

In practice: models of
cultural exchange and
reciprocity

Papers from ST PAUL St Gallery
2014 Curatorial Symposium

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ST PAUL St Gallery 2014 Curatorial Symposium

In practice: models of cultural exchange and reciprocity

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The 2014 symposium focused on models of cultural exchange. A related, and inevitable secondary focus is the institution, broadly defined as a primary set of conditions within which the practice of curating has evolved, and the various modes which it proposes, supports, and regulates for cultural exchange. The institution is understood here to include not just the exhibition format and associated physical spaces, but also the social space, the critical text, the publication, the archive, the biennale, the international residency and the research trip and not least, symposia like this one. It's from within, in loose alignment with, or through resistance to these modes that the contemporary practice of curating continues to define itself. Each allows for a specific type of exchange, is mediated by the individuals involved, and comes with its own set of ethical obligations.

Three questions underpinned the symposium's framework. These are: what are our roles and responsibilities as institutional workers, and as both guests and hosts? What can the contemporary institution do to further effective exchange? How do we avoid repeating dominant narratives? Indigeneity and how it is represented and afforded agency is a fundamental aspect of this conversation. Approaching this the third Curatorial Symposium, we wanted to build on the established dialogue and ambitions of the previous two. Essential to this discussion is retaining the geo-political specificity: these are intended as regionally-situated discussion platforms, which look at issues particular to contemporary curatorial practice in the Asia Pacific. They anticipate practical outcomes for those practicing as curators or in related fields, as well as providing space for speculative conversation about why, how and what it is we do as curators, in relationship to other strands of cultural production, and a broader socio-political context.

Mindful of current discussions around the legacy of institutional critique, from our earliest conversations about the programme, there was a clear sense of urgency to look self-critically at the context in which we work. If, as Andrea Fraser has written, we come to embody the institution we affiliate with, how can we collectively become an active constituency, and one that prioritises radical mobility, emancipatory forms of political action, and usefulness as a civic function? How do we foster and protect criticality in our public institutions and spaces, in an increasingly corporatised institutional landscape?

Moving ahead with this discussion includes looking back. The first symposium in 2012 was shaped by questions around what curating means within the wider sphere of cultural and knowledge production. In 2013 the symposium *From a history of exhibitions towards a future of exhibition making*, part of a project initiated by Biljana Ciric, focused on revisiting historical territory in the Asia Pacific region as fundamental to mapping the future of the curatorial in this place. Both symposia sought to involve an audience connected by their work in making exhibitions, and those who are concerned with thinking through the implications of 'cultural production'.

In continuing our conversations with colleagues in the Asia Pacific and reflecting on existing forms of engagement and exchange, 2014's symposium included specific address of the 'curator tour' model created and facilitated by Asia New Zealand Foundation and Creative New Zealand. Their annual curator tour of New Zealand curators to Asia has been running for four years, with the fifth tour taking place in September 2014. In support of critical reflection of the tour format so far, Asia New Zealand Foundation and Creative New Zealand partnered with ST PAUL St to bring previous participants together to discuss outcomes and challenges of this type of programme. This discussion formed a significant part of the first day along with present-ations from local curators and artists whose projects specifically engage the notion of cultural exchange. The second day adopted a wider scope for critical reflection on alternative models for the institution, with speakers representing a range of institutions and individual practitioners who self-reflexively promote cultural exchange.

When, how, why and under what conditions such exchanges might take place is at the centre of these presentations, as they seek to both interrogate the prevailing institutions of curatorial practice, and to contemplate alternative practices that promote exchange between curators, artists, and the institutions they affiliate with. The 2014 symposium sought to frame a proposition, or number of propositions, for how contemporary institutions can best make space for exchange. It remains at heart speculative; it acknowledges that listening is an active position, that collegiality involves reciprocity and the sharing of provisional knowledge as well as expertise, and that there is vulnerability in any exchange.

- Papers published in the following are drawn directly from the two-day symposium and published chronologically, but do not represent the full programme of speakers. Additional presentations were unable to be published. Please contact the Gallery regarding recordings of these. For a full list of participants see bios at the end of this publication.

This year's symposium takes a specific look at cultural exchange. This exchange is facilitated by and through a series of established frameworks such as the exhibition, the gallery, the biennale, the research trip or residency, the text, and the symposium. As established frameworks, these are institutions that we wish to examine collectively here in this symposium, with an emphasis on the implications for, and obligations of contemporary practitioners in the field. Today and tomorrow, we set out to question and address what our roles and responsibilities as institutional workers, and as both guests and hosts are. This is a site of exchange, which involves listening as well as speaking.

This includes raising and discussing many questions in an effort to reflect on the history of what we do, the current terrain, and, optimistically, venture some thoughts about how we can approach and carry out our work in a manner that will shape this terrain in ways that embody a reciprocal agency. I expect that this is going to be a dense, challenging and stimulating couple of days where this assembled group looks at the systemic conditions we work within and at ways that we can both immediately and speculatively engage with these situations in order to strengthen what works and effect change where it is most urgent.

In this introduction I will be posing a lot of questions. To begin: What is meaningful and productive exchange? What responsibilities do we have towards cultural exchange in our own contexts? How can contemporary institutions operate productively, perceptively and proactively as sites of reciprocal agency?

Last night our keynote Erin Gleeson spoke about problems of the political institution of cultural exchange through curatorial agency. She spoke of saying no to reciprocity. To do this she drew on Emanuel Levinas whose conception of subjectivity is based on the ethical relationship with the other, and his position that the presence of asymmetry in the relationship between the I and the Other is a crucial issue that excludes reciprocity as an ethical principle from his framework. In light of this perhaps we should now also consider what saying no to reciprocity might be like, or how it might operate in practice.

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This is the third curatorial symposium convened by ST PAUL St, and in the time since the first symposium I have continued to work at ST PAUL St with an overarching approach that is carefully probing at what this institution can do. A key question here is what should we be doing to address our role of 'critic and conscience of society', as per the New Zealand Education Act directive that universities agree to take on. An address of this is not apparent or necessarily present in every exhibition or project, yet it is something that underpins the approach and the culture of this institution that is ST PAUL St.

The 2014 Curatorial Symposium is a reflection on the two previous symposia, as much as it charts its own course

through some of the issues facing curators, artists and cultural workers whose work connects with contemporary art discourses. In developing this year's programme Abby Cunnane and I were mindful of the previous curatorial symposia convened by Vera Mey with a commitment to discussions relevant to the Asia Pacific region, and the importance of keeping this regional discussion strong. The first symposium in 2012 looked at our complicity within the system as curators and 'cultural producers', the second while not forgetting this, charted some exhibition histories in the region.

With this in mind, in thinking about the framing of a symposium for 2014 I am also very much enmeshed in processing the experience I had as part of FIELDS in Cambodia in December last year. The nature of the non-productive roaming residency was intentionally associative with tensions around modes of colonial exploration, exoticism, and contemporary tourism. FIELDS operated within these tensions to reconfigure ideas of knowledge exchange and the stratified roles that inform this kind of cultural exchange.

Within the context of researching Cambodian visual culture—from prehistoric to contemporary—as part of the conference *Don't abandon the Indirect Road*, and through site visits in Siem Reap—I heard a lot about 'capability building'. This phrase was typically deployed by western educated experts in archaeology and anthropology, and in the brief encounters I had with those who used the phrase I could not comprehend how this played out for all those involved. Implicit in the phrase 'capability building' is a sense of giving and receiving, not so much an idea of exchange, but of something being bestowed, and there is definitely a power relation at play. One of my questions in thinking about what to say here, now, is what kind of capabilities do we need to build? And how can we do this in a way that is horizontal, reciprocal and affords everyone agency?

You may think, who is this 'we' I am referring to? That is us collectively via the work we do as curators, artists, educators, writers, critics, funding application and proposal assessors, support letter writers and so on. It is also about our identities within other groups or constituencies outside of this room, whose daily experiences are at a remove from these spaces where we have the privilege to talk about our work.

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In the first curatorial symposium in 2012, Wiebke Gronemeyer problematised the term cultural producer and its implications for the curator. I want to revisit this, as for me it highlights a shift in thinking and practice that has happened in the time since then. The term now seems awful, brash and self-centred, like a production line of ill-considered stuff being churned out in haste to satisfy some immediate demand, which is just as fickle. That said, I want to go back

to consider how she problematised it because I feel that that is still worth considering, and because I am just as mindful that 'cultural exchange' the umbrella working term for this symposium and our deployment of it should also come under close scrutiny, which is exactly why we are here.

If a curator is a cultural producer, this presents what Gronemeyer referred to as a 'conundrum of practice' where 'those politics of power that are ostensibly critiqued through making exhibitions or the generation of discourse through other media in which curators work, are also re-instituted every time they are articulated through practice.'¹

How do we avoid the repetition of established and institutionalised power relationships? How do we deploy existing institutions, or create new ones, in better, more effective ways? Ways that do not rehash and reinforce dominant power structures and narratives.

Gronemeyer argues that there is no abstract conception of culture or of knowledge that curating can claim to attend to, or participate in producing, and that this knowledge cannot exist outside the sphere of production. She says, 'Both only exist in their specificity, which means they only exist both within and on the terms of their making.'² This then suggests while a measure of reflexivity is necessary within a practice such as curating—one that both reflects on and produces culture—that the reflection should be directed outwards to the wider cultural and social sphere within which cultural production operates.

In addressing this Gronemeyer assumed 'a perspective that manifests a shift from position to interest, which means no longer foregrounding the positioning of oneself as an artist or a curator, and rather look at curating as a practice within a wider cultural field, enquiring into the intentions, aims and responsibilities one's practice involves.'³ She is advocating for a generous and outward looking practice that does not get caught up in itself, ie. one that is not distracted by the petty concerns of the art world's egocentric, classist careerism.

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As we are all no doubt well aware, exhibition making has a history born out of strategies of discipline and Enlightenment ideals, and with it came an agenda to make a new bourgeois subject of reason in 19th century Europe. This marked a display and division of knowledge, power and spectatorship, but also the production of a disciplined and educated public who through the mechanism of the exhibition came to know their position within the structures of power.⁴ In response to these ideas elucidated by Tony Bennett as the exhibitionary complex, Simon Sheikh posed some questions:

If the historical role of exhibition making was to educate, authorize and represent a certain social group, class or caste, who then is being represented today? ... Which groups—imagined and real—are being catered to by contemporary exhibition making and institutional policies? And what modes of address would be required and desired to represent or criticize these formations?⁵

Ethical and responsible approaches are embedded in these questions, and in those that are being proposed within this symposium. But what does a curatorial ethics look like? What are our responsibilities as cultural workers/producers?

A while back, in researching what an ethics of contemporary curating might be, I found it little discussed as a specific topic or approach, mainly it is discussed in relation to the museological. If I rephrase it to be an ethics of cultural production in relation to contemporary art practices, working ethically is a situation where multiple, fluid, and perhaps conflicting, demands of the constituents involved must be taken into account. It is put into practice via an unfixed amalgamation of intuitive, pragmatic and institutional (museum, gallery, society and so on) determinants. The question then becomes how to negotiate such complex and unfixed terrain ethically?

In *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics* (published in 2011) Janet Marstine presents a position that recognises the contingent nature of what she refers to as the 'new museum ethics' focusing on it as a discourse and social practice that is dynamic and open to reassessment. Marstine's challenge to museums is to embrace contingency and 'foster collaborative relationships on equal footing with diverse stakeholders and willingly assume the risks entailed by entertaining novel positions.'⁶ Marstine advocates reconceptualising museum ethics as a contingent discourse to emphasise its dependence on social, political, technological and economic factors and to acknowledge its changeability.⁷ Her position is further shaped by Hilde Stern Hein who proposes that feminist theory is relevant for museums because it challenges 'othering'. To paraphrase, for Hein feminist theory is important because it seeks revision of notions of subjectivity and otherness; it blurs distinction 'between agent and acted-upon, proposing instead a continuity of identity and process that is reflexive and adapts to its shifting environment.'⁸; it rejects the autonomous individual for connectedness, fixed systems of classification, and accommodates impermanence. Citing many others, Marstine also argues for the importance of creating and not avoiding civic discourse because it can lead to the transformation of the institution and self; reciprocity which 'makes the ethics of the core contingent on the ethics of the margins.'⁹; and activism which opens up debate around issues of social justice. Marstine's text offers many points of approach to the new museum ethics, but there isn't time to discuss them further here.

In the same year *Manifesta Journal* issue 12 (a publication that is more closely related to contemporary art practices and conditions) was wholly dedicated to ethics. In the issue, Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro acknowledges the contingencies at play when approaching ethics in saying that a universalising deontology would have no value if it was not based on individual ethical experiences and that 'a curator is a subject who questions the universalizability of ethics because his job...is essentially ethical, linked to responsibility and commitment.'¹⁰ He goes on to say, 'the ethos of the curator is precisely that of constantly questioning the norm.'¹¹ The way Hernández-Navarro puts it makes it seem like a curator is automatically an ethical person. While we know this is not a given, at the core of these positions as he states them is fidelity and respect towards the other.

