on Hall's "formative years" in the 1950s and 1960s.

It alludes to, for instance, the crucial role of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 that caused a Europe-wide exodus from communist parties, and to the Suez Crisis, the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt after Egypt's President Nasser recognized the People's Republic of China and nationalized the Suez canal, one of the world's most important economic arteries. This imperialist invasion sparked mass protests in Britain, and both events ultimately demanded a rethinking of previous leftist orthodoxies.

Akomfrah describes the work as an exercise in "spectropoetics": a re-visitation of the ghosts that haunt a life, and an interrogation of the fundamental transformations in the imaginary that those hauntings ultimately produce. Hence, the work moves between Hall's voice, ideas, memories, inventions, and insights, and immerses his biography in historical events. For Hall, identity is never a finished product or a given reality. Rather, it is an ever-changing relation that emerges in-between subjects and history—as, in his words, an "unfinished conversation."

John Akomfrah, born 1957 in Ghana, lives and works in London



John Akomfrah, *The Unfinished Conversation*, 2012, 3-channel HD video installation, colour, sound, 46 min

Rajkamal Kahlon

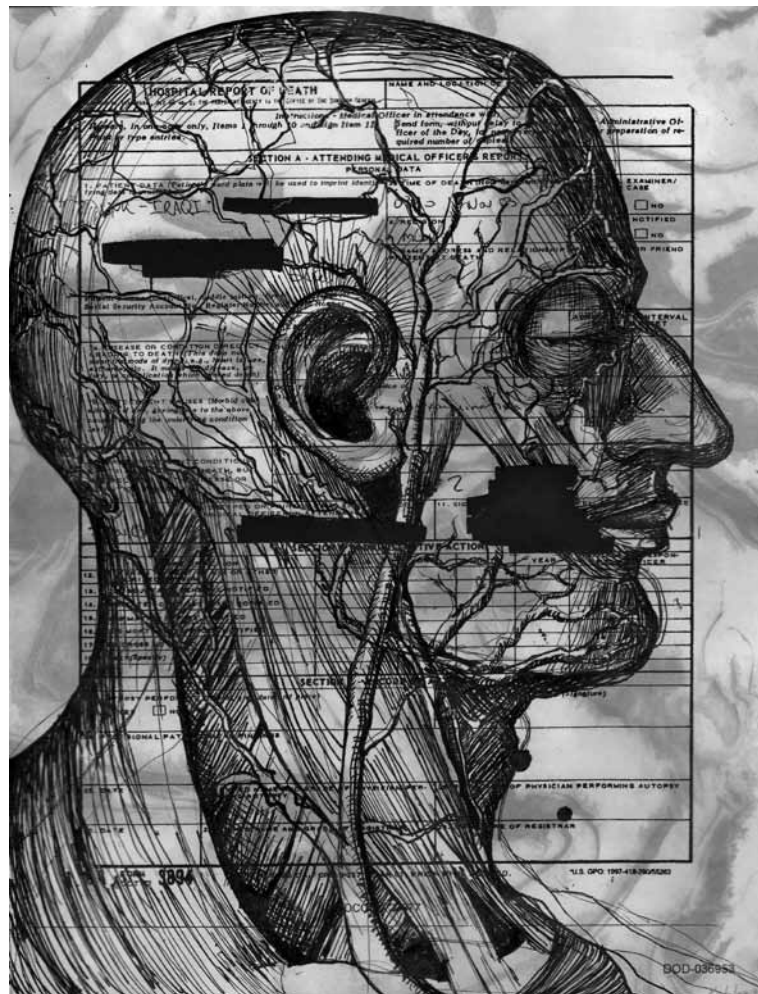
Did You Kiss the Dead Body?, 2009–present
A Tale of Modern Monsters, 2012

Rajkamal Kahlon's paintings, collages, and installations are surgical in nature, opening up the very bodily presence of colonial histories. The first thing we recognize in the paintings in the series *Did You Kiss the Dead Body* are European anatomical illustrations drawn with ink on paper. They are educational illustrations, but they may also make us think of the "ecstatic" medieval tortures of punishment. At first sight, the innocent beauty of the red and pink patterns of the paper obliterates any association with violence and bodily disintegration. The technique of marbling has its origins in Iraq and Turkey, and it is used here as a way to refer to the living interior of the body. But upon a second look, we come to recognize that behind those drawings there is text, documents. These documents are autopsy reports and death certificates from US military bases and prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan, which were controversially made public on the American Civil Liberties Union's website in 2004 under the Freedom of Information Act. The texts highlight relations of abuse and power through descriptions of anonymous Iraqi and Afghan male prisoners, young and old, who died

in US custody. The reports employ a rational scientific language to catalogue the internal and external details of the men's bodies while attempting to determine a cause of death, ranging from "natural" to "undetermined" to "suicide." The title of the work—*Did you Kiss the Dead Body?*—is a reference to the last line of Harold Pinter's poem "Death," read by Pinter during his 2005 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, a speech marked by sharp criticism of American foreign policy and reflections on the nature of truth, language, and power.

A new work by Rajkamal Kahlon is a large wall painting with a sculptural component. The tree, a symbol of the cycles of nature and life, here bears fruit in the form of disintegrated human fingers. The finger is the instrument of pointing, and the tree figured by Kahlon here may be read as a delirious, dream-like vision, through which the gestural "meaning" of dismembered bodies make its claims on the present.

Rajkamal Kahlon, born 1974 in USA, lives and works in Berlin



Rajkamal Kahlon, *Did You Kiss the Dead Body?* (detail), 2009, series of ink drawings on marbled U.S. military autopsy report, each 28.3 × 36.6 cm

Joven Mansit

Tabloid News, 2012

Huli, 2012

Tres Paganus, 2010

Ammo Dump Explosion

Rocks South Manila, 2011

Joven Mansit is a painter whose work is based on Philippine history. In his deceptively realistic painterly re-creations of old photographs and documents, he achieves a transformation of the “historical document.” The document is liberated from its indexical relation to past events, and becomes an imaginary scene which disrupts the present—inscribed into popular fictions, carrying latent memories, a fractured representation of a living mythology. In other words, Mansit blurs the line between representation and the waking dream—or even the hallucinations—of history. But not only does he meticulously re-paint historical images, thus fictionalizing and mythologizing them. Above all, he is a collagist and a manipulator of images, icons, signs, and symbols. In his compositions, he transforms what the images depict into scenographies of Filipino history that take the shape of a historical theatre of the absurd. It is in the realm of the surreal and the absurd that images open up to multiple associations—but where they lead us is nevertheless not left to chance. Rather, Mansit’s paintings transport us into a realm of dismembered icons, capturing

contemporary myth and historical experience at once.

Among the works by Joven Mansit on display is a series of oil paintings using pages from the English-language Philippine newspaper *Daily Pacifican* as backdrops. The pages come from the 1940s and the headlines situate us in World War II. The scenes painted onto the newspaper depict figures covering their heads with the so-called “bayong,” a Filipino basket. This image is itself an “icon” of sorts, immediately recognizable as an image of traitors: the Makapili, or Alliance of Philippine Patriots. The Makapili was a militant group formed in the Philippines during WWII that gave military aid to imperial Japan. The Makapili are best remembered for aiding the Japanese by pointing out insurgents while covering their heads with the *bayong* in order to conceal their identity. The head and face is also a key motif that Mansit alters and manipulates in his other works. It is an image of the named and the nameless, of a playful engagement with both fundamentally uncertain and haunted identities.

*Joven Mansit, born 1984
in the Philippines, lives and
works in Manila*



Joven Mansit, *Huli*, 2011, oil on 1940's newspaper, 47.5 × 29.5 cm.
Courtesy of Miguel S. Tomacruz Collection

Harun Farocki

Parallel, 2011-2012

Harun Farocki systematically draws our attention to the way in which images, technologies, and systems of representation define social and political space, consciousness, subjectivities, structures of feeling, and ideologies.

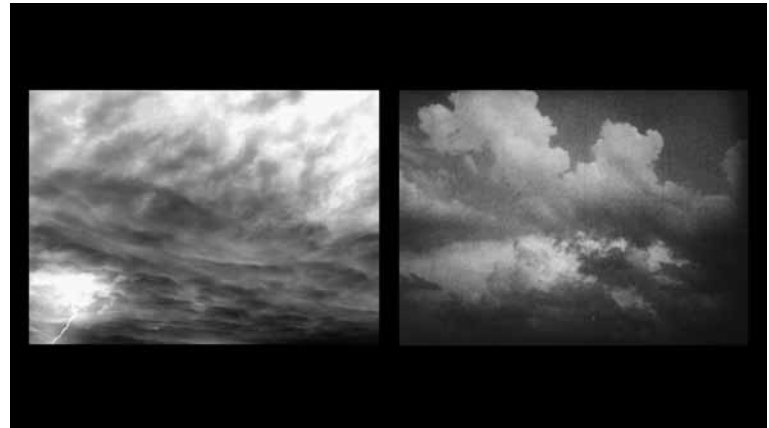
In this new work, Farocki juxtaposes the history of computer-based animation with elements of art history. In only thirty years, computer-generated images and animations have evolved from simple symbolic forms into images that aspire to perfect simulation, and seem to desire to outperform cinematographic and photographic representations, not merely of “static” reality, but increasingly of the dynamic aspects of life, as manifest in gestures or complex movement in general. In appropriating the dynamics of social and natural reality, does computer-generated hyperrealism seek to outdo reality itself?

Today, mimesis has become a matter of generative algorithms, and the resulting technologies are increasingly capable of calculating, predicting, and controlling complex processes—from manufacturing, to war, to emotional experiences in the animated worlds of mass entertainment. Underlying Farocki’s investigation into the frontiers of innovation in current image-technologies is the assumption that increasingly, we live in technologically produced

image-worlds in which images have become what he calls “ideal-typical.” In the new mimetic paradigm of digital “realism”, reality is no longer the measure of the always imperfect image; instead, the virtual image increasingly becomes the measure of an always-imperfect actuality. With the “ideal-typical” image, representation seeks to overcome lived reality by constructing, monitoring, and governing it. Even fantasy and fiction now tend to assume a predictive and even preventive quality. Does this leave actual, lived reality to exist only as derivation of the ideal, as flaw or impurity, or, like in military or surveillance technologies, as a potential threat? Have these ideal-types become our new normative schemes, all-encompassing idols capable of scripting and predicting all actual life-movement?

One more time, *Parallel* questions the notion of “progress” that underlies histories of art and representation based on a linear, evolutionary progression from imperfect representation (mimesis) to more accurate, complex, and perfect forms. *Parallel* is like an interrogation of possible other stories, evolutions, or reverse-evolutions of which the image-surfaces of digital animation and their underlying generative algorithms speak.

Harun Farocki, born 1944 in German-annexed Czechoslovakia, lives and works in Berlin



Harun Farocki, *Parallel*, 2012, 2-channel HD video installation, colour, sound, 17 min

Kao Chung-Li

The Taste of Human Flesh,
2010–2012
The Way Station Trilogy,
1987–2012

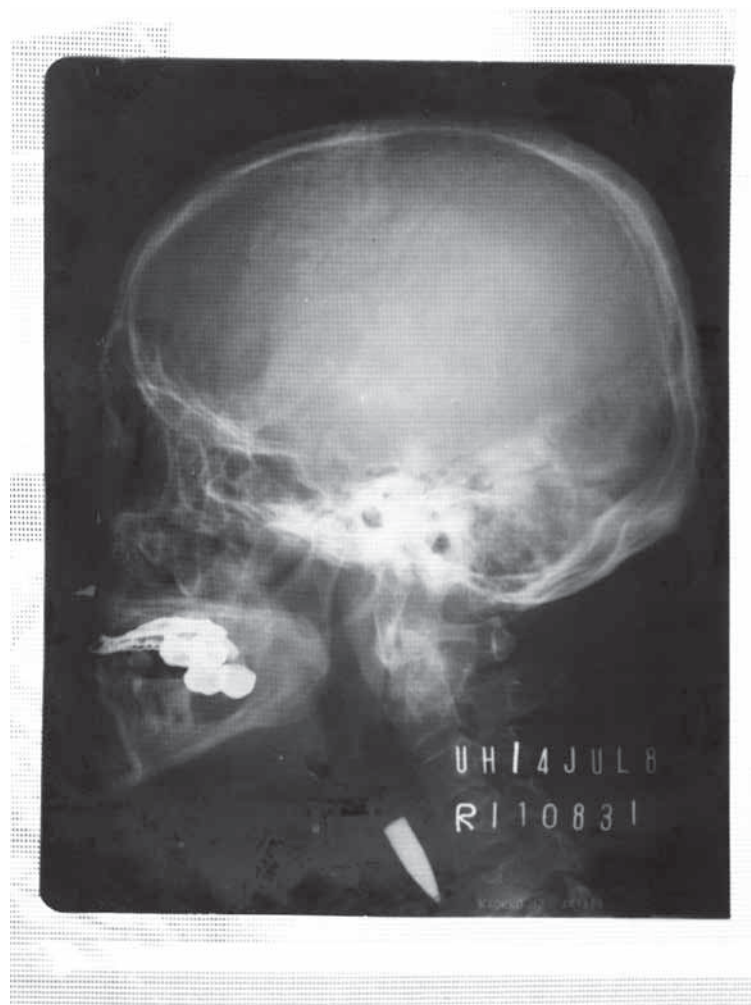
Kao Chung-Li's work investigates the relationship between history and personal biography, between time, images, and media. He is a photographer and a collector of historical pictures as much as a filmmaker, animator, and media-archaeologist. "Taking a picture means an interruption of reality. Showing that picture means a cessation of fantasy," states the artist. For him, the slideshow in particular sustains a tension between image, time, and stillness—and is situated beyond fantasy and reality, subsuming both photography's indexical relation to past events, and the expectancy of cinematic time and storytelling.

The protagonist of both works—a slideshow and a new video—shown here is Kao Chung-Li's father, now 93 years old. The story told spans more than 90 years. A key motif in this work is the bullet in the father's body, which has remained in his lower cranium since the days of the Chinese Civil War. Shot in the head by the Liberation Army during the Huaihai Campaign in 1948–49—a battle that was decisive for the victory of Communists over the KMT—this bullet has remained as a material witness.

Chung-Li's father was born in the year of the May 4th Movement, and thus his biography stands for the Chinese historical experience of the twentieth century, set against the global histories of colonization, the wars of decolonization, and the struggles against neo-colonialism in the era that has called itself "globalization." What is being told here is a counter-story to the hegemonic version of a "universal history" entailed in the propagandistic promise of progress and modernization. The universality of historical experience—that is, general validity beyond a particular context—is here equated with the systemic violence suffered by the vast majority of humanity under colonial and imperialistic regimes. "History is like a language; it is not merely some random noises. A lot of histories are like dialects—restricted by region. Some histories, however, cannot be so restricted," states the artist in commenting on the work. "If we compare my fathers age to a language, I think we ought to learn that language, at least enough to comprehend it."

The new video *The Way Station Trilogy* completes the biography, interlacing the father's recollection with animated scenes, childhood memories, and Kao Chung-Li's own life.

Kao Chung-Li, born 1958 in Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei



Kao Chung-Li, *The Taste of Human Flesh*, 2010–2012, slideshow cinema I, 15 min

Fernando Bryce

Asia, 2006

Fernando Bryce copies existing texts and images that he finds in publication archives. He focuses on documents that were published in relation to shifts in geopolitical power, such as World War II, European colonization, and Pan-Americanism. The artist refers to his technique as “mimetic analysis.” He copies the existing text and image in his own aesthetic style, which is characterized by simple drawings that resemble of mid-twentieth century cartoons, and he replaces the texts with handwritten commentaries that have calligraphic traits.

Asia, the work presented in the Biennial, is made up of copies of a series of covers of the American magazine *Asia*, which was later called *Asia and the Americas*. This North American magazine was very popular in the 1920s and 1930s and was an important source of information for what was happening in the Middle and East Asia at the time. Like in many of his other works, Bryce organizes this series of covers in chronological order which makes a line of thinking becomes apparent, as well as a shift in representation based on the politics that were in vogue at that point. The series of *Asia* magazines give a distinct impression of how the East was perceived in the West in the 1920s and 1930s. They show the stereotypical and

paternalistic way in which the local context was represented, which later gave way to images of an enemy when the situation changes during World War II.