Although we are working with exhibitions in an expanded sense, and in ways that are much more fluid and discursive, the exhibitionary complex is a lingering hangover. While exhibition making and its institutions are no longer heavy handed object lessons educating the public, they still carry this history as an inheritance that in

Gronemeyer's words 'stresses the fact that culture can never be thought of other than as historically contested ground of the governance of social relations. It is a complex of different strategies, knowledges, expertise, technologies and apparatuses, connected to a set of governmental forms of rule that give rise to power and specific modes of its exercise, acting on the social with specific agendas in view.'¹²

In response to that, another question: How can cultural exchange operate in a manner that gives agency to all involved?

This year, in response to interest from Asia New Zealand Foundation and Creative New Zealand, and with their support, a significant aspect of the symposium has been given to the public discussion of the curator tour programme, and we will hear from some of those who have been on this tour about their experiences of 'being there' as curatorial emissaries, researchers, networkers, about their experiences of cultural exchange under this particular model of approach. I'd like to consider what it means to go there in this way. Do we have anything to contribute? Or is it more important to listen and learn about cultures and contexts?

At the heart of this type of model to travel is, I hope, a desire to connect with an other beyond the pressing imperatives to seek out something new and exotic to acquire. Assuming this to be a genuine desire for connection and exchange, for listening as well as speaking, it brings to mind Edouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* where 'each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other'.¹³ Aspects of Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* are useful to consider in this context and his statement that 'I can change myself through transacting with the Other, without destroying or denaturing myself' might offer food for thought.¹⁴ Glissant's transactions described thus have an embedded reciprocal agency. In his summary of the varieties of identity, under what he calls Relation Identity he writes that it is 'linked not to a creation of the world but to the conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures'.¹⁵ In this I hear that there is not necessarily any cultural production taking place, or at least this is not the intention.

With Glissant's 'non world-creation' in mind, I propose a connection to the Māori term and concept of wānanga—a forum for discussion and exchange with the aim of arriving at a deeper understanding. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal in his text 'Indigenous ways of Knowing' in the recently published *Argos* journal, writes that wānanga is 'the word we can most closely associate with the idea of the creation of new knowledge'.¹⁶ How this knowledge is understood as coming into being is a crucial part of the Māori worldview and has links to where Glissant's relation identity resides, or is formed. Royal writes 'the pursuit of knowledge concerns the progressive revelation of depth and understanding about the world rather than the construction of new knowledge as one constructs an object'.¹⁷ Glissant speaks of the relation identity as something that occurs in the conscious experience of contact, it is not located in the construction of a world as a definitive thing, but is formed through depth of understanding via contact, which I argue is extended through collective thinking and exchange such as that which takes place at wānanga.

ST PAUL St is host of this symposium, and yet we are also guests to your presentations, and contributions from the audience. In theory and in practice we should, as Irit Rogoff has suggested, 'stay with the questions'.

1. Wiebke Gronemeyer, 'The Conundrum of Practice', in ed. Vera Mey, *Duty of Care*, (Auckland: ST PAUL St Publishing, AUT University, 2012), p.36. http://www.stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/attachments/394_DutyOfCare.pdf
2. Gronemeyer, 'Curating in the 'Culture Complex'', presentation for 2012 Curatorial Symposium, ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT University, 30 March 2012. Podcast of talk: <http://www.stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/gallery-podcasts/2012-curatorial-symposium-wiebke-gronemeyer-curating-in-the-culture-complex>
3. Gronemeyer, 'Curating in the 'Culture Complex'', 2012.
4. See Tony Bennett 'The Exhibitionary Complex' in eds. Reesa Greenburg, Bruce W. Ferguson, Sandy Nairne, *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.84; and Simon Sheikh 'Constitutive Effects: The Techniques of the Curator' in *Curating Subjects* ed. Paul O'Neill (Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007), p.175.
5. Sheikh, 'Constitutive Effects: The Techniques of the Curator', 2007, p.175.
6. Janet Marstine, 'The Contingent Nature of the New Museum Ethics' in ed. Janet Marstine, *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.7.
7. Marstine, 'The Contingent Nature of the New Museum Ethics', 2011, p.8.
8. Hilde Stern Hein, 'Redressing the Museum in Feminist Theory', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 22:1 (London: Routledge, 2007), p.32. DOI: 10.1080/09647770701264846
9. Marstine, 'The Contingent Nature of the New Museum Ethics', 2011, p.12.
10. Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro, 'The Curator's Demands: Towards an Ethics of Commitment' in ed. Victor Misiano, *Manifesta Journal*, No.12, 2010/2011 (Amsterdam: Manifesta Foundation, and Milan: Silvana Editoriale Spa, 2010/2011), p.7.
11. Ibid.
12. Gronemeyer, 'The Conundrum of Practice', in ed. Vera Mey, *Duty of Care*, (Auckland: ST PAUL St Publishing, AUT University, 2012), p.39.
13. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p.11.
14. Édouard Glissant quoted in Manitha Diawara, 'All the Difference in the World', *Artforum* February 2014, p.166.
15. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 1997, p.144.
16. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, 'Indigenous ways of Knowing', *Argos Aotearoa: The University Beside Itself*, online journal: <http://argosaotearoa.org/work/indigenous-ways-of-knowing/> (Accessed 12 June 2014.)
17. Ibid.

**A series of calls and response:
Rebecca Ann Hobbs and Lucreccia Quintanilla**



#1 Rebecca Ann Hobbs: Growing up in a corrugated shed in far North Queensland had its perks...



For example, I remember dad would position long plastic drain pipes around the place for the green tree frogs to live in. With the rainy season the frogs would become outspoken and their calls, amplified by the pipes, would mix with the sound of the tropical rain and the thunder to create a percussive arrangement that any rhythm section would be envious of. Things moved slowly in this environment, except when on the back of a horse, where a gallop would propel you through the landscape at a heart-racing pace. Syncopated beats and fast moving tempos

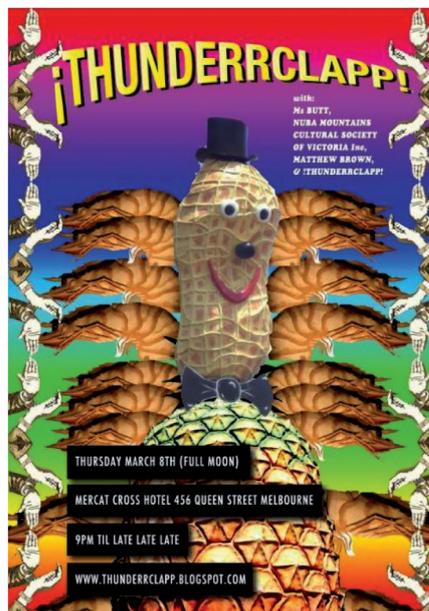
[LQ interrupts]

#2 Lucreccia Quintanilla: ...Not just memories I would say. More like a substance that circulates through your body periodically with the slightest of cues... when I was six my grandfather who had been a music teacher all his life decided to teach me rhythm—ta-ti-ti-ta - ta-ta-ti-ti-ta. - clap, clap, clip, clip clap—after a while I became bored of learning and decided to teach him something—I forget what it was that I thought was so important to impart to the old man. He played along and after another while he lifted up his

aluminium walking stick on its side up to his mouth and began to blow into one of the adjusting holes [enact this gesture]. With his fingers he proceeded to block and unblock the rest of the now frets. I had never been so impressed, that sound was the most amazing thing ever to me.



#3 RH: [abruptly interrupts the video and goes to text pic] But Lulu I am not sure if this is a good start, we are being nostalgic, this mob have not come to hear us be sentimental, we have been invited to talk about 'models of cultural exchange and curatorial practice.'



#4 LQ: Hmm... the 'kooratooreal'. I think immediately of cataloguing...what if you don't want to be catalogued? Is there a section for the uncataloguable? There is a section for the too hard and a section for the too complicated, but where do you go if you want to be uncataloguable? Everyone speaks their own language, or many at once, accessing always multiple senses of time and place. So how does a curator resist the need to frame ideas within the dominating European canon. Words like exchange, culture and motifs come to mind. These words to me are all ever-changing developing substances. Always very complex. How do we as artists and curators resist the pull to over

simplify what is truly complex and shaded? Simplification sure is easy to read easy to catalogue. But...just as we have begun this talk by telling stories...



#5 RH: I am attracted to the story telling platform, even if it is sentimental. If I am hearing you right Lulu you are asking how do we move away from taxonomies, typologies, and collections? Which seem to perpetuate the age old reductive binary of 'same and other', preserving the dominant narrative. What are the placeholders that allow us to explore 'the margins at which disciplinary discourses break down and enter the world of political agency'? Do you like that quote? I got it from Landry and MacLean's *Spivak Reader*; secondary texts, they are my life saver.

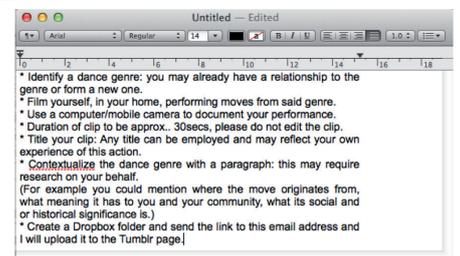
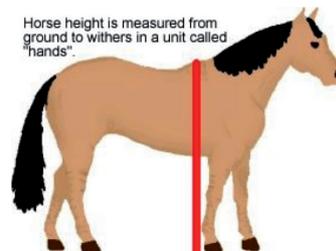


#6 LQ: (stroking her chin) Yes exactly... sentimentality and nostalgia have such a bad rap. I really feel for them—ha ha! But I don't think those stories are just about reminiscing though Rebecca. They revisit us for a reason. We retain certain stories as individuals for a reason. They have formed us. My theory is they help us make sense of the now. They are good things to exchange. But let's leave philosophy for another day. I am thinking about stories with an awareness that while we are talking art here an industry largely based on aesthetics that perhaps we need to look more at the ever developing stories... behind motif and colour the usual pointers of the familiar 'different'—I am thinking appropriation. Think about the stories. The complex stories.



#7 RH: Phew...sweet, I like this idea. I tend to remember and tell stories via the body and movement; measuring space with falls, thrusts and stretches. I remember as a child throwing an old empty four-gallon drum at a termite mound. With each toss I would scream at the tiny creatures, 'arrrr you fuck'n ants, who do you think you are!!!' The drum would ricochet off the mound into the dirt and I would have to walk over and get it to start the process all over again. This was going on for a quite while: throwing, yelling, retrieving, throwing, yelling, retrieving. Until eventually I went to pick up the drum and there was this bright orange snake sitting, looking straight up back at me, as if to say, 'What are you doing making all this racket?'" It was only then that I realised just how much noise I was making and that this might have an effect on others. I agreed with the snake and thought it best to give it a rest.

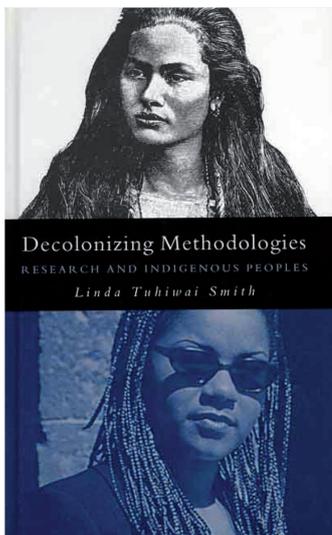
#8 LQ: Ha! Sounds like performance art to me! It's all about the rhythm! I guess that rhythm, childhood and music for that matter, can be destructive and are not by default all positive vibes, all easy going and umm harmonious! So here is a question...is there some sort of formula for effective cross-cultural collaboration for you Rebecca Ann Hobbs?



#9 RH: Damn, that's a tuff question. Honestly I don't know. But what stands out the most and seems to need a direct response is the idea of 'effective'. Surely effective means something is quantifiable and if there is measurement, the question is: Who's doing the calculating? One of the most interesting things about working with others is that there are often hiccups and slippages. What I like to try do when working collaboratively is to create a space for open exchange and individual stories to occur within, somewhat like the amplifying pipes of dad's. These types of platforms seem to require boundaries for participants to creatively

push up against. For example the text here is a set of instructions that I asked participants to follow for a body of work entitled Dance Portraits. I am also attracted to the idea of placeholders, I like the fact that this work exists on the net and is acting as a live archive that can be updated by anyone who hears of it and wishes to be involved. Of course there are participants who have 'broken' these directions, which is sweet. I want to throw that same question back: Is there some sort of formula for effective cross cultural collaboration for you?

#10 LQ: I would not call what I have rules as much as considerations to remember regardless of the type of collaboration or outcome: Don't assume anything about anybody that you work with, and this includes culturally. Always think about power positions within your working relationship with others. Seeing differences as a negative is a big mistake to make. Some things will be untranslatable and they are strengths rather than weakness in a collaborative environment. Always find ways to laugh. These have been accumulated through time and mistakes and after having been on the receiving end of these considerations not being part of the equation. Of course it is easy to be too focused on the final outcome to remember to do those things that should be second nature considerations. also I do not work with anyone that I have fundamental clashes with in terms of those things above. You know the type who does not see those things as important because they are 'beyond it' and claim to be all futuristic and see no need to burden the creative process with so much 'heaviness'. They are very political considerations for sure. I guess in the future we should not be caring about those things, it's true but...it's like, dude! We are not in the future! Ha, ha! Perhaps that is why I am becoming more and more obsessed with Sun Ra's futurism that is poetic and outlandish and most importantly aware and complex. Also I have been reading a little bit of Denise Ferreira da Silva who looks at race and gender from a perspective that one actually exists within multiple senses of time so there is the complexity again. So there, then, if the future is now, well, it seems that nothing much has changed! Sometimes it even feels like we are going backwards in time! That is my answer to you!

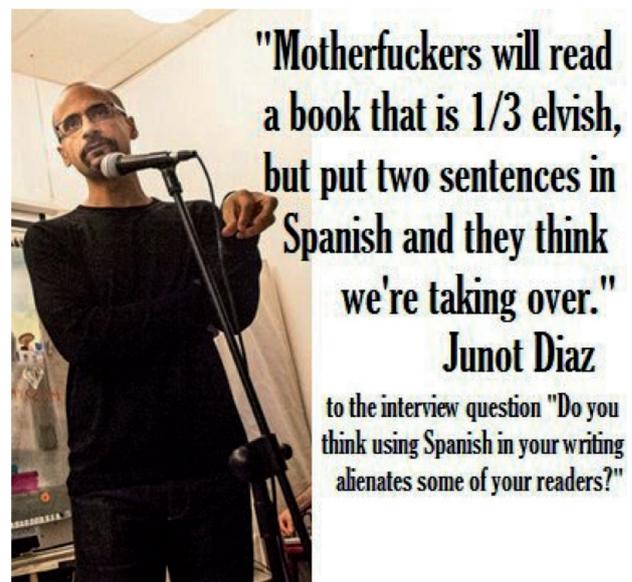


#11 RH: And a great answer it is too! I also find looking at others really helpful. I have recently been reading Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

#12 LQ: Also btw when I say difference I mean differences of opinion, difference in aesthetics, difference in ways in which decisions are reached. But back to you: you have mentioned that as the initiator of collaborative works you see your task as that of a definer of boundaries to exist within and even break. Like a type of game. How do you source your collaborators in that case? I, having been one before—and even as I type this—I know that our common interest in a particular type of music and dancing has been important. But are there other factors for your choosing who to work with?



#13 RH: I like the game analogy; play plays such an important role for me. I tend to work with people who arbitrarily come into my life, or this is often a starting point. Take the dancing, which has not always been the subject of my creative focus, but become so after I moved to Otahuhu and started hitting a lot of South Auckland clubs with mates. Even though I had been dancing for years I never took it seriously as a subject. (Which is silly as I often try to demystify the creative process for students by asking them to make work utilising experience-centred knowledge.) Once I committed myself to performance this opened possibilities for work in the field and collaborative opportunities. For example my first ventures into this subject was with the mates I was hitting the clubs with, turning all that playing into field research.



#14 LQ: Awesome...this is a side thought to build up on but...think about the way in which we have negotiated working together according to very different ways of

working. I like the way it that flowed on from conversations that we have had in the past over what has been a 10 year friendship! The writer Junot Diaz says that a good artwork is one that is understood through discussions with others—that was me totally paraphrasing btw—to me this is a type of collaboration as well and this is what you and I have always done together. I guess here he refers not to direct participation but a different type of further collaboration after the work has been read/viewed/experienced.



#15 RH: Our ways of initiating collaborations are different, but the thing that is consistent is our friendship and continual support of one another. You too arbitrarily came into my life, but it seems to be our commonalities that propel us to act as host and guest to each other's ideas over and over again. Above all else I enjoy our conversations and storytelling and can relate to the Diaz train of thought. Why don't you share another?

#16 LQ: What about the story of my African dancing days in New York?!? Eh? You wanna hear it? As a nine year old when I was the only non African American in the African dancing troupe. Which was put together by the teacher in order to encourage us to get back to our African roots. Because it was a lower income area and the teachers had been through college during the 60s and 70s, they wanted to instill pride and this was achieved through us doing hip gyrations and what Ms Abrahams called 'sexy dance'. Which involved nothing sexual per se, but is what some would now term as twerking. We danced to Michael Jackson songs. What do you think about that story?

#17 RH: It's hilarious!

#18 LQ: I was really good at it!



#19 RH: No doubt. I have seen you on the dance floor and can vouch that you still have 'sexy dance' techniques. I have a similar story around trying to negotiate cultural complexities. Going back to those stories about singing frogs and enduring snakes, we were living, as 'guests', in Wulgurukaba country. But there were moments when I got to act as host. For example we had a trampoline, the only one for quite a while, so this was my hosting space. The regional Murri¹ kids would come over and hang out on the bouncing canvas, we had a ball. Getting back to creative platforms and the task at hand; as a maker I think I am trying to always get back to the trampoline. Take the recent collaborative work I did with Altercation Dreamer Solutions, who is a bounce dancer for the Sissy Bounce artist Big Freedia and is based in New Orleans. I facilitated a Skype workshop where Altercation taught several participants in Otara how to bounce, or twerk as you say. The final work was a two-channel piece; one channel was Altercation showing and instructing. The second channel is a group of us trying to do the moves. That workshop was the trampoline all over again and again I had a ball.

#20 LQ: So...what do you think Rebecca? Are we done with our bouncing today?

#21 RH: For now. Thanks for having us.

1. Murri is a self-defining First Nation Australian term for the peoples that traditionally occupied most of modern-day Queensland.

See You at Yasukuni
Fiona Amundsen

'If I don't come home, I'll see you at Yasukuni'... 'We'll meet at Yasukuni, beside the second cherry tree'... These are phrases that World War Two Japanese soldiers and pilots of the Kamikaze Special Attack Force would say to their families and each other as they went into battle and ultimately death. They were referring to the Tokyo based Shinto shrine, which is dedicated to people who died whilst serving the Emperor and whose souls are thereby enshrined as deities. Although this is the shrine's core business it has faced local and international backlash connected to a series of political actions that started in 1959 with the enshrinement of a number of Class A, B, and C convicted war criminals. What is significant here is that the enshrinement process operates via specific Shinto based ceremonies, meaning that enshrinement itself is not automatic upon death, but rather a conscious act. The shrine, and on-site Yushukan military museum has also been accused of historical revisionism concerning Japan's imperial expansion throughout East, South East Asia and the Pacific, which has been further perpetuated via a series of formal visits by government officials, including the most recent in late 2013 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. These visits anger the former Japanese occupied countries of China, South Korea and Taiwan as they are seen to dishonour the histories of extreme suffering these countries have endured. Specifically, Yushukan museum presents Japan as the liberator of Asia from Western colonisation, but without any mention of its own imperial regimes. Also, in addition to this tension, any official governmental visit is seen as a potential breach of Japan's 1947 constitution where the US Occupational forces aimed to specifically demobilise Yasukuni Shrine as a government-sponsored institution, which arose from the *Potsdam Declaration*. This resulted in 'Article 9' of the Japanese Constitution which prohibits Japan from using combat as a means to settle international disputes. Prime Minister Abe's recent visits to Yasukuni Shrine can be viewed as a direct challenge to Japan's constitutional pacifist positioning.

All of these interlocking surrounding narratives—whether they derive from the visits of governmental officials, or the enshrinement of convicted war criminals—makes Yasukuni Shrine a complex phenomenon within a local and international socio-cultural psyche. Rooted within Yasukuni Shrine's complex narratives is a physical and spiritual place of not only mourning, but also the possibility to remember the atrocities of WWII itself. These memories must surely involve not only what Japan inflicted on other nations—its own nightmarish imperial history—but also the force of the American military who essentially used Hiroshima and Nagasaki as strategic test cases for their newly fashioned atomic bombs, thereby forever changing the geopolitics of not only this region but the world at large. However, Yasukuni Shrine while also a site of spiritual depth and remembrance cannot shake off its complex imperial history, which ultimately locks the shrine in to a rhetoric of strident fanatical nationalism—any mention of Yasukuni creates a complex myriad of feelings, for both Japanese and non

Japanese. Yasukuni Shrine is a site of trauma, both historical and present-day.

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Earlier this year I took part in a six-week residency at Tokyo Wonder Site where I focused on Yasukuni Shrine. The title of the project, *See You at Yasukuni*, forms part of a larger one where I've been looking at how *The Pacific Theatre* of WWII is memorialised and imaged. It was a full-on experience photographing Yasukuni Shrine. I was constantly asked why I was interested in this site, and while I gave carefully worded responses about my interest in history, nationalism, WWII and photographic representation, not to mention the racist rhetoric surrounding this war, it never seemed to sit well. There was not only a cultural divide, but also one of subjective positioning. It's not that I didn't have a sensitivity to the complexity of Yasukuni, or that I shouldn't have been looking at it, or that my voice was trying to claim centre stage, or that I claimed to have any answers concerning the Yasukuni issue, but rather that I wasn't making my ethical or political intentions clear. *See You at Yasukuni* therefore presents a kind of double-whammy as it attempts to address not only the political, historical and trauma related contexts of the shrine itself, but also the ethical complexities of how to represent all this now, through lens-based media. This project takes its ethical positioning from the Australian theorist Jill Bennett who states in *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* that her 'theoretical concerns and methods both intersect with and diverge from an important strand of trauma studies that promotes a critical and self-reflexive *empathy* as the most appropriate form of engagement with trauma imagery'¹ [Bennett's italics]. For me, this acknowledgement and awareness of 'self-reflexive empathy' establishes a methodological foundation from which to engage with not only the shrine and its complex histories, but also the manner in which trauma itself is articulated via lens-based practices. This project therefore argues that any imagery relating to Yasukuni Shrine must involve 'self-reflexive empathy'. However, this becomes super complicated considering that this project resists personalised or primary experience, which is then articulated in to a visual form: in other words, the focus is not one of witness testimony that then authenticates trauma-related experiences or memories associated with Yasukuni. What becomes significant is not only this project's ethical framing per se, but more importantly how this can be *identified* within the resulting artworks that essentially aim to sidestep witness testimony.

I think it's important to acknowledge that there's a distinction regarding the role that specifically photographic imagery conventionally plays in the articulation of trauma-related experiences. Photographic representation often manages to generate an emotional response that in turn creates an over-identification with first-hand experiences of trauma, meaning photographs *authenticate* trauma-related

horrors. This results in a problematic appropriation of trauma-related experience that produces a relationship based in a kind of uncritical sympathy.² American theorist Susan Sontag has written extensively on these ideas in relationship to war photography, most notably in *Regarding the Pain of Others*.³ So, for this project there is also a critique of the photographic image as it relates to documentary practices, specifically the slippage between what is perceived to be known and experienced through images with what is actually communicated and presented. This questioning of the documentary image is hardly novel, however a fundamental shift in understanding and expectation of 'the image' is altered when the content is linked to political trauma: images must deliver, and deliver in a certain way, affirming ideologically driven narratives. Again, this raises the complexity of ethical positioning for this project as it works with trauma-related material that can trigger deeply felt painful memories, be they personal or cultural, while also attempting to challenge how such content gets represented. So, if *See You at Yasukuni* seeks to pay homage to the significance of first-hand trauma-related experience but at the same time attempts to critique the very representation of this, how might an ethical framing be located within such objectives? Key to this inquiry, therefore, is acknowledging that the focus here is not solely based in an 'aboutness' of certain trauma, but rather the lens-based processes through which it is articulated.⁴

The German playwright Bertolt Brecht's idea of 'crude empathy'—'a feeling for another based on the assimilation of the other's experience to the self' is useful here. 'Crude empathy' is key as it provides another way in which to language this potential over-identification with the experience and/or memory of trauma as articulated through the lens. Alternatively the aim for this project is to negotiate trauma as a political, rather than solely subjective phenomenon, which becomes challenging as such an objective tends to abstract specific experiences and narratives.⁵ In essence this again presents a complex positioning regarding ethics. If the goal for this project, is to simultaneously sidestep narrative—akin to 'aboutness'—whilst also acknowledging its importance outside of primary subjective experience, it could be asked where the political, within any resulting artworks, in fact exists? So, at risk of rephrasing the same question, this project therefore asks how an ethical framing can be identified in artworks where narrative content—derived from trauma—is not literally visible? As the Indian literary theorist Gayatri Spivak suggests this calls for a 'politics of listening [and seeing], predicated on the listener's willingness to enter into such an encounter with another'⁶. This is, perhaps, another way in which an ethical framework of self-reflexive empathy may be identified in these photographs. 'A mode of ethical seeing can potentially support and tolerate difference, rather than either [rejecting] or assimilating the experience of others to the self'⁷. Therefore what becomes key for this Yasukuni project is to think about how these photographs might produce a kind of 'ethical seeing' of the political complexities embedded within imaging and the shrine itself. How might these images teach us to look critically and empathetically?