Through reproduction, the images and text look at first like ironic representations, but then you realize that the artist didn't add anything—the content was there already and the statements circulated among large groups of people, consolidating public opinion. Also, by putting the documents in an art context where cultural capital is generated, the attention shifts to another dimension, where other forms of representation are produced. In this case, the documents are restaged by anachronistic witnesses that bring to mind obstinate imperial representations.

Fernando Bryce, born 1965 in Peru, lives and works in Berlin



Fernando Bryce, *Asia* (detail), 2006, ink on paper, series of 50 drawings, each 30×21 cm. Courtesy of collection of Diana and Moisés Berezdvin

Liu Ding

The Un-erasable, 2012

Since 2009, Liu Ding has collected “everyday” artworks from online auctions, flea markets, and friends. These include paper-cuts, embroidery, sketches, watercolor paintings, oil paintings, woodcuts, and sculptures, most of whose motifs, styles, and genre are familiar and common. Yet these artworks hold no “special” status, significance, or value. Typically they are gifts or souvenirs, they decorate homes or hotel lobbies, or they are made as part of an artist’s training or by an amateur. They are part of history and our experience of art and aesthetics, but without having a distinct place in art history. And yet they express and reflect the sensibilities, desires, and states of consciousness of their makers just as much as the social context in which they exist.

Liu Ding says that he wishes to act like as “agent” for those works, as he seeks to make them visible and bring them to consciousness, choreographing or “staging” their appearance and interrogating how they shape the perception of art. Each work he acquires for his collection is mounted in a new frame, usually in bright colors. Liu Ding places his artistic signature on those frames.

On the opening day of the Taipei Biennial, Liu Ding will mount a selection of his collection in an installation consisting of a booth

and a stage where these works will be displayed. Together with the Beijing-based artist Li Ran, each work, while being installed, will be the subject of a conversation and a detailed interrogation. The installation process will be simultaneously filmed with a video camera set outside the booth and directly facing the artists. On the second day, in the very same booth where the collection is on view, Liu Ding, Li Ran, and the Taiwanese scholar and art historian Meiling Cheng will discuss the collection in an attempt to bring it into a direct relationship with us today. This discussion will also be recorded on video. At the end of the performances, the two videos will remain unedited and on view on two TV screens installed outside the booth, with the collection remaining on display throughout the exhibition.

*Liu Ding, born 1976 in China,
lives and works in Beijing*



Liu Ding, *The Un-erasable*, 2012, performance, mixed media installation.
Courtesy of Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne

Joachim Koester

Calcutta Served as a Basis for British Expansion in the East, 2005–2007

“They are not dead, but sleeping,” wrote Thomas De Quincey in 1822 in his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. De Quincey was an important writer in the literary genre called drug literature. In his book, he introduces opium as a gateway to “the secret inscriptions of the mind,” with guidelines for using the drug both to intensify aesthetic pleasure and to recall forgotten memories, a more frightening enterprise. Joachim Koester looks into drug history by researching the opium trade that the British East India Company set up with China.

Calcutta played a major role in this history, as it was here that the opium was auctioned off and shipped to China. In 1830 the trade made up one-sixth of the gross national product of British India. The trade led to two Opium Wars, one in 1841 and one in 1856. The First Opium War ended with the signing of The Nanking Treaty in August 1842, one of the most humiliating defeats in Chinese history, which secured the British opium trade in China and ultimately created millions of Chinese opium addicts. They would often end up so destitute that they were forced to immigrate and work as cheap laborers in Europe and the US,

bringing their opium addictions along with them.

The result of Koester’s research is a text and the photographs *Calcutta Served as a Basis for British Expansion in the East*. Though Joachim Koester set out to find traces of the opium history in the local official museums, he found that they had been omitted from the official history. The image on the left, of an elephant being lifted onto a boat, is a photograph of a print that he found in a book he bought in Calcutta. The image on the right is a photo that the artist took of the ruins of an ancient Bhadralok palace. The Bhadralok were a class of gentfolk that were close to the English and arose during colonial times. The book mentions that they would feed opium to their dogs as a parlor game.

*Joachim Koester, born 1962
in Denmark, lives and works
in Copenhagen*



Joachim Koester, *Nanking Restaurant. Tracing Opium in Calcutta* (detail), 2005–2008, Series of 3 silver gelatin black and white photographs. Courtesy of Jan Mot, Brussels

Jompet Kuswidananto

War of Java, Do You Remember? #2, 2008

War of Java, Do You Remember? #2 is a part of Jompet Kuswidananto's extensive research project that looks into the complexities of Indonesian cultural history. The War of Java was fought between 1825 and 1830, sparked by the rebellion of Prince Diponegoro in response to the plans of Dutch colonizers to build a road across land where his parents' tomb was located.

For Jompet Kuswidananto, Indonesian society is in a permanent transitory state. It evolves amidst layers of living traditions, in the interstices of the aporias of colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial states, and in the space between the ever-blurred and ideological distance marking the "traditional" and the "modern." This ever-transitory reality forever bears the imprint of the colonial scene, just as those roads built over tombs. Thus, the War of Java has never ended, but rather persists while continually changing its face.

Jompet Kuswidananto is interested in the images and narratives that live and renew themselves in this "haunted" zone of contradictions, and particularly in the way they shape bodies, and the way bodies negotiate those histories.

War of Java, Do You Remember? #2 recollects such negotiations from Indonesian colonial history.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Dutch began to build sugar factories in the north coastal region of Java, a particular practice emerged among the plantation workers and sugar farmers. A ritual called "cembengan" was created, which accompanied the initial processing of the sugar cane into sugar. This ritual was conducted amidst the large machines that ground the sugar cane. Workers performed a dance that invoked the spirits of their ancestors. In the context of the colonial factory, the ritual addressed the experience of colonialism and factory work as a new cosmological bond, expressed as a bodily-mimetic relation between humans and machines, an inversion of the orthodox-"modern" perception that divides the magical and the mechanical. This dance, perhaps, was not "magic"—but rather a way of relating to and disarming the magic of the modern factory regime, of capitalist exploitation, and of the colonial spell.

Jompet Kuswidananto, born 1976 in Indonesia, lives and works in Jakarta



Jompet Kuswidananto, *War of Java, Do You Remember? #2*, 2008, video, black and white, sound, 7 min

The Museum of the Monster that is History

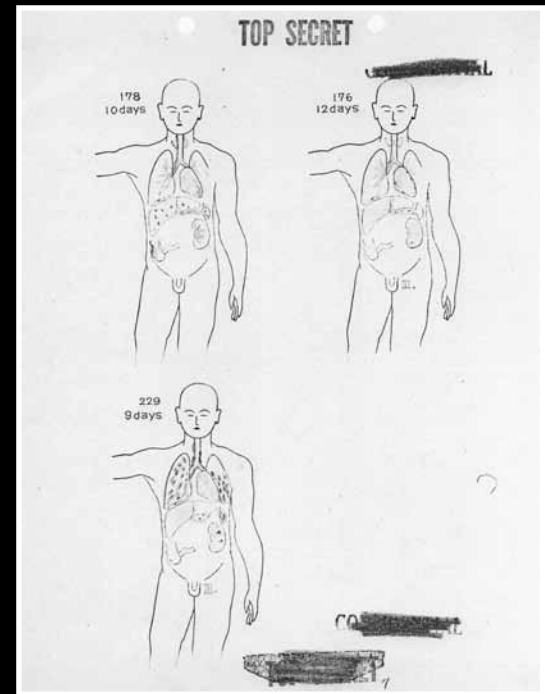
Curated by James T. Hong and Anselm Franke

Participating Artists: Reza Abedini, Bavand Behpoor, James T. Hong, Hou Chun-Ming, Jei Li, Kelvin Kyung Kun Park, Eyal Weizman, Paulo Tavares, Steffen Krämer, Tony Chun-Hui Wu, Yao-chung Wu and anonymous contributors

Monstrosity in modern times surely comes in plentiful forms, but its most poignant face is not modern fiction, but actual violence enacted in the name of rationality. *The Museum of the Monster That Is History* is devoted to the violence on which modern states and social orders are based. It looks at the violence that foregoes any “modern” organization of society (which never disappears at its margins within and without) and in those institutions that guard them. It highlights the monstrosities exerted in the name of reason and order, or in the name of a lesser evil to serve a greater perceived good. State-sanctioned forms of terror are monstrous not merely because of the scale of destruction afforded by modern technologies, but more so because of their “normality.” While perhaps considered unfortunate, state terror is still accepted as necessary and legitimate at a given moment within a particular regime, or in the name of a universalist science. And indeed while modern history is characterized

by radical ruptures and permanent transformations, it is in the insistent irrationality of officially sanctioned, systemic terror, as experienced in colonial subjugation, genocide, imperial wars, cultural destruction, and disciplinary measures, that we must locate its actual and strikingly consistent continuity. Turning towards this continuity in modern history reveals that there is a particular systemic economy of terror necessitated by the rule of “modern reason” itself, and hence official terror is not an exception, but rather modernity’s history-making rule. This side of modern rationality presents us with a symptom running counter to the promise of progress: modernity as the permanent invention of a barbarity that hides behind the mask of civilization, order, and rationality.

The Museum of the Monster That Is History comprises various contributions. *Taiwan WMD* identifies weapons of mass destruction as its monstrous historical subject. The international community has taken steps to ban or at least



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control the spread of WMDs (weapons of mass destruction), but Taiwan is not officially a part of this international community. And since Taiwan (ROC) was born as a state of emergency in a state of exception, WMDs are especially well-suited for just such states and just such emergencies. Compiled by James T. Hong, with contributions by Tony Wu and Kelvin Park, this exhibit presents the rarely documented and much contested history of these types of weapons within and around Taiwan.

The end of World War II signaled both the creation of modern Asian states and the inauguration of their state-supported WMD programs, which were kick-started by Japanese WWII research units, such as Unit 731 in China and Unit 31 in Taiwan, and by preparations for the coming Cold War. One such example is *The Report of G.*, which outlines WWII Japanese experiments with the glanders bacterium, a weaponized horse disease, on primarily Chinese prisoners. Prepared by Japanese biological warfare scientists for the US government in 1949, this report impeccably represents the utilization of medicine, science, and rationality for the efficient production of terror.

Supplementing these exhibits, *The Museum of the Monster That Is History* dedicates a series of vitrine displays to particular historical aspects of “the rationality of terror”: one is dedicated to the Great Famine in China, conceived

by scholar Jie Li; another to decapitation as an iconographic and political motif which persists both in Chinese history and in modernity at large; and another to the Irishman Roger Casement, who served the British government and authored two famous “reports” on systematic colonial terror in the Congo and the Amazon around the turn of the twentieth century. During WWI the British would execute Casement as a traitor.

Cultural theorist and artist Bavand Behpoor, together with graphic designer Reza Abedini, contribute an installation on the “martyrs museum,” a form of museum found worldwide which palpably exemplifies the fundamentals of modern states in martyrdom, as the sacrifice of individuals and their bodies. The museum that they restage in parts, however, is the rather particular Shiraz Martyrs Museum in Iran, which addresses itself to foreigners but is hardly visited by them, and relies in several respects on a *metaphysics of absence*, in opposition to Western concepts of the museum. Their “translated” martyrs museum hosts a variety of “typical” objects and accompanying martyr narratives that in themselves *exhibit* the gap between the systemic rationale and individual history.

Another section of the museum is devoted to the role of traitors: those who betray the norms of their respective countries or communities and “cross” enemy lines. In the

popular imagination, they are either embodiments of evil or larger-than-life personalities. The traitor here is literally looked upon as a “figure,” represented by an idiosyncratic selection of known and unknown figurines in the accessible size of twelve inches. This size seems to be the most appropriate for contemplating and perhaps appreciating their treasonous accomplishments.

The museum then presents a display contemplating the “economy of death” by looking at the “price tags” and the monetary values of life. Just as a nation’s currency is relative to its strength and influence, so too is the value of its citizens. We imagine that all human lives are priceless, but we know that economic reality—represented, for instance, by compensation payments—speaks of another truth.

The passage of time does not heal all wounds, and it cannot settle all accounts or resolve all disputes. So the final two exhibits offer attempts at preparing the ground for reconciliation and opening new chapters in history. As governments change, technolo-

gies advance, and the identities of perceived perpetrators adapt, symbolic atonements and scientific research seek to document, to uncover, and to put on record, as a prelude to possible forgiveness. *Apologies*, compiled by James T. Hong, presents the “official apologies” of statesmen and perpetrators from various contexts throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The *Mineral Geology of Genocide*, shot by Paulo Tavares, Eyal Weizman, and Steffen Krämer, documents a cutting-edge forensic investigation of mass graves in Guatemala, in an attempt to reconstruct the unwritten, silenced history of state-sanctioned violence. (James T. Hong and Anselm Franke)



- 1 James T. Hong, *The Report of G*, 1949/2012, documents, each 17.9 × 21.5 cm
- 2 Eyal Weizman, Paulo Tavares, Steffen Krämer, *The Mineral Geology of Genocide*, 2012, video, colour, sound
- 3 Jei Li, *The Great Leap Forward and Famine*, 2012, photographs
- 4 *823 Artillery Bombardment*. 1958/2012, video, colour, silent, collection of Tony Wu
- 5 Kelvin Kyung Kun Park, *Invitation to a Peaceful City*, 2005, HD video, colour, sound

**Seismic Symphonies—
Taiwan Symphony, 2008/2012**

What is “culture”? One common theory defines culture as that which distinguishes humans from nature, and in Western-style scientific disciplines, often the two are conceived as being in opposition. The common model has it that culture is something that has risen “above” nature. Hence, natural processes both underlie, and potentially undermine, cultural processes, and culture must rule and master nature, including “human nature.” Other typical scientific conceptions state that either we are entirely determined by nature and its laws, and culture is only an illusion, or the exact opposite, that everything is a cultural “construction,” including our ideas of nature. Alongside these common ideological standpoints and trenchlines, there has been the explosive growth of industrial culture, of science and technologies that have made it increasingly difficult to say where “our” culture begins and “nature” ends.

In her sculptures, installations, and videos, Elisa Strinna investigates and tests such distinctions. She explores the way they structure our perception and our fields of knowledge. She does this not through theoretical reflection, but by closely examining various natural materials. As Strinna

studies the information intrinsic to these elements of nature, various narratives come to life, which reveal intrinsic “cultural” aspects of nature, and challenge any narrow conception of both cultural and natural processes. What is left, instead, are differences of scales, times, and languages, which demand different forms of translation.

Seismic Symphonies—Taiwan Symphony is a sound installation and sculpture. It translates earthquake seismograms into a symphony, played on an organ. The organ reads the analogical recording of the seismic shock like a score. The earthquake that is “played” here took place in Taiwan in 1999 and was the country’s strongest earthquake of the last twenty years. *Seismic Symphonies - Taiwan Symphony* is also a symbolic inversion: the instrument of the organ is most commonly used in Christian churches, and its sounds are derived from the heavens and symbolize cosmic harmony. But here it is the earth, “nature,” the ground beneath our feet that is moving. It speaks to us not of harmony, but of our fragility, undermining our fantasies of mastery.

*Elisa Strinna, born 1982 in Italy,
lives and works in Venice*



Elisa Strinna, *Seismic Symphonies—Taiwan Symphony*, 2008/2012, sound installation, wood, plastic, iron, paper, 210 × 60 × 70 cm, 5 min

Adam Avikainen

Ginger Glacier, 2012
±5,000,000,000 years

Adam Avikainen's works—mainly installations that make use of various materials combined with his own writings—are like narratives that unfold between idiosyncratic observations and scientific findings, calculations and projective narratives, which are often told by objects or things. Avikainen thus draws us into scenarios that are based on both rational predictions and imaginary make-believe. What all his work has in common is that it re-scales human perception and self-perception in relation to both the micro- and macrocosmos of nature and geology, and situates our bodies and minds within the all-encompassing continuum of nature. Avikainen's scenarios begin when "humanity" as we know it (as something beyond or in control of nature) ceases to exist. They raise awareness of the multiple other actors that define our fate—from the uncountable organisms such as bacteria that inhabit our bodies, to the large-scale processes of geology and the planet, in whose "body" we live just like the bacteria in our belly. Avikainen's work reacquaints us with the alterity of life in our own bodies and environments. They bring us into close imaginative-sensory contact with that familiar strangeness of volcanic, mineral, vegetal, and

mental realities and dimensions of life.