This is where the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's writings around affect and the encountered-sign, meaning the sign that is felt, are useful in which to rethink the relationships between the representation and critical inquiry of trauma-related experiences and sites.⁸ I'm interested in how

the affective responses engendered by these photographs may not be solely born of emotional identification or sympathy; rather, they emerge from a direct engagement with sensation as it is registered in the work.⁹ This provides a politicisation to these images as not simply allowing access to the 'essence' of trauma-related primary experience, but rather as something that allows for the making of new thought through these photograph's production of a sensual perceptual encounter itself. And it is precisely this embodied sensual encounter with the photographs that can form the basis for this self-reflexive empathy that's situated in critical inquiry as opposed to only emotional identification.

Like Bennett, within this project, I'm more interested in *how* an artwork does what it does than how perfectly it speaks of trauma. This creates an important distinction, in the sense that '...what counts is where the image takes us, what affect propels us into. These photographs cannot simply give us the answer—which would, of course, merely short-circuit critical thought. They need, in a sense, to relinquish the moral position in order to enable ethical inquiry'.¹⁰ Affect itself boasts a significant role concerning the ways in which *meaning* is negotiated first and foremost via embodied sensation. In other words affect is pre-representation, pre-cognition. Therefore, what becomes paramount to these images is the ways in which affects may also engender a critical (and thereby political) function.¹¹ So in the context of this project, the traumas of this site become catalysts for the production of affects that then service critical inquiry, thereby challenging expected and known readings of what an image of Yasukuni should involve. Paradoxically, the photographs of this project do not aim at any essential representation: there isn't any single truth to be discovered, or 'correct' way to image Yasukuni Shrine. And this is perhaps what is most shocking about these photographs; they refuse to shout a specific political message. It is this conflict between images and their meanings, between images and culturally embedded 'events', the shift between what can be seen and what can be said that reveals the fundamental ambivalence between discourse and document inherent in documentary practice. It is by working with this ambivalence—not to be mistaken as apolitical—that this project aims to provoke new experiences of historicised narratives that both pay homage to trauma, but resist holding histories as static or fixed.

1. Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.8.
2. Ibid.
3. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).
4. Bennett, 2005, p.9.
5. Ibid., p.11.
6. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface and Afterword to Mahasweta Devi, 'Imaginary Maps'", in *The Spivak Reader*, 1996: 267–286. Referenced in Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.105.
7. Ibid., p.105.
8. See Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, translated by Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
9. Bennett, 2005, p.7.
10. Ibid., p.90.
11. Ibid., p.24.

**Food, water and shelter:
Fundamental sites of exchange
Natalie Robertson**

Abstract

The philosophical base of Te Ahikāroa ('the long burning fires of occupation') and the practice of Manaakitanga (host responsibilities of care and guest responsibilities of reciprocity) are the loci around which my art practice circulates. I will discuss my current photographic project, *Te Ahikāroa: Long Burning Fires*, and the work of Local Time, an art collective I am a member of. Both projects look at how our relationships to environmental resources and ecologies can be reframed to create contemporary visual narratives of belonging to land and sea. Urban life is rapidly displacing the agricultural past of the New Zealand nation-state, with increasing isolation from and declining empathy for rural ways of life. Laws developed by urban politicians affect food preparation and exchange, building practices, and water usage, threatening sovereign rights to shelter, food and water. What approaches to art making may serve the philosophies of Te Ahikāroa and Manaakitanga within Te Ao Māori in the 21st century? What other communities have similar philosophies and approaches? Can the community of art and artists enact principles of host and guest, with attention to manaakitanga, as a model for cultural exchange and reciprocity?

Adapted from presentation

Ko Hikurangi toku maunga, ko Waiapu toku awa, ko Ngati Porou toku iwi. *Hikurangi is my mountain, Waiapu is my river, Ngati Porou is my tribe.*

I begin by positioning myself in location to a particular geographic, socio-cultural and spiritual landscape.



Hikurangi Mountain and the Waiapu River, 2012

Central tribal values for many, if not most, Māori tribes, are manaakitanga and the maintenance of ahi kā, along with the attendant rights and responsibilities. I can only speak from the position however, of being Ngati Porou from the East Coast of Te Ika a Maui, imaginatively named the North Island. Specifically, I speak from the position of being a Waiapu River Naati. Tikapa marae is my turangawaewae. Our beach is approximately 5km long stretching at one end

from a headland known as Port Awanui to the south bank of the Waiapu River mouth, known locally as the Ngutuawa, the beak of the river.



Waiapu River, Te Tai Rawhiti, East Cape, Aotearoa

This essay rests heavily upon research material and cultural knowledge from that position. Ngati Porou maintain their ahi kā rights and responsibilities within a specific geographic boundary. Those who live within the boundaries are called *ahi kā* in recognition of their role in keeping the home fires burning, while those of us who live away are sometimes called *taura here*, in reference to the binding ropes that connect us to home.

I'd like to consider how cultural exchange might occur within differing modes of a shared discourse, one where reciprocity is understood as a fundamental site of exchange. This can be interpreted as inter-tribal cultural exchange (including our relations from across the Pacific). In Ngati Porou culture, and the Māori worldview, hosting implies sharing one's resources, especially food, with guests, as generously as one can, even if it means going without once the guests have left. It has been said providing seafood is one of the highest mana enhancing mechanisms known to the Māori psyche. If you were to come to the East Coast, we would give you the choicest cuts of venison and try to offer the trifecta of paua, kina and crayfish.

In a recent talk by well-known Ngati Porou scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, she discusses a tribally-driven cultural revitalisation project towards indigenous wellbeing that positions practicing hospitality as a core value, stating that 'for us, it is a reciprocal process'. She asks 'what do you need to be able to exercise hospitality?'¹

I would argue, as I'm sure would many, that to be able to continue the centuries-old practices associated with hosting and generosity, we need to have access to our resources. The resources we need in order to host, includes access to our land and seas. We must understand the natural world to be able to harvest and hunt sustainably. When can we gather seaweed and when do the mullet run? What blossoms on the trees indicate that the kina, the sea urchins are fat?

Ka wera hoki i te ahi, e mana ana anā. *While the fire burns the mana is effective.*

This aphorism links together the two concepts, Ahikāroa and Manaakitanga. *Ahi* is the Māori word for fire, in fact it is Pacific-wide, as *Mana*, which forms part of the word is *Manaaki*. Manaaki, to support, take care of, give hospitality to, protect, look out for, as an activation of MANA A KI. MANAAKITANGA includes host responsibilities of care and guest responsibilities of reciprocity.



Paua cooking on fire, East Coast, 2012

Concepts in Te Ao Māori:

- * Ahikāroa – Long burning fires of occupation, also used to refer to the people who keep the home fires burning
- * Kauruki tu roa – Long ascending smoke (similar metaphor to Ahi Kā)
- * Manaakitanga – generosity in hosting
- * Ahi Teretere – flickering flames of those who don't reside at home
- * Taura Here – the binding ropes to connect those in cities with those at home
- * Ahi Mataotao – fires grown cold lead to extinguishing rights to land

While 'Ahi Kā' literally means 'site of burning fires', Te Ahi Kā Roa, the long burning fires, is a concept of land tenure through continuous occupation or seasonal maintenance of customary rights. It is a deliberate political maintenance of land title claims to ensure rights are not extinguished. It is now often used to refer to the people who live all year round on tribal lands, who work to maintain cultural tribal practices, the Ahi Kā, the keepers of the fires.

Ngati Porou scholar Nepia Mahuika writes:

... those who remain at home, (who) are considered ahi kā roa (long burning fires of occupation) or kauruki tu roa (long ascending smoke). These are highly political identities within the tribe, with those viewed as ahi ka roa generally perceived to have more speaking rights or decision making rights than those whose home-fires have perhaps grown cold.²

So what has disrupted this continuum of more than 50 generations of unbroken occupation of our land and our cultural knowledge systems? Linda Tuhiwai Smith speaks about the impact of global imperialism on knowledge systems. In a recent talk, she states 'what imperialism did

was to govern the way we think about knowledge... it worked to subjugate other forms of knowledge and other ways of understanding the world and the human condition.'

Waiapu River Ngutu Awa looking to East Cape, 2010



East Cape is the first place in the world to see the sun rise every day. In early summer, in the year 2000, I stood very near to where this photograph was taken, waving goodbye to my grandfather David Hughes. We had buried him next to my grandmother the day before, some 250kms to the south in Wairoa. As he lay dying, some four or five days earlier, he talked to me about this place several times. He told me a story of the Karaka trees that were once abundant here on the bank of the Waiapu River, about how as a boy of about 8, he would ride down here on his horse, to meet the mailman who would row across the river to give him the mail. As he waited, he would feel shivers down his spine as the Karaka seedpods and branches on the trees made an uncanny sound. In the telling of the story, my grandfather would rub his dry, wrinkled 96-year old hands together to make the noise. He called it the Whispering of the Karaka Trees. When he asked his mother why the trees whispered in this way, she told him not to worry, that this was the pathway of recently deceased Ngati Porou spirits who were passing through here on their journey from the peaks of our ancestral mountain Hikurangi, on their return to the homelands of Hawaiki. Thus he was taught that this tribal lore was different to other tribes who have different leaping places for departing souls. Now of course, this didn't make my grandfather feel any better about collecting the mail, alone down at the river mouth, here where it meets the sea. We agreed between us, that I would meet him here at the Ngutu Awa, the beak of the river, as he took his final journey from the place he had spent his childhood. I said I'd wave to him and asked him to wave to me, to give me a sign. In true dramatic style, he made his presence very clear to me, leaving with a great rain shower that misted over the distant Whangaokena Island and then streaming light through the clouds, akin to biblical paintings, the rain passed.

I have returned each summer since my Grandfather passed, to camp on coastal family land where he grew up. The land he lived on has changed enormously in the past one hundred years. It is an ecologically precarious environment. There are no more Karaka trees along the banks of the Waiapu at the foot of our mountain Pohautea. The birds, the fat Kereru wood pigeons that would once have been plentiful no longer have a home there.

Returning frequently has deepened and affirmed my connections and relationships to land and sea, but also is a

cultural-political act of establishing and maintaining ahi kā, burning fires on our land to declare intergenerational occupancy. The politics of return hasn't been without its problems. The initial issues have been largely resolved through the regularity of return and the formation of new family relationships on the coast. Equally important has been the annual gathering of artists, writers and environmental workers to wānanga, the Māori word that describes a space for learning and engagement.

These art and environment wānanga have been an integral part of the seasonal relationship to place. The 20 or so people who come continue to return to maintain connections, most of which occurs around the circadian rhythms of the day, food gathering, fishing, cooking and eating.



Waiotautu Stream, Port Awanui Road, 2013

Water is carefully monitored and at times, a vehicle or quad bike is sent with containers to fill up with spring water.

Despite the apparent simplicity, espresso coffee is made daily and the cooking is gourmet. Locals call in on their horses or 4WD to share a coffee. Communal cooking is part of customary Māori values of generosity and provision by hosts for visitors. In the midst of this context, I have been making photographs for more than twenty years.

The site, Omaewa, is ten acres, with a combination of a grassed area, a wetland, extensive wild gorse and some native trees. The heart of the camp is under an ancient pohutukawa tree, a huge sprawling tree that has taken root in a semi-circle. Under this tree is a caravan, and alongside the caravan, a makeshift shelter made of driftwood and tarpaulin, has been recently renovated and now has a timber frame structure to support the tarp. I came to realise this isn't exactly legal when a distant cousin visited. He commented on the fire pit and the structure. He's the guy that does the fire and building permits for the district council.

Environmental Degradation

This is no 'wilderness' retreat, but a place that was once a bustling port, made redundant with the advent of the motor vehicle. The landscape and seascape are heavily modified by successive attempts to harness the land to economic production, farming and forestry. The soil turned out to be completely unsuitable for pasture, so dairy farms eventually failed and now, eight decades later, the soil is being eroded at a massive rate, producing more sediment than any other river basin in the world.

As a result, as acres of de-forested land are washed

away into the river, the silt gets washed out to sea and covers the once-plentiful seafood beds, destroying the habitats of crayfish, kina and paua. It's hard to get enough kaimoana to feed visitors these days. Easier to kill a beast. Long gone are the beds of pipis. The mussels on the rocks are gritty and filled with sediment.