The *Ginger Glacier* is a monstrous, quasi-mythic non-being that comes to us from a future geological age. It is pictured by Avikainen as a mutation of life growing out of all life's symbiotic relationship to the sun. Not only do we owe our lives and all life on earth to the sun, but according to current scientific prediction this giant gas ball on fire will have completely obliterated the earth in about five billion years, while all oceans will have evaporated in one billion years, a time in which there will have been about twenty cataclysmic extinction events. Consequently, we humans have less than fifty million years to drastically alter our physical bodies to withstand extreme heat. The *Ginger Glacier* is a name for what will become of our human bodies as well as all other elemental and spiritual life: a collective body composed of anarchic cellular life living and growing in symbiotic relationships, a "frozen heat wave" that "dances with the sun."

*Adam Avikainen, born 1978
in USA, lives and works in
Minnesota*



Adam Avikainen, *Ginger Glacier*, 2012 ±5,000,000,000 years, frozen heat wave in the form of Ginger Glacier's skin and a monologue with itself possessed by teenaged humans...

Angela Melitopoulos Maurizio Lazzarato

Assemblages, 2011–2012

**The Life of Particles,
2011–2012**

Two Maps, 2012

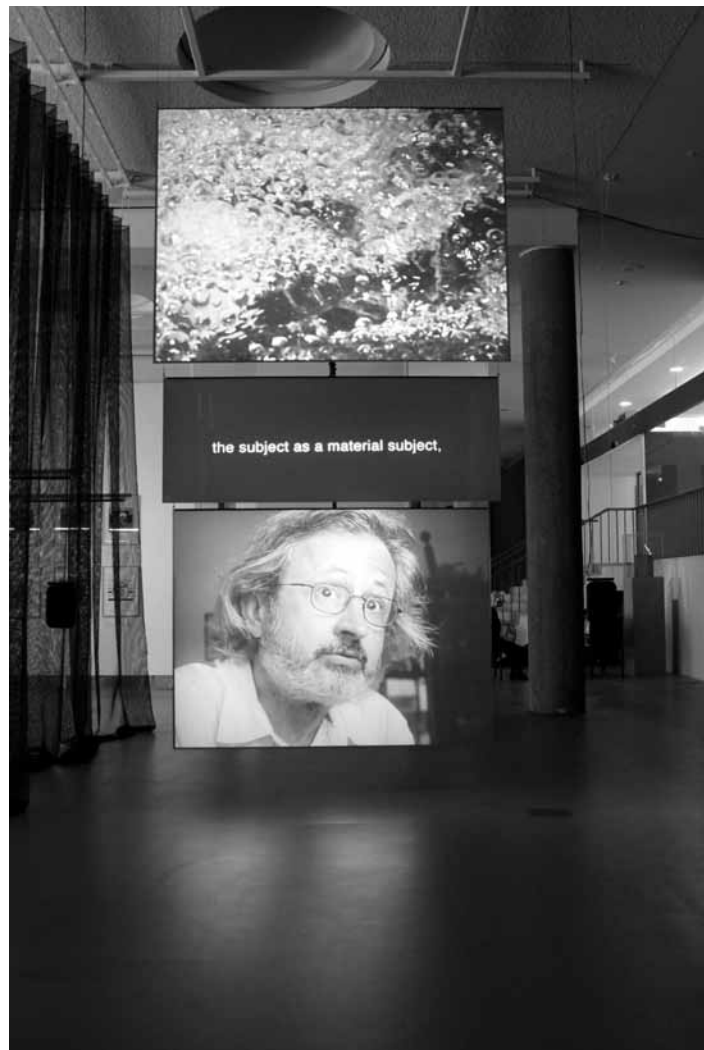
The starting point of the two-part visual research projects *Assemblages* and *Life of Particles* is an interview conducted with the French psychotherapist, political activist, and philosopher Felix Guattari in 1992. Guattari was a major influence on the New Left after 1968, and he is also known for his collaborative work with philosopher Gilles Deleuze. His work was directed against the modern Western concept of a patriarchal and colonialist subjectivity. In his La Borde clinic in France, Guattari and colleagues helped advance a worldwide movement against dominant psychiatry, which they regarded as an oppressive institution that violently enforced such normative and alienated forms of subjectivity. Working with patients, artists, theorists, and scientists, they implemented a radical “politics of experimentation” at La Borde.

With archival material and additional interviews by Guattari’s colleagues and friends, *Assemblages* follows Guattari from La Borde to Brazil and Japan, two countries where he travelled extensively in his quest for alternatives to a Western ontology that separated nature from culture, signs

from things, and the individual from the collective—separations Guattari saw as being at the root of contemporary crises. It was on these journeys that Guattari began to develop an interest in animism and studied so-called animist cultures and practices, in which subjectivity is not located in the human alone, but distributed in polyphonic forms throughout an environment. He called these forms “assemblages.”

The second part of this project, *Life Of Particles*, is a journey that begins with Guattari’s experience in Okinawa, diving into the imperial history of the region as experienced on an everyday basis, not least through the massive presence of the US military since WWII. *Life Of Particles* also enters into a dialogue with the contemporary situation of Japan and the relation between subjectivity, animist spirituality, and modern technology in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake and nuclear disaster. In the separate installation *Two Maps*, photographer and anthropologist Chihiro Minato discusses both the changes of landscape and the landscape of media in the aftermath of Fukushima.

Angela Melitopoulos, born 1961 in Germany, lives and works in Berlin; Maurizio Lazzarato, born 1955 in Italy, lives and works in Paris



Angela Melitopoulos / Maurizio Lazzarato, *Assemblages*, 2011–2012, 3-channel video installation, colour, sound, 69 min. Installation view, *Animism*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2012. Photo: Arwed Messmer

**Trickle down—Public Space
in the Era of its Privatization,
2007/2012**

Andreas Siekmann's work revolves around the representation and visualization of the ever-abstract realms of economics, capital, and politics. How can politics and economics become visible, and under which conditions? Essential to his work is the analysis of the transformations and mutations of capitalism, the worldwide introduction of neoliberalism, and the impact it has had on society, democracy, urban space, and environments. He meticulously researches the restructuring of labor conditions under so-called globalization and the systematic erosion of social structures. He interrogates the present conditions of capitalist exploitation, neoliberal propaganda, and the forms of political camouflage they yield today.

Siekmann's projects are long-term investigations, which materialize in the form of graphic representations, drawings, sculptures, installations, films, and architectural models. His sculptural and installation work have focused on the privatization and commercialization of urban space, on the "event"-city, and city marketing in the wider sense. His investigation for the Taipei Biennial 2012 focuses on the close relationship between artistic work, "creativity" as a marketing slogan, urban image-

campaigns, and so-called regeneration policies. The backdrop of this work is the increasingly global methods of the financial industries to make city governments dependent as debtors, thereby systematically undermining politics and public control.

His graphic representations take the form of visual narratives in which complex processes are represented by symbols. His visual language encompasses manifold historical references, including, for instance, Otto Neurath's pictorial pedagogy of the 1930s. He thus translates and transfers earlier attempts that sought to root particular techniques and artistic methods within socio-political contexts into the present, evoking both continuities and discontinuities in the history of capital.

His graphic representations—maps or diagrams—allow us to closely follow complex and networked processes of production and capital flows, and at the same time represent statistical information and foster a "pedagogical," comparative approach to "data." Through them we can permanently switch between the particular and the general, the concrete and the abstract, the "mere figure" and the realities and lives that are in-formed or enslaved by it.

*Andreas Siekmann, born 1961
in Germany, lives and works
in Berlin*



Consulting and accounting firms

Andreas Siekmann, *Trickle down—Public Space in the Era of its Privatization*, 2007/2012, digital prints, 460 × 980 cm. Courtesy of Gallery Barbara Weiss, Berlin

Rosemarie Trockel

Copy Me, 2012; Language Change, 2012; Episches Theater, 2012; As Far as Possible, 2012; Leading by Example, 2012; Less savage than Others, 2012; Copyright is a Myth, 2012; Abstraction, 2012; 15 Minutes of Fame, 2012; True Colors, 2012; Daily Trap, 2012

Rosemarie Trockel became known in the eighties for her feminist works that addressed the status of women in the art world. Among these works were knitted pictures that consisted of large, mechanically produced woolen material stretched over a canvas frame, often incorporating recognizable symbols such as the hammer and sickle or the *Playboy* logo. These works questioned the belittling way in which feminine creativity was usually approached. The fact that she had the works made using industrial and mechanical fabrication raises the question of the authorship and authenticity of the works.

Another emblematic series from approximately the same period is called *Oven Burners*. This series consists of cooking plates that are mounted on a wall like canvases. Highlighting the traditional role that women are supposed to play, she uses the formalist arrangement of the plates to subversively allude to Minimalist Art, mastered solely by male strategists.

However, calling Trockel a feminist artist would be too narrow a definition, as the set of authoritative systems that she aims at is much broader. It includes any system that administers representations of reality and prescribes predetermined positions. She attacks established theories about sexuality, culture, and artistic production. She inserts in her work characters with shifting identities and gender roles, parodies to deconstruct societal phenomena, which compliment her constant investigation of theories from anthropology and sociology.

Drawings and collages have played a major role in her career. She uses them to cut and paste images that represent themes she has explored throughout her oeuvre. The images are composed or decomposed like shattered thoughts, creating a mingling of established notions of reality and the subconscious. These assemblages showing the iconography and themes of her oeuvre result in a supra-layer, which—coming with little explanation from the artist herself—leaves the viewer questioning his or her expectations of materials, artworks, exhibitions, and the subject matter treated by Trockel.

*Rosemarie Trockel, born 1952
in Germany, lives and works in
Cologne*



Rosemarie Trockel, *Copyright is a Myth*, 2012, digital print, 90 x 70 cm

Ashish Avikunthak

Vakratunda Swaha, 2010

In the first scene of *Vakrantunda Swaha*, a young man dips a Ganesha idol in water on the last day of the Ganapati Festival. During this festival, a Ganesha symbol is worshipped for ten days, and then on the eleventh day the statue is taken through the streets in a procession to be immersed in a river or the sea, symbolizing a ritual send-off of the Lord in his journey towards his abode in Mount Kailash. As he leaves this world, he takes with him the misfortunes of all men. The scene was shot in 1997, and the young man in the footage is the artist Girish Dahiwalé. The scene was supposed to be part of a collective film manifesto that Ashish Avikunthak and three other artists planned to shoot, but they never finished the project. In 1998, Girish Dahiwalé committed suicide.

The film became a requiem for Avikunthak's deceased friend. It stages the rite of passage that allowed the dead artist to enter into the other world. The film develops as a dreamlike sequence of scenes that confuse good and evil, fiction and reality. *Vakrantunda* literally means "twisted trunk," one of eight forms of Ganesha that prevail over human weaknesses and demons. *Swaha* is the name of a deity associated with sacrifice. When sacrifices are made, the name "Swaha," which literally means "self-spoken" or "spoken by me," is chanted.

The title thus frames the death of the young man as a sacrifice which, like Ganesha's departure, frees man from bad faith. One recurring theme is the tonsure, the Hindu ritual is traditionally carried out by the oldest son after the loss of a family member. Whereas it normally happens only once when someone dies, in this film the tonsure is performed three times, and on Ashish Avikunthak himself. By showing Avikunthak's own mourning, the film—which took him twelve years to finish—becomes a cathartic document.

Ashish Avikunthak, born 1972 in India, lives and works in Calcutta



Ashish Avikunthak, *Vakratunda Swaha*, 2010, HD video, colour, sound, 21 min

The Museum of Crossings Curated by Anselm Franke and Hongjohn Lin

First Part: Virlani Hallberg, Lin Swallow Y., and others

Second Part: Hongjohn Lin; Costume Design: Tsai Chih-Hsien

The Museum of Crossings is devoted to the crossing of borders. The first association refers to the physical crossing of boundaries, such as the borders of nation-states, which are crossed by tourists, entrepreneurs (and their money and goods), migrants and smugglers, and agents and spies. The spy perhaps best exemplifies what this museum is about: namely, that “borders” are zones of projections and mirror-effects, guarded by (often stereotypical) images and frames, which can be “passed” if one falls into a particular scheme, assumes a good camouflage, or acts like a legitimate “type.” This is true not only of territorial borders, but of all borders of identity: borders are “mimetic zones” in which identity and deviation, similarity and difference, are guarded and negotiated. Above all, they are zones of contagion, of irreversible contact with alterity near and far, real or imagined, fictional or actual—and it is only because of this that they have become zones of control, of hygiene and paranoia, the site of racism, xenophobia, and the projective export and imputation of collective fears. *The Museum*

of Crossings is devoted to different “morphologies” of crossing boundaries. It looks at borders as mimetic zones in which identity and alterity are in permanent exchange, and in which the imaginary and the fictional assume a powerful role. The monster in this context is a figure of mimetic and morphological powers who awaits those attempting to transgress normative or cosmological boundaries.

How is the border between the human and non-human guarded and upheld? Why is it that monsters are frequently hybrids, border-figures between human and animal, or between humans and machines? How can we image the passage, the process of crossing, between animal and human, between machine and man? In a different register: How does the symbolic order and cosmological representation change after acts of destruction and violence? And again: How are we to imagine the mimetic relation of any living organism to its environment, its “milieu”?

The Museum of Crossings is divided into two parts. The first part presents a series of “relational diagrams,” or “border mappings.”





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These are miniature stories and cartographies, organized along various lines of division in order to expose their very principles of construction. From the impact of the Bikini Atoll nuclear tests on cosmology, to the phenomena of mimicry in insects that visually “adapt” themselves to their environment, to the policing of the line between the normal and pathological in psychiatry, to the “codes” of sexual politics, to so-called colonial mimicry and the apparently universal schemes of racism, a seemingly “natural” line of division in all cases is replaced with the always unstable and shifting distinction between “passive” and “active” agents, between a “figure” (active) and a “background” (passive), and their particular codependency.

The second part of the *Museum* attends to the specific case of George Psalmanazar, the bogus Taiwanese man who gained a reputation in learned social circles in early eighteenth-century London. His book *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa* (1704), portraying a bizarre wonderland of naked savages, floating villages, Satanism, cannibalism, and human sacrifice, never failed to satiate

the curious desire for projecting the alterity of the other. Psalmanazar, despite having white skin and blond hair, could get by as Formosan, partly because of his hyper-exotic performance of eating raw meat and sleeping with his eyes open, and partly because of the lack of proper knowledge about Taiwan in particular and ethnicity in general. The *Museum of Psalmanazar* is intended to realize his fantastical Formosa, invoking the crossing of his spirit from early Enlightenment London to the Taiwan of the present. Different display techniques, especially the shifting of foreground and background, are employed to recompose a skewed picture. The effect is to arrest the fleeting phantasmagorical images that have always divided the normal and the perverse, the primitive and the modern, the powerful and empowered, and the one and the other in rendering cognitive relations at the crossroads of the fantastical and the real Taiwan. (Anselm Franke and Hongjoh Lin)

1 Museum of Psalmanazar, The Map of Formosa according to George Psalmanazar

2 Museum of Psalmanazar, Satan Worshipping

3 Virilani Hallberg, *Receding Triangular Square*, 2012, HD video, colour, sound

Danh Vo

02.02.1861, 2009

Danh Vo's works are closely connected to, and continuously reflect, his family's history against the backdrop of a contemporary world increasingly defined by migration and exile. Vo's family fled from Vietnam in 1980 and was picked up from their self-made boat by a tanker from Denmark, where they later received citizenship. Vo's artistic strategy lies in the displacement of signs and meanings across the registers of secluded identities and historical experience. His work seems to suggest that in the aftermath of colonial and imperial mass displacement that characterizes the world today, it is not "meaning" as such that counts most, but rather the way it is situated, materialized, and enacted, thus positioning the negotiation of composite identity within the question of their "framing."

In one of his researches, Danh Vo followed the traces of French missionaries that were sent to Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century by the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris. He particularly looked into the lives of those missionaries that were murdered for their attempts to convert people to Christianity.

The work 2.2.1861 is a handwritten copy of a farewell letter written by the French missionary Théophane Vénard to his father.

Théophane Vénard left France for the Far East in 1852 and worked in Hong Kong for fifteen months before being transferred to Vietnam, where he was captured in 1860. He was given the option of renouncing his Christianity but refused. As a consequence, he was sentenced to decapitation. The letter was written a few days before he was killed on February 2, 1861.