For a region that once was renowned for seafood delicacies, this loss of resources means that tribal generosity to guests is undermined. Indigenous values are jeopardised. The region has become one of the poorest in the country. Getting a feed for the family isn't a recreational activity.

Local Knowledge



Waiapu Ngatu Awa (2), 2014

See these trees on the skyline? These trees are markers for fishing grounds, triangulating with corresponding trees on Pohautea. Except those ones chopped down now, in favour of pasture. If the mullet and kahawai also disappear, so too shall the way of life, and the ability to feed our manuhiri, our visitors.

Ngati Porou activist Tere Harrison discussed with me her view that the collecting of kaimoana, of seafood, as an act of resistance, of being able to go and get food and not buy it. Exercising the right to gather seafood is part of her cultural identity.

The upshot of all of this doom and gloom is the slow burn value that is emerging out of the annual gathering of artists, writers and environmental workers. The reciprocity is flowing both ways with small community there, through the resources and knowledge we exchange. It includes the ongoing commitment to cleaning up the beach each summer, to replanting native trees on each return home.

From the Mouth of the Port to the Beak of the River, 2014



Tikapa Beach, Kimiora and Graeme mussel gathering, 2014

Can the community of art and artists enact principles of host and guest, with attention to manaakitanga, as a model for cultural exchange and reciprocity?

The annual wānanga at Omaewa in a sense birthed the collective Local Time. Camping together provided all the necessities for good conversation, over food. Te Miringa Hohaia, curator of *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance* had camped with us the first year. He later asked us to curate art interventions for his second Parihaka Peace Festival. This led to us establishing platforms for other artists and a series of interviews on collaborations.

Local Time (www.local-time.net) is a four-person collective, comprising Dr Alex Monteith, Danny Butt, Jon Bywater and Natalie Robertson (Ngati Porou, Clan Donnachaidh), based in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Local Time has been named as a collective since 2007, and our working relationships with each other stretch back over a decade. We are friends, colleagues and collaborators.

Somehow we became a thing and in 2012, ST PAUL St Gallery invited Local Time to lead a multi-disciplinary, practice-based research investigation in collaboration with a wide range of practitioners. We wanted to consider the fundamentals of living in any geographic, socio-cultural environment. How can 'camping' assist in creating provisional and temporary conditions that draw attention to unmediated access food, water and shelter?



Waiariki Spring, Tamaki Makaurau, 2012

Hei kai titowera awa hoki nau te wai? *Is it much trouble to prepare a drink of water?*

With the permission of Ngati Whatua, through Kaumatua Grant Hawke, this commenced with Ngā Wai o Horotiu, 'the waters of Horotiu'. Through the course of the project, we gathered water daily from Waiariki Spring, located in the carpark behind the Auckland University Law School library. This rhythm of water gathering was the act that most gave us a sense of learning about the geography and local history of the area we work in.

The gallery project provided a substantial research platform that led to inclusion by international curator Hou Hanru in the Auckland Triennial 2013. *For If you were to live here...* How did this become an act of reciprocity with Ngati Whatua?

During the Triennial, Ngati Whatua commemorated the 35th anniversary of the return of their land at Bastion Point with a concert of local musicians.

They also celebrated Matariki with a hangi for visitors who came to help with their Ko Te Pukaki ecological planting restoration.



Matariki hangi fire preparation for Ko Te Pukaki, Orakei Marae, May 2013

I took containers of the Waiariki Spring water to both of these events, for the 'green room' for the concert and for the hangi lunch served to visitors at the replanting day. This is story isn't told to sing of my own sweetness, but to acknowledge that the simplest exchanges can confirm commitment to our ongoing relationship.

A year on from those events, at a recent backyard gathering by a fire, one of the Hawke family, said to me that it was good that I'd brought them their water, remembering the simple gesture.

To conclude, I believe that to begin to understand the worldview of the first peoples of the land you live in, or work within in, is an essential step towards a committed cultural exchange. That's reciprocity. Indigenous people already understand the worldview of the dominant culture.

I'll conclude then with this possible explanation from Professor Whatarangi Winiata who described manaakitanga in this way: 'behavior that acknowledges the mana of others as having equal or greater importance than ones own, through the expression of aroha, hospitality, generosity and mutual respect. Displaying manaakitanga elevates the status of all, building unity through the humility and the act of giving.'³



Matariki, Orakei

Ka wera hoki i te ahi, e mana ana anā. *While the fire burns the mana is effective.*

1. See Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Eve Tuck, 'Decolonising Methodologies', lecture, The Graduate Center, City University New York (CUNY), 29 April 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIZXQC27tvq> (Accessed 1 May 2014.)
2. Nepia Mahuika, 'Kōrero Tuku Iho': Reconfiguring Oral History and Oral Tradition. (PhD thesis, University of Waikato, 2012.) <http://hdl.handle.net/10289/6293> (Accessed 21 May 2014.)
A reference within this quote is credited to A.P Mahuika. These terms, from a Ngāti Porou perspective, are defined by A. T. Mahuika, 'Draft Affidavit on Behalf of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Porou to the Privy Council', Private Papers (10th September 1996), pp.12-13.
3. See Whaturangi Winiata, Leadership Booklet, He Kākano – Te Awe o Ngā Toroa, 2011, p.15. <http://hekakano.tki.org.nz> (Accessed 20 May 2014.)

On 3 January 2014 in Freedom Park, Phnom Penh a one-hectare space established in 2009 as the only legal space (after ruling party permission is granted) for assembly, was violently stripped of its freedom. Armed military police indiscriminately fired live ammunition into a crowd of protesting garment workers, killing four people. The popular visual and material cultural experience of contemporaneity in Cambodia sits in between an aesthetic history in the form of archaeological artefacts from the French colonial perception of the height of Khmer civilization of the Angkorian period (beginning around 802AD and going until the 14th century), post regime recovery from the Khmer Rouge rule in the 1970s and the brutal realities of forced globalisation and exploitation of labour from foreign investment including neo colonisations from neighbouring ASEAN countries and from the presence of NGOs. Fora for free and fearless speech are threatened to be potentially muted and spaces for aesthetics are relegated to those catering primarily to the tourist gaze or market forces.¹ Anything which exhibits a threat to the little economic improvement the country holds, including the threat of criticality, compromises safety and security on a personal and civic level.

This context was the backdrop for a project I co-curated with Erin Gleeson, *FIELDS: an itinerant inquiry across the Kingdom of Cambodia*, a 20 day nomadic residency for artists, curators and researchers which attempted to navigate these layered tensions to reconfigure ideas of knowledge sharing and what it means to culturally produce or to create a platform of experience for use for future cultural production. The curators' invitation to our fellow 'fieldworkers' explained our aspiration to merge the sacred and the profane and to consider the effect of the virtual on the actual within a framework of pedagogy and action without established institutional structures for contemporary art. While our vision remained perhaps unavoidably ethnographic, our experiences were rooted in mutualism, with no claim to represent, report or produce. From my perspective, this was a strategy against notions of knowledge production or the idea of being a cultural producer but to return to being artists, curators, writers, researchers and educators engaged in actions of talking and thinking (rather than enveloped within the machinery of cultural or knowledge production and the institutions that entails).

My current location in Singapore, although economically more stable, also limits freedom of speech and civil liberties. In terms of the region, sometimes it feels like being the richest house on the street. Local media is solely state sanctioned and public gatherings of more than three people are considered acts of protest, prohibited without permissions and permits. How can the exhibition really carry and mobilise political gestures beyond acts of critical reflection? Can the exhibition be more than a safe space for unsafe ideas? How should this safety be considered? How do we use these ideas once encountered through the supposed publically political sphere of the exhibition?

Prior to my relocation and repositioning in Singapore I held a commitment to what felt like a politically progressive context in New Zealand. New Zealand modes of exhibition making have largely been imported from a British colonial legacy and from a traditional museological ideology—with museum as repository for important or significant cultural artefacts irrespective of how locally relevant they may be or how they were acquired. This has largely been challenged and intervened with through indigenous strategies—Māori—as well as tactics of institutional critique from an artistic and curatorial level. The museum as static cube has been redressed through transformation of the museum as storehouse to museum as guardian not just for art but rather treasures (or *taonga* in Māori). Within this role the curator plays a position which is not taxonomist but rather cultural negotiator, mediating different languages, time scales and belief systems in order to do those treasures, viewed as living not dead, justice to their existence. The exhibition holds power as a mode of historical revision, intervention, reconciliation and commitment to ideologies that will neither be silenced nor standardised to fit conventional museum models of conservation, presentation or preservation.

Singapore is a context which knows little of its own public history pre independence a mere fifty years ago in 1965. The colloquial attitude of 'if you can beat them buy them' can be applied to institution and exhibition making models where it is seen as a format that bought, sold, copied co-opted and appropriated. How can the exhibition really remain an autonomous, political space when the political becomes an aesthetic without the integrity that accompanies the gesture? The transportation of the exhibition is a recent import. Even acts of criticality within the exhibition are still enveloped within zones of cultural safety.

This particular context, similar to other commonwealth settler colony contexts displays what Zoe Butt, curator based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam would perhaps describe as 'cultural chauvinism' towards South East Asia reinforcing centrist and peripheral power dynamics as to where and whose culture is found.² It is a paradox being based in Singapore which carries regional commitment without regional affection. The region of South East Asia has territories and borders which are still heavily contested to the extent where we are arguing for and of a region that does not really believe in itself, let alone for mutual cultural and political infrastructure and presentation.

Asia's meanings are fluid, which opens up possibilities but also suggests limitations—it can be too conveniently ambiguous for a decent engagement with its meaning. There seems to be a sense of disassociation with the term. It almost feels that the hosts of the party don't want to be there but those who aren't hosting want an invitation. The best way to describe Asia within New Zealand is not in terms of ethnic lineage or geographical specificity, but rather in terms of a shared experience that crosses over multiple nationalities and generations. Being Asian in New Zealand essentially means not being of European, Pacific Islander or

Māori descent: it is inevitably tied to an offshore repository of signs and signifiers, and its local presence alludes to a peripheral identity. In Auckland, New Zealand's biggest city, one in every five inhabitants has some Asian heritage. While the country has taken ownership of its position as a major player in relation to the Pacific Islands, the question remains how the nation can engage with the larger power structures of Asia and to question what motivates this kind of alignment.

If we consider contemporaneity and as not a temporal unit but rather a geographical one then we can understand what gestures can be understood as 'curatorial' even in the most unlikely contexts.

Perhaps the most radical curatorial gesture I encountered was unconscious and accidental. This moment was happened during FIELDS on one of our site visits to the infamous S-21, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. The museum itself is effectively a readymade, a contentious pre-existing site whose development into museum space is through interpretation devices (wall text, guides) and the introduction of a public through audiences consuming this kind of disaster tourism. Bloodstains can still be seen ingrained in tiles and evidence of torture are part of the items on exhibition. One of the most intriguing displays was the presentation of bronze busts of the Khmer Rouge regime leader himself Pol Pot made during his reign. These were placed on the floor in a metal cage. I'm unsure whether the framing device of the cage was fabricated or accidental or perhaps even just a security mechanism rather than symbolic gesture. Visually it was an incredibly powerful statement in terms of trying to understand what it represents within contemporary Cambodia, still undergoing gross human rights violations, and within a museum that exhibits human remains.

Despite the constraints of working within a context with somewhat obvious restrictions to exhibit criticality publicly, even the most progressive situations still hold limitations for public understanding of representational issues. An exhibition I co curated, *In spite of ourselves: approaching documentary* (2012), included artworks from seventeen artists across object, photography and video as a tiered approach to exhibit artists who engage with ideas surrounding documentary. The exhibition's original staging was at ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland but upon positive review was invited to tour to the Dowse Art Museum in Wellington. One of the artworks was an inclusion by Qatari American artist Sophia Al-Maria, a video installation piece called *For your eyes only* (2007). The artwork was a sensitive, lovely and generous gesture showing women getting ready to go to a wedding, filmed in the women's quarters of the house in Al-Maria's fatherland Doha, Qatar. A vital and conceptual element of the piece is that it was exclusively on view for a female only audience, a gesture of privileging female space and what this means in various social contexts. The video itself was non salacious but rather showed a very conventional aspect of female ritual, putting make up on, self loathing at one's own body and joking around before an event. Despite careful curatorial framing, an internal memo was leaked to the governing body of the Hutt City Council about the particular work's edict. Unfortunately due to the political leveraging of certain councillors, the memo was then leaked to the city's newspaper and a furore ensued after front page coverage was given to the work with a googled image of the artist's

face, a stock Getty image of a woman in a burqa and the head line 'no men allowed' in block capital letters pandering to the worst stereotypes. A Western and distanced perspective around this geography was taken without identifying it as part of an expansive notion of Asia and therefore within grasp of empathy and understanding.