The letter is copied by Danh Vo's father each time it is sold or an exhibition copy needs to be made, and this will happen until demand runs out or until the father dies. Danh Vo's father—a Catholic himself—owes his handwriting skills to the fact that Vietnam, under French rule, adopted the Roman alphabet. Though these skills can help you get a better job in Vietnam, they were never beneficial to Danh Vo's father, since he did not master the Danish language after he arrived in Denmark.

*Danh Vo, born 1975 in Vietnam,
lives and works in Berlin*

F.M. F

20 janvier 1861.

Très cher, très honoré et bien-aimé Père,

Puisque ma sentence se fait encore attendre, je veux vous adresser un nouvel adieu, qui sera probablement le dernier. Les jours de ma prison s'écoulent paisiblement. Tous ceux qui m'entourent m'honorent, un bon nombre m'aiment. Depuis le grand mandarin jusqu'au dernier soldat, tous regrettent que la loi du royaume me condamne à la mort. Je n'ai point eu à endurer de tortures, comme beaucoup de mes frères. Un léger coup de sabre séparera ma tête, comme une fleur printanière que le Maître du jardin cueille pour son plaisir. Nous sommes tous des fleurs plantées sur cette terre que Dieu cueille en son temps, un peu plus tôt, un peu plus tard. Autre est la rose empourprée, autre le lys virginal, autre l'humble violette. Tâchons tous de plaire, selon le parfum ou l'éclat qui nous sont donnés, au souverain Seigneur et Maître.

Je vous souhaite, cher Père, une longue, paisible et vertueuse vieillesse. Portez doucement la croix de cette vie, à la suite de Jésus, jusqu'au calvaire d'un heureux trépas. Père et fils se reverront au paradis. Moi, petit éphémère, je m'en vais le premier. Adieu.

Votre très dévoué et respectueux fils.

T. Théophane Vénard

m. s.

Danh Vo, 02.02.1861, 2009, last letter of Saint Theophane Vénard to his father before he was decapitated, copied by Phong Vo, ink on paper, 29.6×21 cm

Hsu Chia-Wei

Marshal Tie Jia, 2012

Hsu Chia-Wei's new video installation engages with the history of a tiny island off the coast of Matsu, which is situated in the Taiwan Strait. During the Qing Dynasty, the island was the site of a tiny temple. When Chiang Kai-Shek retreated to Taiwan, the temple was dismantled and relocated to a larger neighboring island, and a bunker was constructed in its place. At present, the bunker is a ruin and ownership of the island has been transferred again to the proprietors of the original temple. The island is also under the commandment of a local god called the "Ironclad Marshal," a frog deity. This deity originated from a temple located on Wu-Yi Mountain in China, which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, at which point the deity migrated to Matsu.

In Hsu Chia-Wei's work, the island is used as a stage. Employing the cinematographic device of the "green screen"—a generic background that is replaced in the post-production process with any other background image—Hsu places a fictional version of the original tiny temple on the island. Slowly, the camera zooms out and reveals that it is a montage, now showing the green screen on the island. This scenography forms the backdrop of a performance in which a local senior citizen sings a form of folk opera found only

in the south of Fujian Province, recounting the experience of WWII. He is the last person capable of performing the opera, which has a long tradition and was known to be Ironclad Marshal's favorite pastime, but which has now fallen into oblivion.

Next to the video, Hsu Chia-Wei has installed a mock-up of the tiny temple, similar to what he used for the montage in the video. It is a reassembled temple made from cinema props—the fictionalization of what the original temple might have looked like. Next to this is a letter on the wall, written by Hsu, in which he asks the Ironclad Marshal for permission for his action, lays down his vision of contemporary art's historical agency, and shows documentation of the god's response.

Hsu Chia-Wei, born 1983 in Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei



Hsu Chia-Wei, *Marshal Tie Jia*, 2012, HD video, colour, sound; temple scene installations, photograph, film: approx. 10 min; installation: 240 × 240 × 280 cm; photograph: 120 × 120 cm

Yin-Ju Chen

**One Universe, One Nation,
One God, 2012**

The Turner Archives, 2011

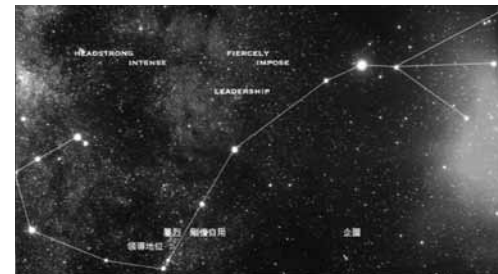
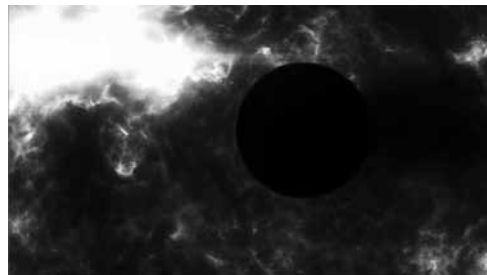
(in collaboration with James T. Hong)

Yin-Ju Chen presents two works in the Taipei Biennial 2012: *The Turner Archives*, created together with James T. Hong, and a new three-screen video called *One Universe, One God, One Nation*. *The Turner Archives* is inspired by the infamous novel *The Turner Diaries*, written by William Luther Pierce. *The Turner Diaries* has been called a “bible of racism,” as it sets out scenarios of race war and ends with the victory of white supremacy. It is famous for having been the inspiration for numerous racist crimes and right-wing terrorist attacks. The installation *The Turner Archives* creates a fictional character named Turner, whose private “war room” or planning office we enter. Here we find his personal plans to overthrow the US government as well as references to recent anti-immigration laws passed in the US and to the history of the Ku-Klux Klan. There are two videos in the war room, one showing images of segregation architecture and the US-Mexico border, and the other showing images of the multi-ethnic America against which Turner directs his war.

Yin-Ju Chen’s new video installation *One Universe, One God, One Nation* seeks to evoke a sense

of closure and despair in the face of the inescapable cycles of history. The particular moment evoked here is the age of space exploration in the 1960s, juxtaposed with the forms of imperial, ideological, and totalitarian power existing at that time. The inspiration for the work came from Hannah Arendt’s analysis of space exploration as a form of “world alienation,” and also from the astrological horoscope of Chang Kai-Shek, which predicts his charismatic and authoritarian character. How is it that most modern movements for a better future, and all attempts to break free from the chains of power, ultimately fall prey to their own mythologies? Here we enter the slippery ground between “science” and “collective dream image,” between the knowledge and the fantasy of an epoch. *One Universe, One God, One Nation* is a visual meditation on power, modern forms of totality and totalitarianism, mass mobilization, devotion, the auratic, and the supernatural. It works through the juxtaposition of images taken in outer space with images of war and submission to power.

Yin-Ju Chen, born 1977 in Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei



Yin-Ju Chen, *One Universe, One Nation, One God*, 2012, 3-channel HD video installation, colour, sound, 17 min; Yin-James T. Hong, *The Turner Archives*, 2011, multimedia installation

Pratchaya Phinthong

One of Them (01), 2012

Pratchaya Phinthong's works deal with global economic value exchange and its material manifestation. In a recent project he joined Thai workers to pick berries in Sweden when he was invited for a residency in France. He asked the curator in France to add on a daily basis useless material to the exhibition of the same weight as the weight of the berries that he picked that day. In another project he presented a stack of Zimbabwean dollars, a stack that grew as euros were slowly being exchanged through a local network since the Zimbabwean dollar's hyperinflation is so strong that it is banned from international exchange markets.

The geographic focus in *One of Them (01)* is on the People's Republic of China. In ancient China, the scientist Zhang Heng was said to have invented a seismograph that worked with extreme precision to detect the occurrence of an earthquake as well as the direction of its source. On the outside of a closed vessel eight dragons were attached, each facing the principle directions of the compass, and each carrying a ball in their mouth. When the ground moved, the ball in the mouth of the dragon facing the direction of the earthquake source would move and fall into the mouth of a toad that was seated with open mouth under the dragon. The mechanism

of the seismograph was never unveiled and remained a mystery for the many scientists that produced replicas that never reached the same accuracy.

Pratchaya Phinthong links this object with a current economic reality. Globally, 17 rare earth minerals (REES) necessary for hi-tech gadgets such as flat screen TVs, smartphones and hybrid cars are being sourced. With the closing of the last US element mine in 2002, the People's Republic of China is now close to having a global monopoly on these minerals, controlling 97% of the global trade. Recently, China announced to be cutting the exports by 70%.

The ball in the exhibition is part of a set of eight balls, all produced in China, each one cast in one of the earth minerals. The ball is placed in the direction pointing to mainland China.

Pratchaya Phinthong, born 1974 in Thailand, lives and works in Bangkok



Pratchaya Phinthong, *One of Them (01)*, 2012, a ball made of rare earth mineral (Ytterbium Metal), 10 cm diameter, colour print on paper, 42 × 29.7 cm. Courtesy of gb agency, Paris

Wei-Li Yeh

With Chi-Pan Chen, Yu-Hsin Wu, Jhi-Yi Liu, Pei-Chun Shih, Gang Yen, Chi-Min Tsai, Chun-Ta Chiu, Freya Chou, Daisy Li, Chih-Ming Feng, Leo Wang, Ku-Ming Chen and Chi-An Tsai

Antiquity-Like Rubbish Research & Development Syndicate in 206, 2010—present

Every object assumes a name, a place, a value, and utilitarian or symbolic meaning. Much of a society's labor is spent keeping objects and their classifications pure and stable (above all, in the name of safety or cultural values). But before, underneath, and after this order, there is plenty of uncertainty and impurity. *Antiquity-Like Rubbish Research & Development Syndicate*, led by artist Yeh Wei-Li since 2010, is dedicated to this uncertainty and to the movement of things across boundaries.

This process-oriented work began in 2010 with a concrete spatial renovation project in which fourteen artists collaborated, and has since materialized in different temporary collaborations involving various forms of production, reflection, and media. The project maps the processes and movements among the categories of “art,” “antiquity,” and “trash.” The precarious balance between these categories functions like a map that registers “transformation” in the order of society, whether this be devaluation and destruction in urban renewal, or value-production

in commodity capitalism, or the quasi-magical production of “value” in art.

Each of these three categories delineates a class of objects beyond utility. “Trash” designates objects that have become valueless. Objects here literally “fall apart” and become “impure” and “undifferentiated,” that is, without clear borders—hence the affinity of trash with monstrosity. It is in this realm of hybridity that the project finds its materials: objects salvaged during spatial renovation projects, objects from illegal roadside dumping grounds, neighborhood construction sites, beaches, and riverbeds. Can such discarded debris be “elevated” and achieve the status of either “antiquity” or “art” through analysis, evaluation, and aesthetic judgment? Can it simultaneously challenge the hierarchy between trash and art—its connection, for instance, to the classifying and evaluating institutions of the museum, the market, or individual authorship, and its disconnection from everyday collective practice, life, and locality?

Wei-Li Yeh, born 1971 in Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei



Wei-Li Yeh, *Antiquity-Like Rubbish Research & Development Syndicate in Miaoli*, 2012, from stage right-center to left-center, wooden light-box, Lamba semi-transparency, 100 × 200 × 15 cm

Peter Friedl

Bilbao Song, 2010

Peter Friedl's works assume the character of "conceptual acts" and "models," with the purpose of exposing particular problems of representation at the intersection between aesthetics and politics. They are models of narration in which the "official" version of history-telling—and thus representation—breaks down. Friedl emphasizes the gaps and inadequacies that characterize the relation between representation and history.

In *Bilbao Song*, Friedl uses the genre of the Tableaux vivants to create a complex allegory. Tableaux vivants were originally used to popularize famous paintings, to bring these paintings as re-staged life-scenes to people who had no access to the original. *Bilbao Song* shows different historical paintings from various epochs as tableaux vivants. What they have in common is that they are all related to the Basque Country, a part of Spain marked by its struggle for independence, whose complex history encompasses the internal colonization of Europe, the so-called "minority-question," as well as the world's first aerial bombing of civilians, famously depicted by Picasso in his painting *Guernica*—an iconic picture of both modern atrocity and modernist art.

Aside from the first scene depicting the painting *Henry IV*

Receiving the Ambassador of Spain (1817) by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, most of the painters and their motifs are lesser known, and suggest that what is at stake here is the creation of a counter-iconographic memory within a frame dominated by images of the "terrorism" that defined the Basque struggle for independence. In this multi-layered allegory, there are also real people—such as the clowns Pirritx and Porrotx, who entertain and educate children in the Basque language, Euskara. The music track—the only "live" action on stage—is an instrumental version of Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *Der Bilbao Song*. This song has nothing to do with Bilbao, the capital of the Basque Country, but is rather set in the gangster milieu of Chicago. Not unlike Brecht's universe, what is at stake here is a history populated by marginal (or subaltern) figures who reveal the surreal construction and fictional character of historiography.

Peter Friedl, born 1960 in Austria, lives and works in Berlin



Peter Friedl, *Bilbao Song*, 2010, HD video, colour, sound, 5 min 53 sec.
Courtesy of Meyer Kainer Gallery, Vienna

Roe Rosen

**Maxim Komar-Myshkin,
Vladimir's Night, 2011–2012
Out, 2010**

Roe Rosen is a painter, filmmaker, and writer whose work interrogates structures of power, trauma, and evil. His often grotesque, macabre, and obscene works evoke a sense of realism in the face of the structural violence of a world where victims turn perpetrators and terror bears the name of the rule of law.

In *Vladimir's Night*, Vladimir Putin is shown vacationing in his summer mansion—in the role of a little child. Before falling asleep he imagines seeing faces in the wooden veneer of his bedroom cabinet. Animated objects flow out to cuddle with Vladimir, but the scene soon turns violent. Vladimir is gradually raped, tortured, and murdered by objects.

The author of these paintings and poems, Russian artist Efim Poplavsky (1978–2011)—aka Maxim Komar-Myshkin—is one among several fictional figures created by Roe Rosen. He was allegedly influenced by Soviet author Daniil Kharm's funny and horrifying sense of the absurd, embodying both a defiant autonomy through art and the realism of terror. Poplavsky, who allegedly committed suicide last year, is described by Rosen as a Jewish emigrant to Israel from Russia who suffered from severe paranoia, believing that Putin himself wanted

him dead. The album *Vladimir's Night* is hence an act of personal revenge, which calls upon the aesthetics of Soviet children books for aid.

Roe Rosen's other work in the exhibition is the video *Out* (*Tse*). It is both a documentary and exorcistic horror film. The film alludes to the European-Christian tradition of exorcism rituals, whereby a demon or devil is driven out of the body of a possessed person. In *Out*, two people from the Israeli BDSM (bondage and discipline/sadomasochism) scene agree to hold a role-playing session in which the spirit of extreme right-wing Israeli foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman is exorcised, using as text original quotes by Lieberman. *Out* is a piece on domination, submission, and the acting out of power structures. But above all, it is an anatomy of borderline-disorders—the projection of one's own fears onto others that marks the structural core of xenophobia and racism.

*Roe Rosen, born 1963
in Israel, lives and works in
Tel Aviv-Yafo*

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НАШ ТРУД ПРИНЕС ПЛОД, РАСПЕВАЮТ ДОБРЫЕ ПОВИТУХИ,
В ТО ВРЕМЯ, КАК ВОЛОДИНА ДУША, ВЕЛИКОЛЕПНЫЙ КОМАРМЫШ,



НАКОНЕЦ ВЫЛЕТАЕТ НА СВОБОДУ ИЗ СВОЕГО БРЕННОГО КОКОНА.

Roe Rosen, Maxim Komar-Myshkin, *Vladimir's Night* (detail), 2011–2012, series of 36 gouaches on paper, each 55 × 33.5 cm

Jimmie Durham

The Museum of Stones, 2012
Smashing, 2004

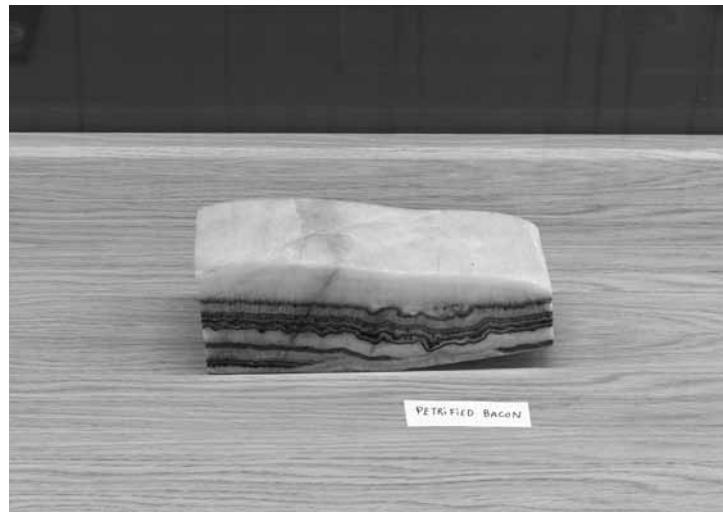
Jimmie Durham is a sculptor and poet whose work can be described as a disarming mirror, a sarcastically sharp yet playful critique of both Western colonial rationality and universal stupidity. A disarming mirror: as a Native American artist and activist, Durham reverses the stereotypical imputations projected onto and used to categorize the native and “primitive.” He unmasks the ignorance and stupidity in self-proclaimed “modern” systems of knowledge and their alleged superior rationality by applying the very same methods used to categorize, historicize, and musealize cultures of the “other” to the tradition of the West and Modern Science. This reversal produces insights that empower counter-hegemonic narratives—narratives opposed, for instance, to the predominant view of progress and evolution—letting us grasp instead a history of actual destruction, a story of regression and decay, which has its backdrop in modernity’s genocidal continuity which began with the conquest of the Americas and lasts up to today.

In his *The Museum of Stones*, Durham plays the classifying scientist that juxtaposes Western ideas and practices surrounding stones with this own. Stone, in the western tradition, is the “object” that is “pure, dead matter” and

mechanical “nature,” as opposed to “subject” and “culture.” And stone also stands for permanence; it is the material into which Western culture inscribes its fantasies of eternity, representation, and power. For Jimmie Durham, these have become the source not of “reason” but of fanatic and willful “belief” and the mass deception prevalent in Western modernity. Hence *The Museum of Stones* includes a quote and sketch by Adolf Hitler that speaks of stone as the only thing that “withstands the flux of all phenomena.” Durham’s own conception of stone is rather different: he sees in stone an agent that not only inhabits a different time, but is also an image of permanent geological transformation.

The video *Smashing* equally engages with stone—here it is used as a tool to destroy various objects given to Durham as he sits behind a desk offering his service. Decomposition, destruction, trash: it is through those “objects” that have fallen outside the “order of things” that Durham’s work tells us what this order doesn’t know about itself.

Jimmie Durham, born 1940 in USA, lives and works in Berlin and Rome



Jimmie Durham, *The Museum of Stones* (detail), 2012, mixed media installation. Photo: Arwed Messmer
 Jimmie Durham, *Smashing*, 2004, video, colour, sound, 92 min

Andrea Geyer

Spiral Lands / Chapter 2, 2008

In the cycle of works called *Spiral Lands*, Andrea Geyer investigates the role of photography in the colonization and continuous appropriation of the North American continent, using the American Southwest (now Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado) as an example. Not stopping with the past, but working up through the present moment, Geyer looks critically at records, documents, stories, drawings, and photography that construct the complex history of North America and the identity of its people. Taking the context of the Navajo Nation and the surrounding Pueblos (the American Southwest) as an example, the project works itself non-linearly through different aspects of the historic encounters of first European settlers, then Euro-Americans, with this land and its people. Addressing the Western concept of “landscape,” Geyer points to the fact that visualization is and has always been a sophisticated ideological device, revealing as much of what stands behind the camera as what stands in front.

Chapter 2 of *Spiral Lands* consists of a slide projection with the voice-over of a lecture. This form engages the role of “the scholar” or “the researcher,” who for 150 years has fostered an ongoing fascination with this particular part of North America.

Every summer hundreds of anthropologists, ethnographers, artists, and photographers travel to the Southwest to conduct their investigations into the land and local culture. Looking closer at the outcome of such investigations, one could say that in these writings of histories and identities, it is not their subjects but rather the researchers / ethnographers themselves, who—like the protagonist in fiction—hold center stage. In Geyer’s installation the lecturer in the voice-over is critically asking herself what drives the desire for this land and what enables the feeling of a right of passage.

Andrea Geyer, born 1971 in Germany, lives and works in New York



Andrea Geyer, *Spiral Lands / Chapter 2*, 2008, installation in an educational setting with slide projection, 80 colour and b/w slides, voice over, brochure with footnotes, 50 min. Courtesy of Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

The Otolith Group

Anathema, 2011
Daughter Products
(1952–1962), 2011

The name of The Otolith Group (Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun) is derived from the organ-structure in our inner ear through which we keep balance and derive our sense of gravity and orientation. Much of The Otolith Group's work, materializing in different media, is engaged in critical historiographies of colonialism, contemporary capitalism, and their related social imaginaries.

Our capacity to rethink critically our quotidian worlds lies in our ability to reverse and inverse everyday perceptions and perspectives. Such a gesture of inversion is what the video *Anathema* suggests. What if it is not we who control and own the "black mirror," those digital touch screens that have become identical with the world of communicative capitalism, and which today keep us under their spell? What if it is the substance in these screens that actually "owns" us, making us a vehicle of its desires and needs, invading our nervous system and our affects and emotions? Liquid crystals, the substance of which LCD screens are made, are indeed a peculiar sort of material, situated somewhere between the inorganic and the organic, between life and non-life. Beginning with the microscopic behavior of liquid crystals

acting as sentient entities in laboratory tests, *Anathema* takes us into the interior of the world of dream-factory capitalism as seen through the "eyes" of liquid crystals. The film becomes a "space odyssey" of sorts, a slow and epic journey into the heart of digital technology and its pixel-world of machine-assemblages. The film is described by the artists as a counter-spell to the prevalent contemporary form of "capitalist sorcery."

Daughter Products (2011) is a suite of archival images belonging to Anasuya Gyan Chand, the former president of the National Federation of Indian Women. In these photographs we see Indian stateswomen and delegations on official visits to the USSR, Japan, and Chairman Mao's China. These are images from the largely perished world of socialist internationalism and solidarity, and looking at them today raises questions not only of political, but also of historical economy and the transformations of horizons of political and collective aspirations.

The Otolith Group,
founded in London in 2002



The Otolith Group, *Daughter Products (1952–1962)* (detail), 2011, series of 56 silver gelatin prints, dimensions variable

Omer Fast

5000 Feet is the Best, 2011

Omer Fast's work shifts strategically between documentary and fictional registers in ways that ultimately destabilize our understanding of reality and media. Many of his recent works have engaged with the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the role of media, technology, and subjectivity. The video *5000 Feet is the Best* is built from two simultaneous story lines. One consists of footage of interviews that he conducted at the end of 2010 with an American ex-drone pilot who talks about the work he did for five years that left him with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The identity of the speaker is concealed in this interview. The second story line consists of a fictional interview with an ex-drone pilot in a hotel room in Las Vegas, where he now is a security guard at a casino.

In the first interview, the ex-pilot talks calmly and practically about his job: hitting targets, and human factors like fatigue due to overwork. At certain points the interview shifts to a more emotional tone and the ex-pilot shares how he felt when he killed someone for the first time.

The atmosphere in the second interview is very different. The ex-pilot is irritated and answers in a hasty, indifferent manner. One passage of the interview is played over and over again, incorporating

only minor changes that are hardly visible, like flashbacks. After telling two stories involving tricksters and make-believe, the ex-pilot tells a more detailed story about a family that is bombed and killed. This narrative resembles one the real ex-pilot tells about a bombing in Afghanistan, but with one major difference: the people are not bombed in Afghanistan, but in the United States, and by Chinese occupying forces.

Omer Fast, born 1972 in Israel, lives and works in Berlin



Omer Fast, *5000 Feet is the Best*, 2011, HD video, colour, sound, 30 min.
Courtesy of gb agency, Paris; Arratia Beer, Berlin

Luis Jacob

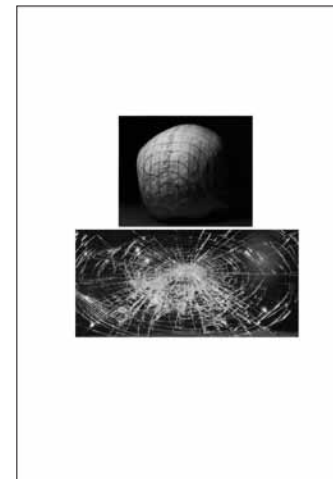
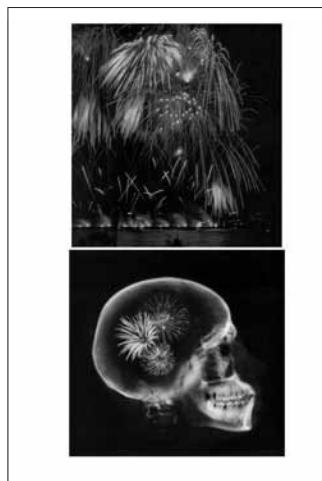
Album II, 2003–2004

Luis Jacob is committed to opening up “framed” situations from within. Jacob activates spaces, relations, genres, identities, and stereotypes to make them realize their potential and possibilities. And he reflects structurally and historically on both “the opening” as an event in which everyday certainties, social constructions, and ontological grounds are disrupted, and historical processes of closure within the horizons of our collective imaginaries: the affirmation of a particular order, the reification of identity, the consolidation of power and authority.

Against the backdrop of his philosophical training, Jacob’s artistic work can be characterized as “theory-without-text.” Like theory, it distills from the concrete, singular, and particular the “general type,” a “formal law,” a structure, logic, or rationale. But like poetry—or all art for that matter—it uses the singular and particular as an event that disrupts such abstract structures from within, insisting on non-identity and difference as the location of all events and encounters, and equally insisting that nothing in this world can ever be fully assimilated into any structure or generality: there always remains an incommensurable rest, a gap, a possible locus of resistance, and this locus must be recovered from the relational reality of feelings and affects.

In his series of *Albums*, Jacob collects images from print media that revolve around themes such as design and inhabitation, architecture and networks, and in the case of the ninety-part *Album II*, the body and social interaction. These images are grouped together and laminated in a serial montage that forms an abstract narrative, variously through content- or form-based correspondences, which articulate the associations and projections of its viewers. The *Albums* send us on a journey into the “image-space,” full of repetitions, rhythm, ruptures, semantic shifts, and fragile constellations in which no determinate meaning can ever evolve. It is this intentional confrontation of the space of meaning (and of “transcendent” language and rationality) kept in conscious unstable movement with the space of imminence, of gesture and bodily, emotional knowledge, through which we can experience *form* not as something stable, but rather as dialogic *event* in which it is also us *being formed*.

Luis Jacob, born 1971 in Peru, lives and works in Toronto



Luis Jacob, *Album II* (detail, panels # 8, 9, 10), 2003–2004, image montage in plastic laminate, 80 panels, each 45.7 × 30.5 cm

Museum of Rhythm

Curated by Natasha Ginwala

Participating Artists: Erick Beltrán, Francisco Camacho, Hanne Darboven, Juan Downey, Simone Forti, Frank B. Gilbreth, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Channa Horwitz, Ken Jacobs, Katarzyna Kobro, Labour Exchange Band, Richard Lin, Jean Painlevé, Gerhard Rühm, Tomo Savić-Gecan, Yashas Shetty and others

Are there not alternatives to memory and forgetting: periods where the past returns – and periods where the past effaces itself? Perhaps such an alternative would be the rhythm of history...

– Henri Lefebvre¹

The official accounts we accept as situated pasts have been composed at a certain pitch, tempo and frequency. When arranged as a linear progression, history comes to be “heard” as a brutal drone. Just as the striking of a tuning fork releases a swarm of collisions that are only received as a steady hum by the human ear, the construction of Modernity has involved a systemic muting of imprints that run alongside proclaimed universals. Even the vector of modern monstrosity has been made impenetrable—a medley of masks that can no longer reveal a face. The effects of this positivist temporality resonate as a false note unto which we are made shadow dancers. The articulations of parallel collisions as possible worlds, hence, call for new frameworks of transgression, whose shattering effect is akin to the breaking of a water horizon

when the vibrating tuning fork permeates its skin.

Surrounded by political, cultural and civilizational collapses on a global scale, we are now faced with the sheer facticity that there is no stable ground upon which history can be sighted. Only a lingering identification with its memorized tempo endures. Within a seismic contemporaneity, the imaginative potential of telling time may no longer lie in minor dissections of petrified chronicles, but in reconsidering the entirety of its sensual complex—the rhythm of history.

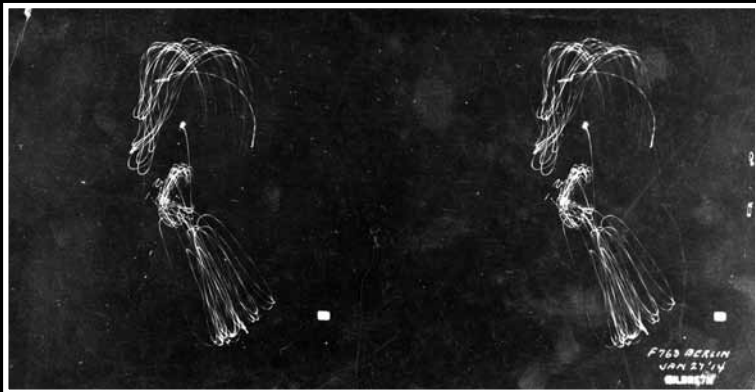
The terrains of rhythm have historically maintained an ontological unfixity that allows anti-time forms to defy schemes of narrative regimentation. Rhythm is said to taxonomize time, yet its inherent capability extends to facilitate a shuttling across “times” as delays, repetitions, and overlays. Hence, the figurative demands of rhythm urge us towards inhabiting history rather than simply becoming transcribed subjects of it—as a Bakhtinian² swallowing of “the world” in order to compel histories to speak from the gut, as an uncanny polyphony of “self-worlds”.



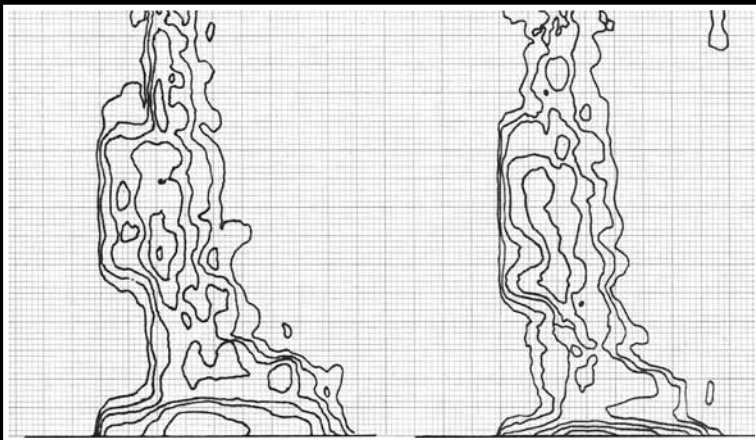
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The complex lineage of “trans-gressions” in so-called primitive societies has amounted to the subversive overturning of modern consciousness and continues to be cast as a fundamental opposite to civilizational progress. To map the social texture of nonconformity from an inside of the present, we may turn to rhythmic dispositions and radical empathy between things of incommensurate worlds. We thereby also address silent thresholds between cultures of colonization and supposed states of aberration.

Museum of Rhythm sets forth a gestural itinerary, which includes the early life of metronomes, a dog whistle, a satellite image of “White Lines in The Gobi Desert”, Parisian street calls, the invention of a swimming stroke, Frank B. Gilbreth’s motion studies, an indigenuous song tradition composed to radio static, Simone Forti dancing the news, a Laurel and Hardy classic set to a “nervous” throbbing³, Theosophist aura diagrams, Hanne Darboven’s encryptions of deep self-time, an aural archive that surveys the politics of listening, nineteenth century photographs of an indigo factory in colonial India,

“Sonakinatography drawings” of Channa Horwitz, and much else, to build fictive bridges as well as vital frictions between aesthetic proposals, material histories and scientific documents.