What ensued was a series of affronting articles, editorials and complaints (which were frankly racist), including violent threats to the museum director. The complaints were sent to the Human Rights Commission on the grounds of gender discrimination and the host museum was called to the commission to mediate with complainants. The responses were amplified by a discussion on public ownership of cultural spaces, the façade of advocating for equality of access and issues over ratepayer funded galleries and museums. A formal apology was issued by the museum but the work was able to proceed to be exhibited under its exclusive conditions to a generally positive response. Despite the negative and conservative public media coverage, what did result was a debate on the politics of representation, cultural translation and educating a public unfamiliar with gestures of contemporary art practices. Conflating a conceptual gesture from a culture in which it was extrapolated became an issue and one which confronted two curatorial concerns I have. Firstly protecting the integrity of the artwork and the artist from these reductive, essentialising conversations but realising the potentials and limitations of the audience I might be introducing them to. Secondly, affirming that the exhibition, gallery and/or museum is a political and loaded cultural space and although there are curatorial gestures which try to challenge audiences and disrupt and undo processes or conventions of representation, some people do not want to be undone. It is negotiating these two positions in a respectful yet critical manner in which I try and conduct my practice.

These concerns surrounding what happens when the hypothetical realm of the gallery encroaches on actual political issues with serious affect are again brought to the forefront. Recent events surrounding the sponsorship of the Sydney Biennial from offshore detention centre contractor Transfield Services brings forward the issue of what to do with enacting political action when the very histories and methodologies that enable such political spaces to exist are the cause for political action in the first place. I have been following these events with avid attention not least because the Australian Government are in conversation with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen about taking in refugees despite the lack of resources the country is able to support for its own people, many of whom were displaced as refugees to Australia following the Khmer Rouge regime.

As a potential political sphere of action, is the exhibition space ever really political or can it only present and represent politics? The validation and canonisation of art, artists and their practices is no longer solely through the museum but through the biennial. It can be argued that this format has an urgent interface of interacting with lived politics because of the entrenchment of the biennial and its necessary relationship to the city it sits within. Perhaps it is creating a space which is not safely political in order to contribute to political action but to be a space of question and action, cause and effect. If the exhibition is a space to negotiate different temporalities, colonial afflictions and

furthermore socio economic realities in a place where there is no communal negotiation for freedom let alone public fora to discuss it then the exhibition serves an urgent purpose. It becomes problematic when the exhibition is another format to be bought, sold and modelled upon. There must always be a process of reflection, revision and undoing within exhibition making in order to be politically relative to context.

The first conference on visual culture to occur in Cambodia was in December last year. It was aptly titled *Don't abandon the indirect road*. During FIELDS, I was reminded of a tenet of cultural exchange and difference through *The book of the beginning* (Mahabarta) 'What is found here is elsewhere. What is not found here is nowhere else.' If the creation of a public does not follow the notion of the exhibitionary complex's idea of a public created through exhibiting civility³ but rather a public coalesced by political action through the exhibition, then we are safely in unsafe hands for the potential of the exhibition space to be political. Please help remind me what this kind of political space can look like.

1. In his series of six lectures entitled 'Discourse and Truth' given at the University of California at Berkeley in the Fall Term of 1983, French philosopher Michel Foucault set out to deal with the "problem of the truth-teller or of truth-telling as an activity." He asked "who has the right, the duty, and the courage to speak the truth?" and framed this through a historical analysis of the concept of parrhesia in ancient Grecian politics, theatre and philosophy.

Foucault translated *parrhesia* both as its common English equivalent—free speech, and its etymological root—to say everything. However, Foucault specifies that *parrhesia* is not simply the right to speak, but a particular quality of speaking, in which the individual speaks in spite of the risk to self and with a sincerity that is evident to the listener. For example a protesting garment worker speaking up for their right for fairer wages involves great risk to personal position and safety much higher than a politician arguing publically about their right to demand taxes from the people. The difference is in the particular social status and situation of speech, one is from a privileged, protected and safe position of authority whilst the other does not hold this same comfort.

Foucault linked this to the essential right of the citizen to speak critically and take a stand towards the city, the laws, political institutions, and so on. He also emphasised the philosophical enquiry after certain truths about the world, nature, the city, behaviour and man. Finally, he argued that the exploration of an 'ethics and aesthetics of the self' involved the joining of practice and theory, in effect asking how an individual lives the values and ideas they espouse.

2. Zoe Butt, 'How Attitude Becomes Form: Collaborative Practice in Asia?', lecture, Witte de With, Rotterdam, Tuesday 5 June 2012.
3. Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *Thinking about Exhibitions*, in eds. Reesa Greenberg, Sandy Nairne, and Bruce W. Ferguson (New York: Routledge, 1996), p.82.

Tena Koutou katoa. Nei ra te mihi ki te whanau o ST PAUL St Gallery mo tenei mea tino angitu, a, nei ra te mihi hoki ki te whanau whanui o te Wananga Aronui o Tamaki Makaurau me na tangata whenua hoki kua hapai ana taku nei mahi. A, ko Sakiko Sugawa taku ingoa.

I want to introduce another Research Fellow of ST PAUL St Gallery besides myself: Ella Grace, activist/artist, a recent graduate of Elam School of Art, Auckland. From the day I met her over Skype, prior to arriving here in Auckland, until today, we have worked together on everything side by side. While I am speaking today alone, I would like to stress that this is not a fellowship, singular, but fellowships, plural. Everything started with meeting her and because of the trust she has earned within Tamaki Housing Group, the community group fighting against the state housing demolition, I was allowed to attend their weekly meetings in Glen Innes, in spite of my suspicious status—as foreigner, stranger, and guest researcher sponsored by an educational institution, and with no prior relationship with the housing issue in New Zealand. We worked together on making an exhibition, setting up a reading group, and forming a collective. Despite the fact that we don't agree with each other on some ideas and approaches, we have listened to and educated each other, and learned from one another. And our disagreement has always been a point of departure for me to critically reflect my own practice and amend some of prejudices I have.

I will start by briefly summarising the objectives of this presentation. Since I arrived here, I have been working with three different institutions—a community of state housing tenants and their supporters, the university art gallery institution, and an informal collaborative entity (a collective of young artists). Navigating through three different worlds requires constantly modifying predetermined rules and reservations, and continually renewing one's understanding of each world. This mode of perpetual adaptation is indispensable for politically and socially engaged praxis in general, but even more so for a practitioner situated in a foreign land, as a guest, and for a limited period of time. By describing each engagement I have made with the above institutions or entities during the term of my Research Fellowship, this presentation attempts to highlight the possibilities and difficulties implicit in working across and between them. It focuses on the process of working together, within an existing framework, to make substantial change.

My practice

Acknowledging one's political complicity as well as understanding how political change is produced, is, I find, indispensable, due to the nature of the field commonly referred to as 'social practice' or 'socially engaged art.' It is critical since social practice is about directly tackling existing social and political issues through a series of dialogues and

negotiations with the aim of creating change. Then it's essential to question how our practices are, or bring about, good? What are our pictures of 'the good'? These are the fundamental questions a practitioner should be asking in order to be transparent, but also to affirm the interconnectedness of the specific local environment one is working in, with global capitalism. Despite the fact that capitalism embedded in local policy is manifested differently from place to place, each variation is a consequence of the same overarching economic system. If social practice is really about bringing about change, however small, understanding the mechanisms of capitalism, as well as how political change is produced, is central, giving a practitioner a perspective of where her praxis is situated within the larger spectrum.

When analysing how capitalism functions, and proposing a 'co-revolutionary theory' for today's world, David Harvey, the most influential contemporary thinker in the Marxist geography, identifies seven 'activity spheres' in his book *The Enigma of Capital: and the Crises of Capitalism*. These are 'technologies and organisational forms; social relations; institutional and administrative arrangements; production and labour processes; relations to nature; the reproduction of daily life and of the species; and mental conceptions of the world.'¹ Grant Kester, another key theorist in the field of socially engaged practice, in his book, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, elaborates the complexities of how political change is produced:

Political change is produced and sustained in three ways: transformations in institutional protocols (expansion of franchise, new forms of public policy, legislative or judicial regulation, structural reorientation of the relationship between public authority and private sector, erosion or outright elimination of conventional market systems, etc.); the inculcation of new belief systems or value systems within a broad social network (the normalization of new notions of racial-or gender-based equity, e.g., or the production of new forms of solidarity); and finally, through claims of spatial autonomy which result in the literal physical occupation and control of space (through the transfer or redefinition of ownership, the creation of new boundaries or borders, new spatial identities, etc.).²

The arguments made by these two authors give us hints of the possible roles which socially engaged art practice—collaborative in nature, simultaneously working across various institutions—can play within broader processes of political change, and affirm the ever more complex process of producing political change. My praxis, for example, attempts to reconfigure 'social relations, institutional, administrative arrangements, the reproduction of daily life.' With a strong emphasis on the self-organising ability of people, it experiments with prefigurative politics, activating

relationships, structures, spaces, everyday lives of people in a small, local scale. In relation to this framework articulated by Harvey and Kester, I will discuss my specific areas of interest, as well as limitations embedded in my praxis, and this field in general. My praxis is underpinned by long-term projects with an emphasis on collaboration. These typically take shape around social relationships, forms, structures and places that correspond to specific political and social change. Through these small-scale projects my work aligns with resistance to the impact of local and global injustices, and inequalities created by capitalism. Given that our ways of living and thinking, and even resistance movements to a great extent mirror the capitalist structure we are trying to escape from, the process of realizing such projects is inevitably full of contradictions and inconsistencies, and relies on strategies of negotiation. It is in this area of everyday negotiations that I am interested in engaging,

This interest for long-term projects comes from understanding that our everyday life in general consists of a series of habits and routines. And to establish or break up a certain habits or routines, which are more or less determined by the conditions imposed by the current economic model, takes a long time. Creating long-term, collective, collaborative, convivial, independent, and sustainable models of doing things, in a specific, micro way thus aims to directly transform our conventional behaviours, while constantly negotiating with the existing structure.

Participating in radical, uncompromising social resistance movements detached from any existing structure contaminated by the capitalist system is not the sole channel for creating political change. Furthermore, while engaging with these movements is key to destabilising the existing power structure, I am somewhat less convinced that political instability automatically brings about a new and different way of living. As Kester points out, political 'instability in and of itself is no guarantee that the resulting changes will be progressive or egalitarian rather than authoritarian and conservative.'³ In this sense, my interest is to go ahead and practice the kind of life we imagine in the post-revolutionary era. The following are the questions I intend to answer through my praxis: How do we participate in decision-making in the post-revolutionary era? How do we take care of ourselves? What, and how do we cook? How do we clean up our house, street, universities? How do we think about garbage? How do we share our knowledge and skills? How do we exchange the things we need in our daily life? How do we educate ourselves?

My own interest, as I described previously, has its limitations. That is, the very idea of forming groups, structures, and places to practice an alternative mode of living could be in fact a very middle class idea. We can afford to think about these long-term projects precisely because we are not confronted by immediate threats to our survival. If your basic survival is in danger, for example, your home for life is being taken away, it's extremely difficult to even think about anything but the immediate issues you are affected by. A question I need to pose for myself is how do these forms or relationships exist in relation to those who don't have the time and energy to participate?

Another issue I would like to highlight is the issue of overproduction, especially within the field of social practice, which I am also guilty of. I have seen a lot of socially engaged art practices all over the world, commissioned by art museums or public educational institutions. And I have

seen socially engaged art practitioners consciously distancing themselves from activism, which I find really problematic. No matter which issue or community you decide to work with, there are always engaged activist communities already involved. Artists creating yet another project, without respecting, consulting, supporting, or collaborating with local activists can I think potentially fragment a social movement as a whole. Why does the approach of socially engaged art need to be so distinct from that of local activism? Why don't socially engaged art practitioners find a way to support activists already working and struggling in the field, instead of distancing ourselves from them and creating entirely new project? Does this detachment happen partly because socially engaged art's involvement of institutions with certain protocol, such as to be politically 'neutral'? This separation is even more problematic when you think about how cultural production operates today. Socially engaged art, normally commissioned by public or semi-public institutions, typically lasts only a few weeks to a couple of months. This short duration often causes tension between socially engaged art practitioners and activist communities, because each field works within very different time frames, and with different levels of commitment to a given environment. I genuinely question practitioners, myself included, whether a short duration is really suitable for the kind of relationships or forms we advocate creating, towards social change.

Next I will move on to talk about specific experiences I have had here as a fellow, my engagement with three different worlds. I intended to address the issues and limitations described earlier, through the concept of 'accompaniment', as outlined by Staughton Lynd in his introduction to *Accompanying: Pathways to Social Change*:

There's an element of mystery, of openness, in accompaniment. I'll go with you and support you on our journey wherever it leads. I'll keep you company and share your fate for a while. And by 'a while', I don't mean a little while. Accompaniment is much more about sticking with a task until it's deemed completed by the person or people being accompanied, rather by the accompanateur.⁴

My main objective is to 'accompany' local activists, and, putting my own preferred approaches and reservations aside, listen to them and then come up with ideas that directly support them. This led me to work with Tamaki Housing Group.