As a potential knowledge field, *rhythmanalysis* has been referenced in philosophy, literature and the social sciences, yet remained marginal within investigations of historical time. Here, acts of rhyth-mological study are carried out within a museal frame to re-read volatile aspects of temporality—its abrasions, interstices, accidental coherences and reversals. Departing from the notion of historical museums as sites of accumulation, *Museum of Rhythm* is conceived as an architecture of transmissions where the viewer is an auratic device and the museum, an affective membrane. (Natasha Ginwala)

1. Lefebvre, Henri. *Rhythmanalysis: Space, time and everyday life*, Continuum, 2004.
2. Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*, Indiana University Press, 2009.
3. A reference to Ken Jacobs’ *Nervous Magic Lantern*

- 1 Ken Jacobs, *Ontic Antics Starring Laurel and Hardy: Bye, Molly*, 2005, b&w, colour, sound, 90 min
- 2 Yashas Shetty, *Notes from Utopia*, 2011–present, Image: Rita Willeart
- 3 Frank B. Gilbreth, *Motion Study Photographs* (1913–1917), from image verso: “Champion of Germany fencing. The lights are on the hilt and on the point of the rapier.” Berlin, Jan. 27, 1914. Courtesy of Kheel Center, Cornell University
- 4 Lawrence Abu Hamdan, 2010–present, ‘Voice-prints’ showing the frequency and amplitude of two different voices saying the word “you”. Courtesy of the Aural Contract Audio Archive

Marysia Lewandowska Neil Cummings

**Museum Futures:
Distributed, 2008**

Museums used to be like mausoleums, places in which objects, artifacts, and works of art were classified and preserved from decay. This mission of preservation has made museums the antithesis of “life,” since life is in permanent transformation, and museums were conceived as places outside the normal flow of time.

Contrary to this concept, the Moderna Museet, established 1958 in Stockholm, is an emblematic “modern” museum, seeking to be actively engaged in envisioning societal futures rather than merely presenting a mummified past. It is in institutions like Modern Museet that the call for transparency and participation, which has gained critical momentum in public discourse around museums, originates. It is now an almost universally accepted demand: museums should be platforms for participation and exchange. One consequence of this effort has been the popular move away from art primarily understood as object or artifact and towards an understanding of art as a *social process*.

In the sci-fi-like film *Museum Futures: Distributed*, Marysia Lewandowska and Neil Cummings speculate what will happen once this demand has been fully internal-

ized and professionalized by institutions. They allude to an exchange set in 2058 between the future director of Moderna Museet and a young researcher. Their conversation recounts the various adaptations that museums have undergone in the “past,” for instance, after the market for objects of art as “commodities” collapsed. It envisions the near future of the museum, which has already become a globalized, dynamic structure that constantly re-evaluates and modifies itself along permanent feedback processes, embedded in and collaborating with the market economy in new forms. In the future envisioned here, contemporary art—as a social practice plays a widely recognized role, but one cannot help but wonder, given the overtly “professionalized” character of the conversation, if this role consists more in supporting and ultimately managing the capitalist resource of creativity, in a time when dynamized, quasi-corporate institutions have penetrated all aspects of life. The ambivalence between utopian projection and critique characterizes this vision of the future role of museums in society.

Marysia Lewandowska, born 1955 in Poland, lives and works in London; Neil Cummings, born 1947 in UK, lives and works in London



Marysia Lewandowska, Neil Cummings, *Museum Futures: Distributed*, 2008, HD video, colour, sound, 32 min. Courtesy of Moderna Museet Collection

Eric Baudelaire

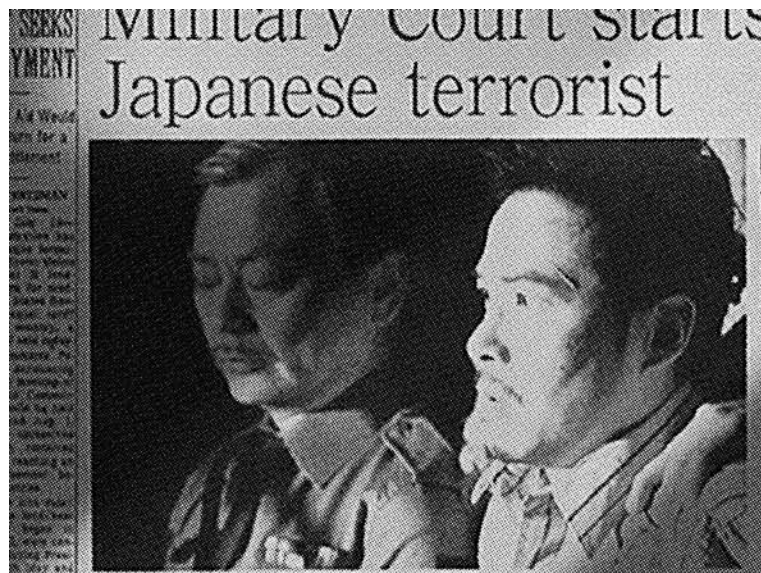
The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years without Images, 2011

Who are May and Fusako Shigenobu? Fusako—leader of an extremist left-wing faction, the Japanese Red Army, involved in a number of terrorist operations—has been hiding in Beirut for almost 30 years. May, her daughter, born in Lebanon, only discovered Japan at the age of twenty-seven, after her mother's arrest in 2000. And Masao Adachi? A screenwriter and radical activist filmmaker, committed to armed struggle and the Palestinian cause, was also underground in Lebanon for several decades before being sent back to his native country. In his years as a film director, he had been one of the instigators of a "theory of landscape"—*fukeiron*: through filming landscapes, Adachi sought to reveal the structures of oppression that underpin and perpetuate the political system. Anabasis? The name given, since Xenophon, to wandering, circuitous homeward journeys.

It is this complicated, dark, and always suspenseful story that Eric Baudelaire—an artist renowned for using photography as a means of questioning the staging of reality—chose to bring forth using the documentary format. Filmed on Super 8 mm, and in the manner of *fukeiron*, contemporary panoramas

of Tokyo and Beirut are blended in with archival footage, TV clips and film excerpts as backdrop for May and Adachi's voices and memories. They speak of everyday life, of being a little girl in hiding, of exile, politics and cinema, and their fascinating overlap. All of which adds up not so much to an enquiry as a fragmented anamnesis. (Jean-Pierre Rehm)

Eric Baudelaire, born 1973 in USA, lives and works in Paris



Eric Baudelaire, *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years Without Images*, 2011, Super 8 film transferred to HD video, colour, sound; 9 silkscreen posters; printed libretto, film: 66 min; posters: each 120 × 80 cm

Arms, 2012

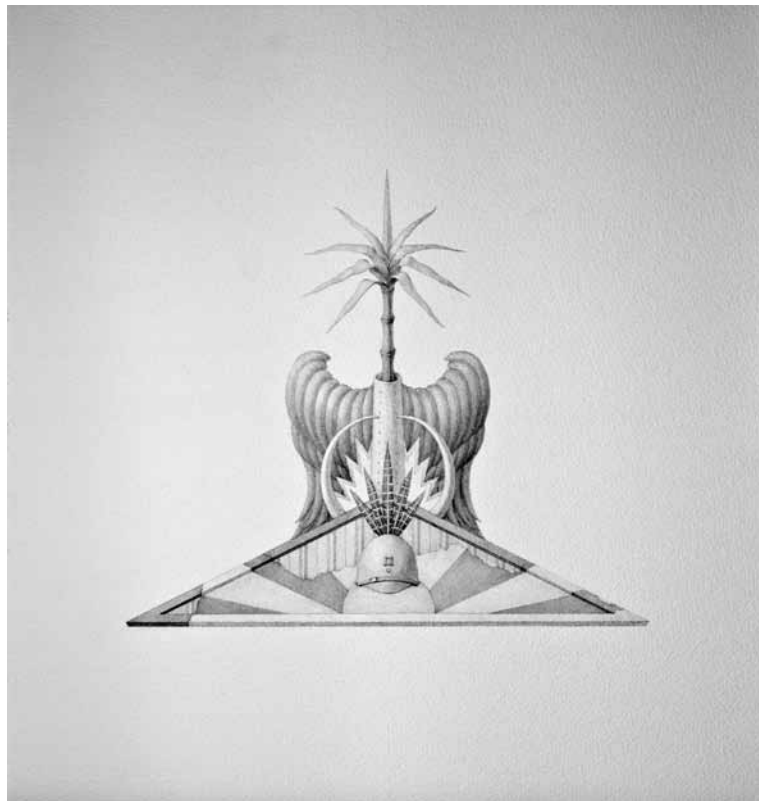
The word “symbol” has its roots in the Greek *symbolon*, which originally meant to throw, or bind, something together. Can we look at history as *symbolic* in this sense, as a synthesis and violent amalgamation of events and disparate influences, which together form the image and imagination of the present and the past? The symbolic, used in this sense of “binding together,” stands for power, for domination, and for the subjugation of disparate peoples and elements under a single rule. The symbols known as “coats of arms” are such symbols par excellence.

The piece *Arms* by Chia-En Jao is about the making of both symbols and Taiwanese history. Employing the symbolic language—the “genre”—typically used on such emblems, he designed thirty coats of arms. Each coat of arms is composed of a multitude of elements that have come to signify events, materials, or structures that are deeply ingrained into the history and cultural memory of Taiwan.

The coat of arms pictured here shows the rising sun, representing the imperial Japanese dream of “uniting” Asia. In the late nineteenth century, Japan took possession of Taiwan from the defeated Qing Dynasty, which had ruled the island since the seventeenth century. The sun on the coat of

arms rises above the South Pacific Islands, and the (broken) shape of Taiwan’s Yushan mountain is visible. Portions of the triangle are filled in with galvanized steel plates, which are commonly used to build factories in Taiwan. Above the red sun is an American military helmet, representing US hegemony in Taiwan under the KMT, after Japan’s defeat. On top of the helmet are feathers of a Taiwanese Mikado pheasant, while in the background there is an unidentified inferno against the backdrop of black eagle wings, the iconic imperial symbol. In the center of the image is an upright cannon in which a sugar cane grows—the very first commodity cultivated in Taiwan, which aroused imperial interest and led to the waves of colonization that have defined Taiwanese history—and continue to define it today.

Chia-En Jao, born 1976 in Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei



Chia-En Jao, *Arms* (detail), 2012, pencil on paper, series of 30 drawings, each 40 × 40 cm

Boris Ondreička

Black Birds & Blackbirds (II), 2012

Boris Ondreička is a singer, author, curator and artist whose works deal predominantly with language, both in its spoken form as performed poetry, and in writing, with a particular focus on typography. His work never assumes a final form or materializes in objects; rather, it constitutes itself as a permanent process, based on a pool of “materials” which are assembled and recombined in site- and context-specific interventions.

Aside from text—mostly his own writings—his work encompasses a vast and ever-changing collection of images, appropriated from various sources and different historical epochs. It is in the space between text and image that his work temporarily nests. This is the space of the imagination, or in other words, of morphological figuration, in which the differences between form and image, image and meaning, become porous and unstable. These differences can be blurred or enhanced through the strategic use of semantic shifts and displacements, that is, through the conceptual act of poetry. The inconsistencies of meaning and rationality are embraced by music and rhythm. It is this immersive, associative, and even hallucinatory quality unleashed in language and images through their musical activation that is at the core of

Ondreička work. Both language—spoken text or written words—and images—concrete or abstract—here become sensors of sorts for what Ondreička simply calls “frequencies,” which is something we may experience as viewers in the rhythm of our associations and emotional reactions, but which also is a way of “recording” history—a history quite different from linear time, but no less actual, embodied, and sensual. Hence, DNA as the physical “code of life” is a persistent motif in Ondreička’s work—and the spiraling double helix is perhaps an image par excellence for the willful collapse of dialectics, for folding opposites into each other along a certain “frequency.” And it is also an image for scientific laws and determination, as the code or program from which emerges all living forms.

Ondreička’s performance and installation *Black Birds and Blackbirds* for the Taipei Biennial investigates the “dark” side of all form and meaning—the unknown, the realm of the hallucinatory, irrational, or compulsive—and the pure “imminence” of form, that is, the point where the difference between form and mental process or social relation evaporates, where “reading” and “immersion” become one and the same.

*Boris Ondreička, born 1969
in Slovakia, lives and works in
Bratislava*

the majority of minority,
the minority of majority,

rity-ty-ty,
rity-ty-ty.

Virlani Hallberg

O, 2012

Receding Triangular Square, 2012

O, a three channel video installation, revisits the old European literary genre of the “bourgeois portrait” and insists on its ghostly actuality as a diagram of both intimate and historical relations. Situated in Sweden, it tells of a love triangle involving a young, wealthy, newly wed couple and their female domestic worker of color, with whom they share everyday life on their estate. The idyllic image and the particular social order represented here comes at the price of frequent outbursts of psychological and physical violence, and the routines performed gradually reveal themselves as a normative “script” full of implicit agreements in which the characters mutually objectify each other, thus entrapping each other in psychological double binds. In this constellation, the female domestic worker is both an object of violence and a projection surface for the white woman’s desires. O is a work about the place of intimacy and desire within a setting of structural violence, and the resulting dependencies and ambivalences in the relation between victims and perpetrators.

Receding Triangular Square is a new work created in collaboration with the psychoanalyst and cultural theorist Leon Tan. It explores forms of detachment and alienation as

experienced in mental despair and psychological illness, but also on a historical scale through the long-lasting destruction of culture under colonial subjugation. The work juxtaposes traditional healing methods from Taiwan’s aboriginal cultures, as well as Daoist rituals, with Western-style psychiatry. Rituals as well as psychiatric treatment are different ways of “undoing detachment” and “repairing the web of time that has been broken” (Chris Marker in *Sans Soleil*). RTS investigates different ways of crossing boundaries to the “other side”—the side of re-connection, where broken relations and detachments can be restored. This “other side” is the side of the psyche, of unspeakable experiences, or the side of the ancestors and “spirits”—but our connection to this side is no longer taken for granted. It has to be questioned, made or re-made. The work reflects on this making and unmaking.

*Virlani Hallberg, born 1981
in Indonesia, lives and works
in Berlin and Stockholm*



Virlani Hallberg, O, 2012, 3-channel HD video installation, colour, sound, 30 min

The Museum of Gourd

Curated by Chihiro Minato

**Participating Artists: Chen Szuting, Ting-Ya Chang,
Daizaburo Harada, Kung Yi-Fang, Hsu Ming-Sheng,
Shiro Takahashi**

The gourd has been used as a container across the world since ancient times. Grown in Africa, Eurasia, Austronesia, and America for more than ten thousand years, it is one of the world's oldest cultivated plants. Easy to grow and cut, it was sometimes used as a dish, spoon, or a container for water and wine. In China and Japan, the seeds kept in the gourd were believed to be fertile, just as the gourd is itself a symbol of fertility and fluidity. In the Chinese myth of Genesis, it is said that a man and woman survived the Great Flood by using a large gourd as a boat. In eastern Taiwan there are villages where local shamans use the gourd bottle for divination. The first form of the Chinese ideogram for the gourd is found today in the word for "liberty"—for there is no liberty without fluidity and, it seems, no fluidity without the gourd.

Another use of the gourd, which may be as old as that of the container, is as a musical instrument. Its natural shape is an ideal resonator and has been used to make rattles, whistles, and many kinds of drums. Ancient history is often conceived in terms of such things as stone tools. The

"Stone Age" is, I think, a particularly modern vision with a very limited perspective, because we do not know whether stone was actually the primary tool of this era. There must have been many more tools that were more important.

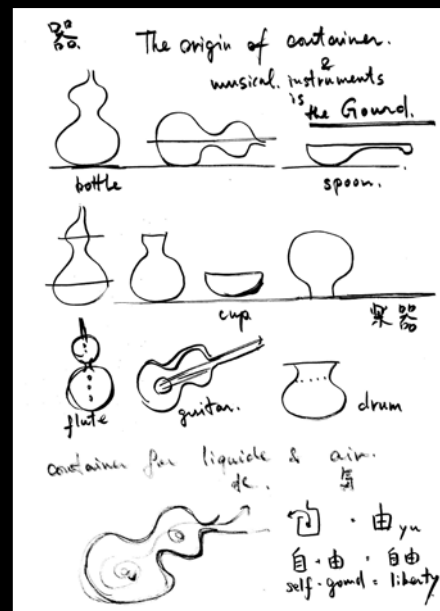
For this reason, I would prefer to call it the "Gourd Age." Migration over land and water would not have been possible without a water container. If the amazing diversity of the gourd family is the result of human migration, then the gourd is one of those things that have sustained our long life on this planet while leaving very little trace of itself. We have shaped gourds and have been shaped by them. We are literally the children of the gourd.

On the question of containers, it is also interesting to reconsider the "Atomic Age" after the great earthquake in Japan.

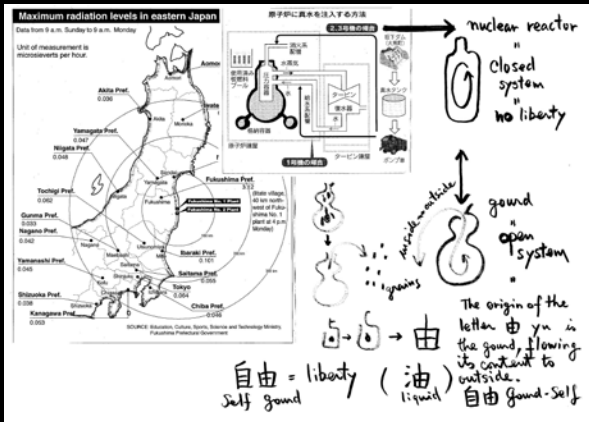
The Fukushima nuclear disaster revealed not only the limit of our capacity to control nuclear energy but also its paradox: while the reactor generates immense energy, this energy must be totally contained. The reactor liberates the energy without fluidity, since fluidity would release dangerous radioactivity.



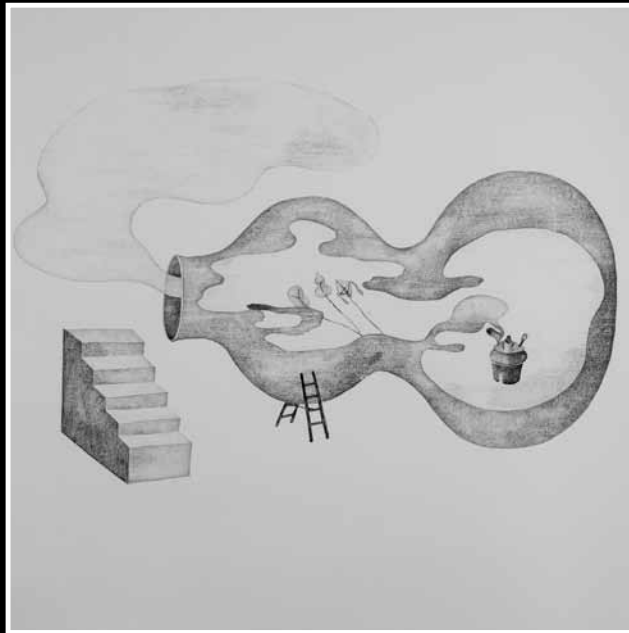
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The vast contamination and planet-wide pollution following the Fukushima disaster illustrate this paradox. The gourd could be a model for the low-tech culture that will follow high-tech disasters. We have begun to turn our attention to alternative sources of energy from wind and from water—resources that flow freely. If the phenomenon of life is in fact this very flow, then the gourd is one of the oldest models of fluidity. The Hawaiian gourd, for example, symbolizes ocean winds and is also used as a musical instrument for Hawaiian dance.

We would like to offer this mini-museum as a container for (thinking) fluidity and liberty. The *Museum of Gourd* is a living museum that collects, keeps, and exchanges ideas about containers and the contents of our societies and minds. Some cities have their psycho-geographical form incorporated into their historical setting—Taipei being one of these cities. In Shilin, the northwestern part of the city, there was once an island called Gourd Island, and we still find its form and its name on one of the streets. The Taipei Fine Arts Museum is located at the mouth of the ancient Gourd Island. The Museum of Gourd will be composed of a number of sections. One will display the first edition of the Gourd Collection. The world

history of the gourd will be traced through mythology, literature, drawing, and photography. The Taiwanese artist Chang Ting-Ya will draw the history through her inside-outside vision. Shiro Takahashi will make a “Big Gourd” with his BABOT technology, to symbolize the fluidity and liberty of our time. Daizaburo Harada, a leading Japanese computer graphic artist, will visualize the form of container-contents architecture.

In addition, *Gourd Magazine* will be an online magazine published by The Museum of Gourd. It will cover a wide range of topics such as art, design, architecture, and more. Many will be invited to share their gourd stories, which will be archived in the museum.

Finally, the Gourd Shop will sell original products that symbolize our philosophy of fluidity. (Chihiro Minato)

1 Kung Yi-Fang, Medium-sized gourds

2,3 Chihiro Minato, Gourd drawings

4 Ting-Ya Chang, *Cure*, Gourd border No.5, 2012, Woodcut, 90 × 90 cm

Jason Dodge

The Ornithologists Are

Sleeping, 2012

The Children Are

Sleeping, 2011

Alto Flute Filled With

Deadly Nightshade, 2009

Anyone, 2010

The works of Jason Dodge function as material witnesses for actions that belong to the realm of the imaginary and are presented in space in the form of an absence. The sparse objects operate as poetry and form a screen that is necessarily filled with a narrative. The titles give away what happened to the works before they were placed in the exhibition which gives them the appearance of “objets trouvés”, but with the understanding that the object’s qualities were meant to be. This way of looking crosses the geographic and temporal, to include other places and times, and sometimes other senses other than sight alone.

The Ornithologists Are Sleeping consists of pillows that have been slept on once, each by a different ornithologist. They are installed next to *The Children Are Sleeping*, a work made using the same logic. Whereas the ornithologists are defined by their eccentric passion, the children are arranged for their status of being non-adults, both having dreams ascribed to this identity. Both works are arranged to create the sense that the bodies

of the ornithologists and children are missing, as the pillows are put in the original sleeping position. These works engage in a well-defined intimacy, as they are juxtaposed with the piece *Anyone*. While the pillows of the former work were shipped to Taipei by the artist, who knows well who slept on them, *Anyone* consists of a pile of bed sheets from a hotel in Taipei which have been slept on numerous times and continue to be slept on and changed weekly.

In *Alto Flute Filled With Deadly Nightshade*, this negotiation of a borderline is situated in the status of the object itself. The flute is forcefully silenced and creates a present vacuum, as its status shifts from being an object that is used to being an object that gets a life of its own and becomes a beautiful threat to anyone interested in playing it.

Jason Dodge, born 1969 in USA, lives and works in Berlin



Jason Dodge, *The Children Are Sleeping*, 2011, pillows that have only been slept on by children; *Anyone*, 2010, 10 sheets exchanged by a linen service weekly

**Some Actions which Haven't
Been Defined Yet in the
Revolution, 2011**

The woodcut animation *Some Actions Which Haven't Been Defined Yet In The Revolution* depicts the nightmarish journey of a character through a world situated between waking and dreaming, day and night, past and present, in which all known, stable boundaries—such as that between inside and outside, human and beast—have become fluid. Time is dictated by traumatic flashbacks, and the nightmare-like atmosphere of the work, which is underscored by haunting music, is evoked not by violent actions, but by the claustrophobic routines of everyday life. There are two iconic scenes that define the work—one when the protagonist pulls an insect from between his teeth and eats it alive, and the other when the protagonist masturbates. The latter scene is the climax of the film, yet shows an anticlimax of sorts, with its undirected and unfulfilled libidinous energy. The former scene evokes the metaphor of “cannibalism” as an attitude and mental condition, used by the influential author Lu Xun to describe the decay of Chinese consciousness. Lu Xun wrote *The True Story of Ah Q*. and was, not coincidentally, also an eminent scholar of Chinese woodcuts.

This work is Sun Xun's first animated film based entirely on woodcuts, a traditional Chinese technique which is more than 2000 years old and which experienced a revival during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Is this the revolution and the disconcerted society left in its wake that Sun Xun speaks about? More likely, it is not one specific revolution from among the many revolutions China experienced in the twentieth-century—but the ever-present effects of continuing revolutionary violence, and the surreal underside of “official” accounts of revolutionary reason and propagandistic promise, where revolution appears as sanctioned terror. The work depicts experience of a world turned upside down in which the rationality of irrationality has become the rule.

*Sun Xun, born 1980 in China,
lives and works in Beijing*



Sun Xun, *Some Actions Which Haven't Been Defined Yet in the Revolution*, 2011, animation, black and white, sound, 12 min 22 sec

Chang Chao-Tang

Time of No Shadows,
1959–2004

As a photographer, writer, filmmaker, and teacher, Chang Chao-Tang has been one of the chief chroniclers of Taiwanese society since the late 1950s. The non-chronological sequence *Time of No Shadows*—a title alluding to an un-rememberable past and a non-imaginable future—starts with a lesser-known picture from his “Headless” series. The iconic picture “Headless Self-Portrait” depicts the photographer’s figure as a shadow with no head, which is cut off by the wall on which the shadow is cast. The work alludes to a loss of control, to histories of de-culturalization, to a sense of absurdism under totalist power, and to history as subjectless process. Comprising works dating from 1959 to 2004, the sequence *Time of No Shadows* unfolds as a continuous inversion between spectators and scenes, a continuous striving towards a missing, elusive, or hidden element, exposing an ever-growing gap between signs and their referents. The photographs thus point towards a rupture or even an abyss in reality. In exploring this abyss, the photographs develop a different kind of realism—a realism of experience on the margins of the social order, opening the obtuse meaning which can only ever be remembered through the hidden,

implicit contents of gestures exposing themselves, revealing a physical, sedimentary memory of collective expressions. In the sequence we see several images of the human body waiting, gazing in aspiration, or captured in movement, frequently juxtaposed with figures of animals, real or reproduced. It is through these animals, especially apes, that the thin and unstable surface of reality breaks open and overflows with repressed or un-rememberable history and an excess of signs and meanings, only to be hidden under veils or behind walls in the next picture. The frequent images of fortune-tellers and their diagrams of human faces or hands through which they “read” future and destiny are iconic of this relationship between the visible and invisible. These images are not historical images in the sense that they document a past; rather, what they capture is a scenography of an historical experience.

Chang Chao-Tang, born 1943 in Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei



Chang Chao-Tang, *Panchiao, Taiwan 1962*, photograph;
Chouchiang, Chiangsi, China 1989, photograph

Teng Chao-Ming

A Monument for the (Im)possibility of Figuring it Out, 2012

The subject of this piece is the film *A Brighter Summer Day* (1991) by seminal Taiwanese director Edward Yang. Together with Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *City of Sadness*, *A Brighter Summer Day* has become the main cinematic representation of Taiwan's White Terror period (1949–1987). Set in Taipei from 1959 to 1961, the film is based on a real-life story: a schoolgirl's murder by her boyfriend, considered the first juvenile murder case after 1949. With this film, Yang attempted to create a representation of a period in Taiwan's history that, in his own words, is "deliberately ignored and forgotten". He considered the actual murder an inevitable result of the societal structure and political environment, and he uses the incident as a narrative tool to describe its logic.

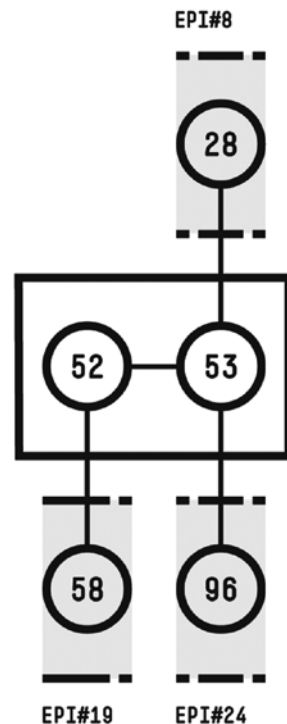
The central element of Teng's work is a life-size sculpture depicting the final scene of the film.

This scene is the culmination of a process of victimization: a girl being murdered, a murderer who is presented to us as the victim of circumstances. It is a scene of a dramatic and perverse dialectic logic, a so-called double bind: in the act of the murder the protagonist attempts to reclaim his agency from an environment that deprived him, but this attempt at break-

ing free ultimately turns into its opposite, a trap through which he ultimately falls prey to the structure. The presentation of the "scene" as a monument further raises the question of the politics of memory. Is there a similar trap or double bind in the logic of memory and historical narrative, in something that endorses history after the fact as inevitable? How much of the past can we figure out to support what to memorize? On the window behind the sculpture, we read the final words of the girl (Ming): "I am like this world. It will never change!"

In addition to the sculpture there is a series of documents on display that analytically decompose the narrative into discrete actions, with the attempt to present the systemic interactions between all the actors. Teng's diagrams are models to structurally understand how "inevitability" and "empathy" are building up in Yang's film, and furthermore, to reflect on how structure and human agency are related in historical processes.

Teng Chao-Ming, born 1977 in Taiwan, lives and works in New York and Taipei



Teng Chao-Ming, *A Monument for the (Im)possibility of Figuring it Out*, 2012, fiberglass painted sculpture, digital archival print documents, newspaper clippings

The Museum of Ante-Memorials Curated by Eric Baudelaire

**Participating Artists: Robert Filliou,
Deimantas Narkevičius, Peter Watkins**

Memorials are usually created *after* catastrophes, commemorating the dead and reminding us that we should do all we can to prevent such tragedies in the future. But the unending proliferation of war memorials suggests that this second function, the prophylactic one, doesn't always work as hoped. What happens if the sequence is reversed? Can memorials also be constructed *before* the fact, in the place of, or in order to prevent an actual event from happening?

The Museum of Ante-Memorials explores this question by bringing together a constellation of films and documents that expand our understanding of the memorial. It explores the relation of memorials to past and future, to actuality and possibility. It brings together fictions—imaginary scenarios, constructed facts—with documents relating to historical events that actually took place, in order to explore where the scenarios they describe begin to overlap. The museum presents fictions that become documents *before the fact*, documentaries of a possibility,

and documents that open up fictional spaces. In this sense, the ante-memorials in this exhibition stage different scenarios: what actually was versus what *will have been* and the possibility of what *could have been*.

The inaugural work in this museum is Peter Watkins's film *The War Game*, produced and censored by the BBC, depicting a nuclear attack on Great Britain in the 1960s. In the style of an actual news report or documentary, the film describes the devastating consequences of the destruction of the English county of Kent in a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union. The extraordinary violence of the statistics enumerated in the voice-over, and the relentless shots of children in agony, of mass graves and of burned flesh, have a striking reality-effect that leaves us in shock even today, fifty years after it was made. "Fiction" here "mocks" reality as it seeks to prevent this reality from becoming actual.

After Watkins's film, the viewer encounters a series of collages by Robert Filliou titled *Commemor* (*Commission Mixte d'Échange de*



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Monuments aux Morts / Joint Commission for the Exchange of War Memorials) from 1970. The work is a proposition: "As for these countries which nowadays are thinking of going to war, they could consider exchanging their war memorials before instead of making it." Filliou's proposition is visualized with pictures of actual war memorials in Holland, Germany, and Belgium, which the Fluxus artist has crudely cut out and swapped with scissors and glue, turning existing war monuments into ante-memorials.

Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Museum is an actual memorial, packed with documents, artefacts, and personal accounts of the first atomic bombardment, along with scientific perspectives on the Manhattan Project. *The Museum of Ante-Memorials* presents two historical documents from Hiroshima, which, in an inversion of Watkins's and Filliou's gestures, open disturbing imaginary scenarios of what *could have been*.

The first is an American memorandum addressed to the Secretary of War, in which a committee of scientists from the Manhattan Project recommend that the bomb should be dropped onto an unpopulated island as a warning to the Japanese, in order to avert the widespread horror a civilian bombing would produce and the inevitable international arms race it would trigger. The advice of the inventors of the bomb to the politicians that would use it went like this:

"If America would be able to say to the world, 'You see what weapon we had but did not use. We are ready to renounce its use in the future and to join other nations in working out adequate supervision of the use of this nuclear weapon.'" The Franck Committee's advice was prescient but went unheeded, a window into the alternate history of what *could have been*.

The second document recalls the fate of the city of Kokura, Japan, the planned target of the second atomic bombardment on August 9, 1945. It is a film shot from an observation plane showing the B-29 bomber Bock's Car making three circles over Kokura in search of a hole in the unexpected cloud cover that makes it impossible to visually identify the target. Bock's Car eventually diverts to a secondary target: Nagasaki. These images of a silver plane navigating the beautiful blue sky evoke the horror of reality juxtaposed with a vision of what was avoided, the strange fate of one city saved from hell, and another one doomed, by a few white clouds.