Tamaki Housing Group

I was introduced by Ella Grace to the Tamaki Housing Group, a community housing group in Glen Innes that has been fighting against the continuous attack on state housing for more than three years. It consists of state housing tenants from Glen Innes as well as fairly young activists. First and foremost, I decided to present myself at their weekly meetings and other events, shutting up, listening to and learning from them. I will note some of the observations which are directly connected to the activities that Ella Grace and I have been organising here.

- The group is predominantly female, and very diverse in terms of generation as well as sexual orientation. There

is a strong sense of belonging, trust, and friendship among the members.

- It also includes young activists, mostly in their early twenties, who have been involved in the community, are really careful about their positioning, and always make sure that they don't take away an agency from the tenants.
- Tamaki Housing Group's community meeting takes place every Tuesday where important information is shared, and possible actions are discussed. The way the members run the group is beautifully democratic and non-hierarchical.
- Compared to the beginning when the attack on the Glen Innes community just started, the number of people who participate in the regular meeting are in decline, probably due to the fact that the Glen Innes case is considered by some as a 'done deal.'
- New people do join the meeting, such as local politicians, old-school local leftists, and students, as well as artists once in a while, yet some of them have attempted to use Tamaki Housing Group to advance their own causes. The group is really good at handling these people.
- There is enormous pressure on the tenants and young activists alike. All of them try their best to keep up with the changing and escalating situation, such as people receiving eviction notices, new houses being auctioned, and open homes being organised by the developers, changes in tenancy reviews being enacted, on top of educating the state housing tenants in other areas while raising awareness about state housing.
- There are a lot of things that need to be done very quickly. And whoever has time takes an assignment such as making visual images, organising a photo show, setting up a website etc. There is definite absence of support from a creative community who can help the Tamaki Housing Group to spread their campaign.

These things I observed and learned from the Tamaki Housing group led me and Ella Grace to organise activities both within the art institution I was affiliated with (ST PAUL St Gallery at Auckland University of Technology), and an informal collaborative entity.

Accompany Collective

First, as a direct response to the lack of relationship between activism and creative communities, evident particularly in the housing issue, we decided to form a collective, named 'accompany', consisting of young creative thinkers and practitioners, with the aim to accompany various community groups and produce visual campaign materials for them. Forming this collective addresses the following issues also relevant to Auckland specifically:

- Community groups working on social justice including issues of poverty, racism, homelessness have less financial support, and backing from creative communities than groups promoting environmental causes.
- In general, perhaps due to New Zealand's modest size as a country, representational politics seems to function slightly better than in other countries, such as Japan or the US. Activism in New Zealand seems to me direct,

orthodox, focusing heavily on representational politics, rather than prefigurative politics as a strategy for making change. This implies that there are not many channels, other than direct activism, that people can choose to engage with a political issue in Auckland.

- Students from the local art schools, Auckland University of Technology and Elam School of Fine Arts, while closely located, rarely interact or collaborate with each other.
- Engaging with activism sometimes can be too demanding, exclusive, or middle class due to time and energy required for commitment.
- Educational opportunities to be part of an independent entity are lacking, where a collaborative as well as horizontal/democratic working mode is valued, as opposed to individual genius, and where success is valued based not on school grades, or economic status, but on how well the collective accompanies the community groups.

We have been regularly meeting for over a month now, discussing our role as a collective, learning about each other, and becoming friends. We are currently working on creating visuals for the state housing issue, setting up our own office, and gearing up our energy for the general elections in September.

ST PAUL St Gallery

Now let me move on to talk about the relationship with an art institution, ST PAUL St Gallery of AUT. The relationship with the gallery, a hosting institution of the fellowship, has been both easy and difficult. Due to the relative independence the gallery enjoys within the university's general management, this fellowship has enjoyed great deal of freedom, which is significant especially due to the political context embedded in the fellowship project. It has also been difficult at times, mainly because the mode of cultural production the gallery is part of does not always fit with the processes and objectives of my praxis. There have been a lot of conversations between gallery staff members and the fellows discussing differences in objectives, approaches, definitions of effectiveness, spatial as well as administrative arrangements, either side constantly amending as well as modifying their ways of doing things.

As a result of these conversations, we organised the exhibition called *This Home Is Occupied*, currently on view, which is a direct support for the fight carried out by the Tamaki Housing Group. It looks at New Zealand's state housing from its inception until today, while also highlighting as well as celebrating the history of the housing movement.

I originally had no interest in using the exhibition space prior to coming here. Showing social and political issues in a gallery space is about engaging with representation, often aiming to influence 'mental conceptions of the world'.⁵ While I do acknowledge that contemporary art galleries have sometimes played a role in representing a voice that is rarely heard in the dominant media, I am not personally interested in this function because of my interest in creating non-institutional, long-term forms and structures that are rooted in our everyday life, and in changing the way we live. I am also skeptical about the kind of instant 'shock effect' sometimes adopted by these politically charged exhibitions.

But this resentment I had towards exhibition making, as well as gallery space in general, changed over the course of the fellowship, especially after hearing a comment made by one of the tenants. There was time when I questioned the effectiveness of the visual images that the young activists produced for Tamaki Housing Group, because there seemed to me lack of consideration of to whom they were addressed, how to get the message out, and how to measure the effectiveness of their campaign. My doubts about effectiveness were challenged and reversed after hearing one of the tenants saying that 'seeing the poster young activists put up near her house made her day.' This really struck me. I was thinking about postering only in terms of how it affects the general public, not really about thinking how it affects the state tenants.

The posters can make her happy and make her feel that there are people thinking about her cause. I see a parallel logic between postering and exhibition making. Even if I am skeptical about the effectiveness of placing any social and political issues inside a gallery in general, if the prime objective of the exhibition is to demonstrate an act of solidarity, and to make the Tamaki Housing Community happy and proud, then I thought I can justify putting my time and energy into setting up a show inside the gallery. Utilising the relationships which Ella Grace had with her comrades and legendary activists, and a documentary filmmaker, we gathered informal, educational materials with the hope of raising awareness in the public as well. The gallery staff played a significant role in conceptualising the show. In fact, including a historical perspective in the show instead of focusing only on Glen Innes was their idea. They are well aware of the danger of aestheticising political issues that actually affect people in real life. We discussed over and over the best possible way to frame the issue without taking any agency away from the Tamaki Housing Group and without beautifying the harsh reality. The realisation of this exhibition is a direct result of compromising, from modifying pre-determined rules and reservations, to renewing one's understanding of each world—a community of state housing tenants and their supporters, the university art gallery institution, and an informal collaborative entity (a collective of young artists).

Reading group: Thinking about overproduction

In addition to the exhibition, the gallery staff and I formed the bi-weekly reading group called Thinking about overproduction at the gallery with artists and researchers as participants. This reading group came about in response to the lack of viable platform in Auckland where critical discussion on socially engaged art takes place. And my personal objective is that reading the book *The One and The Many*, that values local, modest projects rarely recognised in the contemporary art world, which I find similar to my own praxis, and understanding theoretical background of these projects, enables people to gain a basis to critique my activities in Auckland. As socially engaged art has been a part of the contemporary art industry, subsequent issues including temporality, overproduction, tension between socially engaged artist and activist communities have also emerged and been widely discussed. This group, I hope, will move beyond the usual and safe critique happening only within a institution, and will exist as a place that can provide

theoretical backing to challenging local political initiatives, while also embracing the field's long and problematic history.

Conclusion

Instead of writing general summary of this paper, I would like to conclude with a couple of proposals:

Firstly, while the benefits of inviting foreign artists are substantial, perhaps galleries and educational institutions who wish to take socially engaged practice seriously should look much closer at developing relationships, and working with local activists for more long term projects. This will create long-lasting trust between the local activist communities and the ST PAUL St Gallery, which guest socially engaged artists may benefit from as well.

Secondly, I wish to emphasise how important it is not only to recognise one's position within an institution, but within society. We as individuals need to take responsibility for standing up against that which we see as unjust. Not only through the abstract disagreements and discussions in conferences and symposia, but through exercising one's agency beyond institutional walls. I would like to make a call out to anyone who wishes to support those going through the trauma of evictions, to support a member of the Tamaki Housing Group, Niki who plans to occupy her home in response to her eviction notice. The occupation requires support from food to infrastructure, and I encourage anyone who understands the current New Zealand government's aggressive privatisation and sympathises to message the group's Facebook page.

Another cause that is in need of support is the newly formed collective, Accompany. In order to reach its capacity as a political, community-focused entity, the collective needs a stable financial base, as well as a functioning office. Currently the collective is in need of a computer, phone, printer, and other office supplies, as well as some form of ongoing financial support. If you are interested, or have the capacity to help, please email accompanycollective@gmail.com, or come and find me after the talk.

Kia ora!

- Updates: On July 2 2014, Niki won seven months extension of the lease on her house. It is likely this was motivated by the government's fear that Niki's occupation would cause unwanted attention for the upcoming general election. However this extension is far from the real, substantial solution the Tamaki Housing Group is looking for, and the need for support for this struggle remains especially when Niki's extension runs out.

Accompany collective's first visual project, Save Our Homes, is nearly complete. The posters, stickers, and video will be available for the general public for the upcoming election.

1. David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital: and the Crises of Capitalism* (London: Profile Books, 2011), p.123.
2. Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011), p.224.
3. Ibid., p.207.
4. Staughton Lynd, *Accompanying: Pathways to Social Change* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), p.2.
5. Harvey, 2011, p.123.

A defining characteristic of the contemporary art system is its institutional condition. This is the kind of assertion that we—institutional workers—read and hear all the time, but what does it really mean in practical terms? For a start, the word institution has been stretched, bent, appropriated and turned against itself so frequently in critical discourse over the past fifty or so years that it presently signifies only a kind of catch-all. The simplest thing we might say about a contemporary understanding of ‘the institution’ is that it we recognise it as constituted by a network of social, political and economic conditions, that it reflects a schizoid collision of civic, academic and market agendas. This introduction is an attempt to recover a sense of the recent history of the art institution, towards deciphering how that train-wreck of a statement can be reframed, made useful as a reference for us as individuals in relationship to various institutions, and as a platform for the discussions to follow today.

To begin interrogating this term is to begin with ourselves, not with the faceless and critically over-determined ‘public’ who are theoretically served by the contemporary institution, but those of us in this room. This is less narcissistic and more purposeful than it sounds; I want to remember that the institution—any institution—is first a group of individuals, and that its products, obligations and the extent of its agency are largely determined by those same individuals. I argue that that it’s as individuals that we mediate a relationship to various institutions all the time. We may nominate to ‘belong’ to certain of these, but the state is unfixed; to work for a particular institution is only the most visible of one’s associative connections, which at any one time may form a far more complicated pattern of allegiances.

Today’s look at a breadth of institutional models in operation also opens a space to think about the work of the individual institutional worker as something particular to its context, and distinct from other modes of work, labour, or production. It’s a space to consider the constituency of the institution from the inside out—in reverse to usual—and to consider institutions which are defined through the organised labour of individuals galvanised by self-criticality, responsiveness and social responsibility or usefulness. It’s an opportunity to look at institutions whose programmes actively run counter-course to the prevalent ‘bigger audience the better’ drive, prioritising instead specific connections with fewer people.

The institution of contemporary curatorial work—that which brings us together in today’s discussion—shares its recent history with that of institutional critique. It’s this shared history that I want to touch on today. I’m not saying this is the only history of what we practice, it may not even be relevant to us anymore, but I think it’s important to acknowledge the development of the auto-critical institution at the beginning of a day when we might decide on a whole new critical agenda for this institution we are constituents of. ‘It’s not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It’s a question of what kind of institution we

are’, writes Andrea Fraser, 2005, reflecting on institutional critique some 40 years after the emergence of the term.¹

Rather than re-hash a fairly well-worn and certainly Eurocentric narrative about the institutionalisation of institutional critique, I’d like to refer to just two things that have been said on the matter, and which seem relevant to our thinking today. The first is from Fraser again, who writes, ‘It is because the institution is inside of us, and we can’t get outside of ourselves. ...Institutional critique has always been institutionalised. It could only ever have emerged within and, like all art, can only function within the institution art. The institutionalisation of institutional critique may, in fact, be what distinguishes it most precisely from other legacies of the historical avant garde.’² That is, according to Fraser, institutional critique can be viewed as a kind of self-recognition, and as a process that is theoretically ongoing, rather than historically specific.