Finally, the film *The Dud Effect* by Deimantas Narkevičius presents the flipside of the fictional events of Kent in 1965: this film simulates the launch of R-14 nuclear missiles from a Soviet base in Lithuania in the 1970s. *The Dud Effect* is the inverse of *The War Games* from a narrative standpoint (depicting the launch instead of the

impact) but also in terms of style: every effort is made to render the action ordinary, bureaucratic, methodical. The aftermath is suggested by shots of surrounding nature, the sound of strong wind, and a series of long takes of current Soviet-era nuclear installations in an advanced state of decay. Is it a post-apocalyptic world, or simply the spoils of time, the reassuring evidence of the end of the Soviet empire? And if it's the second hypothesis, why are we not comforted by these images of a past that never was? To the Hiroshima museum's *would have been*, to Watkins's *will have been*, and to Filliou's simple conditional, we witness Narkevičius's *was not*. In this conjugation of works, among other constants linked to their "memorial" value, it is essentially a question of time and truth, or of how time puts the notion of truth in crisis. (Eric Baudelaire and Anselm Franke)

- 1 Peter Watkins, *The War Game*, 1965, 16mm film transferred to video, black and white, sound, 46 min
- 2 Robert Filliou, *Commemor*, 1970/2003, 12 black and white photographs mounted on plates, each 70 × 100 cm, Courtesy of Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf

Chen Chieh-Jen

Happiness Building I, 2012

Chen Chieh-Jen creates scenarios in his works in which “fiction” takes the place of—and thus reminds us of—that which is systematically excluded from dominant paradigms of “representation” in the political sense of the word. The staged scenarios of Chen’s works are shot at the actual sites of the history or the events or conditions he refers to, and they involve a collective process among his protagonists that unfolds while the film’s set is being built.

The theme of *Happiness Building I* is the generation of Taiwanese people born in the 1980s. Facing increasingly precarious lives, this is a generation for whom anxiety has become permanent. This situation originated with the neoliberal reforms implemented by the Taiwanese government beginning in 1984. These laws have since affected countless families, eroding labor rights, housing rights, and access to social services. The laws “passed a sentence on the futures” of the younger generation.

The characters in *Happiness Building I* are based on young people who wrote short reflections on their individual life histories for Chen. The young people were from different backgrounds, but all lacked stable employment. Their stories became the basis for a fictional narrative composed by

Chen. *Happiness Building I* is set in an old apartment building which will soon be demolished and replaced by a new structure. The tenants who live there prepare to leave one by one. Inside the apartment building we see an unemployed, a young woman who has no family, a lesbian whose father committed suicide after being out of work for a long time, and a female sound artist who left home after her parents divorced. Outside the apartment building, other figures assemble: a single woman exhausted from protesting the Temporary Employment Act, a female laborer who works at a computer recycling center, a physically impaired actor working in a small theater who has long engaged in “silent standing” as a form of social action, a woman who dropped out of school after becoming disenchanted with the educational system and went on to establish an archive on the LoSheng Leper Sanatorium, and a young social activist has also come to help move the possessions of elderly person who live there alone, but who are already gone, and all that are left are their luggage. *Happiness Building I* is an image for the atomization of individuals whose fates, under the new economic dictate, have become “privatized” by society.

Chen Chieh-Jen, born 1960 in Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei



Chen Chieh-Jen, *Happiness Building I*, 2012, 3-channel HD video installation, HD video transferred onto Blu-ray Disc, colour & b/w, sound, 82 min. Photograph: Chen You-wei

The Museum of the Infrastructural Unconscious Curated by John Palmesino and Ann-Sofi Rönnskog (Territorial Agency), and Anselm Franke, with Yi-Jen Chen and David Hellström

Photobooks by Armin Linke

Contribution by Ching-yueh Roan

The Museum of the Infrastructural Unconscious inserts itself amidst the shifting relations between the form of contemporary politics and sovereignties, and the form of their material spaces of operation. It sets out an inquiry into the models to govern, order, affect and structure change by measuring, surveying, quantifying, evaluating, connecting and linking. At the juncture between two trajectories of institutional and spatial transformation, the museum phathoms two sets of archives and their conceptualisation of the connections between surveying, documenting and envisioning change and history.

On one hand, sectoral and expert knowledges have invested infrastructure discourses and practices, and driven the fragmentation and separation of its many technical know-hows. Separations in know-hows and delimitations of fields of influence have been translated

directly into demarcations and separations in space, with the result of a variety of deterministic approaches to change now dominating the horizon. The expansion of the horizon of intervention, the scale and limits where to conceptualise and affect change, seem to link up to the imperial sweep of modernity.

On the other hand, at the side of these practices of delimitation and ordering processes, thrusts of disalignment and de-organisation are appearing on all sides. At odds with the mainstay equivalence between transformation processes and organisational procedures and protocols, a series of fissures, fragments, fault-lines are reshaping contemporary space of inhabitation. Rather than the unwanted, the disaligned, the left-overs, these spaces appear to mark divergent and syncopated paths of development. A number of seemingly





non-connected events, projects and initiatives are beginning to ask how to step out of predefined orientation schemes, where politics, spaces, technologies, images and texts need not to be associated along lines inscribed in previous knowledge.

The first set of documentary practices and materials stems from the National Archives of the Republic of China, and traces the complex political and cultural location of Taiwan. Moving from the colonial and imperial forms of modernity, the envisioned new infrastructures of the 21st Century reverberate with the long modern growth of the control, management and engineering techniques set in motion to govern flows and circulations of goods, materials, energy, populations, information, finance. These techniques accelerate in their turn the separation and distinction of the different paths that cross and make up contemporary space. What seems to emerge is a complex of systematic fragmentation and separation, which is aligning itself with the atomisation of independent work and the anti-political swerves of current public life. How to think of a space where the constructions of ethical subjects are entangled with the construction of their spaces of cohabitation?

A second set of materials are organised in the museum through diachronic analysis. A vast cross-section of the satellite-data archive of the Landsat program reveals the transformations in the material spaces of human cohabitation. The constantly refreshed archive, which scans the surface of the entire earth from an orbit altitude of ± 705 km, is sampled at three decades intervals from the end of martial law in the ROC. The materials that form the surface of the earth in this region are mapped and analysed in their transformation processes. Sounding the spectrum between the frequencies of $0.45 - 0.52 \mu\text{m}$, the electromagnetic reflections detected by the Landsat multiple sensors depict the transformations in the hard surfaces, those constituting the substrata, the infrastructure of human activities. These are markers of complex procedures to control, modulate, contain and frame the shifting links, the disetaneous sets of transformations between the form of contemporary polity and contemporary space. (Territorial Agency / John Palmesino and Ann-Sofi Rönnskog)

1-4 Armin Linke, Michele Achilli, Daniele Brigidini, Guido Canella, Nursery, Abbiategrasso (Milano) Italy, 14/09/2009; Kashiwazaki Kariwa Nuclear Power Station, reactor, Kashiwazaki Japan, 18/02/1998; ONU, New York USA, 08/12/2001; Computer dump, Guiyu China, 22/02/2005

Wei-Li Yeh

Emperor Go in the City,
2005–2012

Yeh's work at various times interrogates what happens at the margins of contemporary capitalist society. Places play a crucial role in this interrogation, whether they be the margins of the city, abandoned sites and ruins, places that are transforming and giving way to something new, or simply those places that are significant to the artist. It is in the crisis and disorder of the abandoned—in things caught halfway between trash and cultural artifact, and above all in everything that is *discarded*—that he finds the material for his dense narratives which ultimately crystallize in his photographic images.

The object in this series was found in 2005 in Wae Wu Yin, a former navy compound in the Taiwanese city of Kaohsiung. Shortly after, the compound was destroyed to make way for the city's new opera house. The object is a painting depicting Emperor Go Jian, an ancient and historical figure, protagonist of popular legends, and approaching divinity. Living some 2300 years ago, Go Jian was the emperor of the Yue Kingdom and is best known for having been captured and made to serve his enemies in the Wu Kingdom for three years. While in captivity Emperor Go kept alive the humiliating memory of this catastrophic defeat by forcing

himself to ingest a fragment of bitter venison gall bladder nightly, until he later took revenge and reclaimed the warring states of what we now know as China. The legend of Emperor Go Jian, who wanted to win back his lost empire, is widely used as a template for the Kuomintang's fate and their claims on mainland China after they fled to Taiwan in the late 1940s. Indeed, paintings depicting Go Jian can still be found in many Taiwanese military installations today. It was just such a discarded painting that Yeh found in Kaoshiung.

Yeh took this painting to his home in Taipei and photographed its journey through different contexts, staging expressively quotidian scenes where the painting functions as mere backdrop. Along this eight-year journey which continues into the present, the painting naturally and superficially decomposes and gets reassembled, as if in an attempt to reconstruct the painting so it can be permanently archived before it finally disappears. Yeh constructs this journey as a different kind of homecoming—not as conquest and revenge, but as dispersal of a memory within a city, as a nomadic experience within the context of urban life and its struggles.

*Wei-Li Yeh, born 1971 in
Taiwan, lives and works in Taipei*



Wei-Li Yeh, *Emperor Go in the City*, 2008, #4 of 7 / Xiao-Chien, Taipei, Taiwan, wooden light-box, lambda semi-transparency, 100 × 120 × 15 cm

Jakrawal Nilthamrong

Zero Gravity, 2012

The films of Jakrawal Nilthamrong can be described as narrative and visual expeditions into borderlands. These are the borderlands of truth, fiction, and the imaginary, the borderlands between life and death, dream and wakefulness, and between the visible world and the invisible forces and spiritualities that shape and traverse the different registers of our experiences and realities. *Zero Gravity* is the second of Nilthamrong's films that engages with "gravity" as an invisible force, which, like "karma," presents us only with its results. His earlier work *Man and Gravity* showed a man's struggle with gravity in his attempts to use a motorbike to pull a huge weight up a mountain. But in *Zero Gravity*, "gravity" refers to the aftermath of violence events.

Zero Gravity is a work about the borderland between Thailand and Burma, and the borderland between fiction and truth, as well as past and present. Set in Ratchaburi, not far from Bangkok, the film follows a man on a journey into the history of the region. In 2000, Ratchaburi hospital was the site of a national incident, when the hospital was occupied and staff taken hostage by armed Karen guerrillas under the command of the "God's Army" from neighboring Burma, the leadership of which was attributed to two twelve-year-

old twins. The ten occupying guerrillas were eventually killed by Thai forces, some apparently executed on the spot after surrendering. This incident raised awareness of the political situation in Burma and the war fought by the Karen people in southern Burma, and was credited with sparking today's insurgency in southern Thailand.

Beginning with shots of the hospital which evoke memories of this event, the film takes us on a borderland journey, from road incidents and the Thai social services that compete for the bodies of the dead, to mysterious encounters in the jungle where the protagonist, whose memory we are traversing, encounters, among others, the Karen twins, the infamous generals of God's Army.

Jakrawal Nilthamrong, born 1977 in Thailand, lives and works in Bangkok



Maria Thereza Alves

Destroy Miramar Resort, 2012
Announcement of Attempts
to Guarantee the Future
Existence of Taiwan, 2012

Maria Thereza Alves's videos and installations speak about the continuity and actuality of colonial relations by addressing questions of representation and the politics of memory, expropriation, and land rights. Her works critique the idea of stable identities and stand as a counter-model to any version of the evolutionary story of progress and to all that is normally taken for granted or assumed as unavoidable or without alternative in the historical process of a colonial modernity. It is her involvement in the struggles of indigenous populations around the world against dispossession and cultural destruction that has made her focus on so-called "local" knowledges and historical counter-narratives.

For the Taipei Biennial 2012, Alves has organized two performative works. The first work brings the ongoing struggle of indigenous people against the corporate development of their coastlands into the context of the Biennial opening, asking the Biennial's curator to wear a T-shirt supporting the campaign against the Miramar Resort on Taitung's Shanyuan Beach during the official parts of the ceremony. Local activists and environmental groups have been

campaigning against the "development" and the privatization of these lands for several years. The construction of this grand new tourist resort, situated in a bay that is a traditional fishing ground for the aboriginal Amis people and that is also home to a coral reef, has been halted by a court ruling that contests the validity of the building permits and environmental impact studies.

Alves's second intervention consists of a performance with a gong player, who will regularly perform in select public spaces in the city of Taipei. The gong is a traditional form of public announcement but has long been in decline. The content of the announcements will refer to immediate demands made by Taiwan's aboriginal peoples in their current struggles, such as the Miramar Resort struggle, the Tao people's struggle against a nuclear waste dump on Orchid Island, and the Taroko people's fight against the Asia Cement Corporation.

*Maria Thereza Alves, born
 1961 in Brazil, lives and works
 in Berlin*



Maria Thereza Alves, *Announcement of Attempts to Guarantee the Future Existence of Taiwan*, 2012, performance in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, public spaces of the city and corporate headquarters.
 Courtesy of Galerie Michel Rein

The Two Year Project

The Two Year Project (2Y) began as an experiment on behalf of the curators of the Taipei Biennial 2010 (TB10): the first artists invited to the show were asked to join in a collective effort to define what is missing in the biennial industries as we now know them. The one factor everyone could agree on was the chronic lack of time. Time to develop, time to install, and time to mediate your project as an artist. A unanimous decision was taken to pursue a conversation over two years, taking the commissions for the TB10 as a point of departure.

Each of the ten participating artists approached the idea in completely different ways. Some brought the initial TB10 commission to a logical conclusion, such as Lara Almarcegui, Christian Jankowski, Pak Shuang Chuen, Chia-En Jao and Shi Jin-Hua. Others reconsidered their working premises in light of newer developments. Take, for instance, Olivia Plender's *Invisible Theatre*, Mario Garcia Torres' *A Reversal of Standard Operational Procedures*, the book project by Michael Portnoy or the TFAM demolition plan as proposed by Chris Evans.

Importantly, with the help of the Goethe Institute in Taipei, a midterm conference was held in Fall 2011, which helped focus and consolidate the 2Y project and generate further discussion on the work in question. In January 2013, the 2Y project presents "Closing Seminar", hosted by TB12, to present the final contributions on behalf of all participating artists.

<http://2yearproject.blogspot.com>

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The 360° Stroke

Project by Francisco Camacho
 21.09–27.09: Training courses
 01.10–05.10: Class dates
 Round one 14:00–14:50
 Round two 15:00–15:50

Shilin Sport Centre
 No.1, Shihshang Rd., Shihlin
 District, Taipei City 111, Taiwan
 T: (02) 2880-6066
 F: (02) 2880-5966
 E: service@slsc-taipei.org
 (register at the Shilin Sport Centre
 information desk)

Happiness Building I

Project by Chen Chieh-Jen
 The film set constructed
 by the film crew and cast
 are open for visiting
 29.09–30.12 (13:00–18:00)
 Closed on Mondays

No.115, Sanjun St., Shulin Dist.,
 New Taipei City
 Located inside the factory
 of the Yi-Ping Construction
 Material Company

The Two Year Project (2Y)

In January 2013, the 2Y project
 of TB10 presents "Closing Seminar",
 hosted by TB12, to present the
 final contributions on behalf of all
 participating artists.

<http://2yearproject.blogspot.com/>

Working With... (Monsters, Institutions and Others)

Lecture by Zak Kyes
 22.09 (14:30–17:30)
Auditorium, TFAM

EVENTS AND PERFORMANCES

28.09.2012

**The Waiting Hall.
Scenes of Modernity**

Hannah Hurtzig
 Performative event
 20:00–22:00
Lobby, TFAM

**Announcement of Attempts
to Guarantee the Future
Existence of Taiwan**

Maria Thereza Alves
 Performance in the Taipei Fine Arts
 Museum, public spaces of the city
 and corporate headquarters.
 Performer/assistant director:
 Titan Jian
 Performance time: 35 min
www.taipeiennial.org

Destroy Miramar Resort

Maria Thereza Alves
 Performance by Anselm Franke
 during preview and opening
TFAM

Black Birds and Blackbirds (II)

Boris Ondrejčka
 21:00–22:20
Gallery on 3rd floor, TFAM

The Un-erasable

Liu Ding
 19:45–21:00
 Performance by
 Liu Ding and Li Ran
Gallery on ground floor, TFAM

29.09.2012

**The Politics of an Exhibition:
Mythology, Images, Space**

Lecture series by Anselm Franke,
 John Palmesino and Eric Baudelaire
 14:30–17:30
Auditorium, TFAM

The Un-erasable

Liu Ding
 12:30–14:30
 Event by Liu Ding, Li Ran
 and Cheng Mei-Ling
Gallery on ground floor, TFAM

Paper Mill Reception

Performance by Pak Sheung Chuen
 Films by Tony Chun-Hui Wu
 19:00–20:30
The Paper Mill
 (Cocktails served)

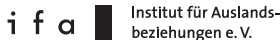
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**Modern Monsters /
Death and Life of Fiction**

Taipei Biennial 2012
29.09.2012 – 13.01.2013

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