She goes on to suggest that the argument that institutional critique is an artefact of an era before the global art market, that there is ‘now no outside’, and thus, no position from which to stage critique, is premised on a reductive reading of institutions as being established, organised sites for the presentation of art, or, an only slightly more expansive definition, as ‘the structures and logic of museums and art galleries’. This sets up an antagonistic paradigm: artists vs the institution. A more complicated reading of institution, acknowledging not just organised sites, but all levels of cultural production including, significantly, the social field, provides a richer set of means to consider the potential for contemporary critical activity which, in multi-various ways, also constitutes that institution.

The second is Hito Steyerl’s question, ‘What is the *internal* relationship between institution and critique? [my italics]’³ Steyerl has argued that it’s an anachronism to talk about criticality at a moment when civic institutions and other forms of public space are being dismantled left and right, underfunded and subjected to the demands of a neoliberal event economy. It’s far too easy to recall Thatcher, ‘There is no society’, and to recognise that we’re not talking about something new here. In this environment state funded cultural and educational institutions are under ever-increasing pressure to ‘innovate’ (read: entertain), increase audiences, and face a crisis of legitimation as they progressively alienate the critical community that formerly validates their activity.

Even institutions that position themselves as progressive are often able to be seen to be complicit in the regime of capital. An example of this that comes to mind is the 2006 MACBA conference in Barcelona, ‘Another Relationality’, on the legacy of institutional critique, which was in its turn critiqued by local activist collective ctrl-I (partly made up by temp workers formerly employed by MACBA) through their public withdrawal and the statement ‘talking about precariousness in the McBa is like taking a nutrition seminar at McDonalds.’⁴ For Steyerl, in what she

identifies as a third wave of critique, an essentially ambivalent subject emerges—disenfranchised by the public institution which cannot after all represent her or her needs—either, as in this case, as an employee, or as a member of a wider public—but on the other hand, more acutely aware than ever of the necessity for such institutions to provide a structure within which to exercise her public-ness. I wanted to touch on Steyerl and Fraser’s commentary to summon the spectre of the self-conscious, self-critical institution—that same institution that spawned contemporary curatorial practice—as something unfinished, and necessarily so.

I’m by no means the first to ask this, but what is it that we expect of an institution?⁵ At this juncture one might look at New Institutionalism with renewed interest—as have a number of recent publications including *On Curating* (the December 2013 issue). Arising around the turn of the millennium, associated with curators such as Maria Lind, Jonas Ekeberg, Charles Esche (though he would call it ‘experimental institutionalism’) and Søren Grammel among others, New Institutionalism was speculatively defined by Ekeberg in a publication of the same name as an attempt to transform the whole framework of the art institution, from within. This meant not only dislodging the orthodoxy of exhibition format and art object, but overhauling the institution at an operational level, the expansion of curatorial, art educational and administrative practices, so that institutions may function as spaces of research and socially engaged debate, aspiring to become ‘part community centre, part laboratory and part academy.’⁶

Not restricted to art institutions, New Institutionalism is a phrase widely used to consider a sociological view of institutions — the various interactions they embody, and the ways they interface with society. In an art context, this meant different things in different places; through the work of the above mentioned curators at institutions including Kunstverein München in Munich, Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven, Witte de With in Rotterdam, Rooseum in Malmö, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Moderna Museet in Stockholm among others, it rapidly gained international critical currency. That many of the institutions associated with New Institutionalism have since closed down or changed their outlooks significantly is largely indicative of the economic and political situation they occupy rather than of their efficacy more generally; what’s at stake is not whether it failed or succeeded (success of this kind was never the agenda). I’m in no way proposing that we set out to repeat the machinations of New Institutionalism, or holding it up as a kind of theology. The question for us I think is whether expanding the way we think and talk about the institution, as structural and yet not static—acknowledging, as critic Julia Bryan-Wilson writes, that ‘...far from the museum being the endpoint of the interpretative chain, it is also productive, exerting pressures and affording opportunities that artists respond to’⁷—helps us to more fully engage with that same institution as a negotiable thing, in which we have an active role.

While a critique of the way the conventional institution functions underlines New Institutionalism in an implicit way at very least, it seems to me tenuous to connect it to institutional critique in anything but an oblique way. As Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, editors of the *On Curating* issue ‘New Institutionalism Revisited’, have written: ‘We doubt that it is possible to claim New Institutionalism as a new form of institutional critique...the roles and speaking

positions of the actors have remained almost unchanged. Even though curators work more experimentally, the boundary that separates the (speaking) position of the artist from that of the curator has remained untouched. There were attempts at a shared, dialogical practice, in which artists were invited to develop institutions conceptually or practically, be it through the design of the logo, the entrance hall or the archive, but even in those scenarios the curators remained the hosts, the artists the guests.’⁸

Returning to the critical territory around New Institutionalism seems relevant on a day when we’re thinking through the multi-lateral operations of the contemporary institution. We need to acknowledge I think that institutions already operate in this way, that curatorial labour—however that might be defined—is far from the only type of labour that occurs within a given institution. There’s a problem in the implicit repression of other strands of the institution’s functions—some of them deeply pragmatic, others entirely fleeting and relationship-based, others profoundly critical and resistant—when these are the very ways in which an institution can be most fully public, in a mode which opposes the prevailing tide of production: culture-as-capital. Thinking through different sorts of labour, non-productivity, and the notion of the ‘cultural worker’ as opposed to ‘cultural producer’ came up in yesterday’s talks, and I anticipate that the re-definition and interrogation of institutional *work* will be undercurrent in today’s presentations also.

Despite their fundamental differences, the larger question raised by both first wave institutional critique and New Institutionalism may be considered a common one. Why is there such hunger for institutions, when they consistently give rise to such dissatisfaction? How to avoid the kind of inertia caused by this paradox, an inertia which results in the bureaucracy-heavy, popularity-hungry and intellectually-bereft institutions we all love to hate? It’s a complicated and entrenched dualism. Nina Möntmann, former curator for the Nordic Institute of Contemporary Art, writing in 2007, quotes the Swedish philosopher Sven-Olov Wallenstein, ‘[it is the institution which] produces a certain structure of desire, it enables a certain space where signifiers and desires can circulate, and in this sense it is just as futile to dream of a fully de-institutionalized space as it is to dream of an institution that would work.’⁹ Echoes of Foucault here, lecturing in 1978 on the ‘governmentalization of all areas of life’: “in this great preoccupation about the way to govern...we identify a perpetual question: ‘how *not to be governed like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, *not like that, not for that, not by them*.’”¹⁰

For whom then? For what? How? In writing this introduction I became conscious all over again of the Eurocentric bias of many of the models we draw on when speaking about contemporary art institutions. That’s partly what today is about: looking at a range of institutional practices which operate in *our* geographical and political and social and economic context, thinking about how they do what they do, and how that’s particular to place, to the Asia Pacific region and cultures indigenous to it, and particular to the different legacies of colonisation that continue to shape us. It’s not only about how we do what we do, but who does it: the relative agency of indigenous practitioners and practice within mainstream institutions of culture, the way

indigenous identities are articulated, and at what volume. Alternative modes of indigenous representation within the contemporary exhibition space, and the strategic ways that language may be used in projects of self-definition and resistance, are two pivotal sessions in the programme today. Something which mainstream institutions of culture are really good at doing is repeating themselves, reinscribing the account of what's appropriate inside and outside of the institution. This is not only prejudicial and problematic, it's also boring. The rearticulation of indigenous identity positions as infinitely heterogeneous, the upending of reductive institutional narratives, is a fundamental for contemporary curatorial practice here and now.

Today's session is called 'Alternative modes of practice: roles and responsibilities of individual and institution'. My hope is that through zeroing in on a series of working models of critique, in small to medium scale institutions, artist run spaces, as well as more amorphous institutions such as freelancing, academic research, the commercial gallery and the curators who move between these various modes, we are able to more practically think about the institution not as a discrete entity but as a *network*, as a decentralised field within which our mobility as individuals is both possible and necessary.

This is not particularly enjoyable to read about in theory, and often comes down to new words, with difficult associations. In his article 'Extradisciplinary Investigations: Towards a New Critique of Institutions' (2007), critic and philosopher Brian Holmes uses the notion of *transversality* to speculate on a third generation of institutional critique, where work extends outside of the context of art and 'can no longer be unambiguously defined as art. [It is] based instead on a circulation between disciplines, often involving the real critical reserve of marginal or counter-cultural positions—social movements, political associations, squats, autonomous universities—which can't be reduced to an all-embracing institution.'¹¹ While I'm all for deconstructing the self-contained and all-embracing institution, I admit to feeling uneasy about setting out to mine the 'real critical reserve' of the margins; it seems to me we need to be increasingly wary and self-reflexive about our motives in this project of broadening the mind of the institution. While I don't agree with everything Holmes says, however, I do appreciate and feel energised by his repeated call for those engaged in the disciplines associated with the art institution to transgress the borders of those institutions, to engage more directly with others in a wider field of resistance to the control of culture.

The metaphor of flight is another one that recurs in critical discourse around transforming institutions. The philosopher Gerald Raunig, in his essay 'Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming' (2007), proposes a 'permanent process of *instituting*'—emphasising the verb, arguing that '[The] non-state public sphere is not to be understood as an anarchic place of absolute freedoms, as an open field beyond the realm of the institution. Flight and exodus are [not] negative, a reaction to something else, but are instead linked and intertwined with constituent power, re-organizing, re-inventing and instituting. The movement of flight also preserves these instituent practices from structuralization and closure from the start, preventing them from becoming institution in the sense of constituted power.'¹² It's significant I think that Raunig is not proposing an absolute break with existing power structures here, rather

a process-oriented shift or series of shifts, a re-organisation of what already exists.

As Charles Esche has pointed out, New Institutionalism didn't produce 'new institutions', but it did produce experimental results. Esche talks about a kind of institutional solidarity, in wanting to build institutions that address the world as he, or others saw it, not as the prevailing authority regime saw it. He writes, 'This still seems experimental to me, in the sense that we don't know how to answer that research question. I think as long as you maintain that methodology you're still experimenting. The moment you know the answer, you become an institution reproducing its own power.'¹³

The Dutch artist Liesbeth Bik (of Bik Van der Pol), interviewed last year about her role as Sputnik (a group of artists, curators, critics and writers asked by Maria Lind at Kunstverein München in 2003 to work as 'fellow-travellers' with the institution, collaboratively working on its direction and programme), spoke of the shift which is called New Institutionalism as being 'both a radical and a mild change',¹⁴ which I think is an astute way of accounting for the bold singularity of gestures like Lind's, yet also their often subtle outcomes. In the talks today this kind of pragmatism is primary, as are the modest but far-reaching changes that an active institution or association *can make*, the processes of adaptation and the repurposing of resources that effect longstanding changes. What kind of institution we want to be can only emerge through an ongoing process of reflection, where the ideal of 'critical distance' from established power structures is accepted as just that, an ideal rather than actual situation.

Compromise, the limits of time and resources that characterise the institutions we are a part of, is another point of connection across the day's presentations. I would argue that the limited institution is not necessarily a bad thing. What I mean here is that from my experience working within public institutions, I think one of the most significant roles they can play is as foil, as flawed and often unwieldy apparatus ultimately incapable of performing to the ambitions of those who work within them, let alone those of their wider public. This, I've come to think, is okay. It's also inevitable—working collectively is always fraught, let alone when the institution has a history and entrenched processes which no one present can see the sense of. My point is, part of what the institution can and should do is to take the hit, take the criticism from both its members and its wider publics, who are then obligated to change it.

One thing I've not touched on here is institutional behaviour, and while I don't necessarily mean gossiping around the water cooler, I do acknowledge that certain attitudes, dispositions and politics have a tendency to grow up and become inscribed in institutional contexts. Maintaining functional equilibrium within in an institution, any institution, may become a major part of its activities, despite the fact that many of the individuals within it genuinely seek to prioritise dynamism and critique. The institution archetypally errs towards consolidation, status, celebratory modes; it's the role of an urgent public and our role as institutional workers to subvert that bias through our activities, intentionality and identity as individuals.

There's also the question of duration—what about utopian conceptions of institutions, that don't actually work in practice? Or institutions that are brilliantly conceived, highly active and then disappear? I don't think all institutions

need to last forever, or that lasting be a marker of success. The same might perhaps be said of exhibition-driven programmes: might they in some instances be slowed down, put to one side for a time, stopped altogether while different types of activity are given precedence within the institution? Enduring beyond critical relevance is pointless, tiring, and results in the wrong kind of compromises. The limited institution is resourceful, decisive, pragmatic as well as being ambitious.

I'm especially interested in all of this right now for a couple of reasons. The primary of these is that I've recently arrived at ST PAUL St from a larger public institution, and am conscious of a shift in focus—from a civic gallery to one situated in an academic institution; from a rhetoric circling around audience to a concentration on education, research and what it means to be 'critic and conscience of society.' For me the question *what can the institution do* has very practical ramifications, and tied up with that is *what can the individual do, within, and because of, and in resistance to the institution*. The last thing I want to do is subject us all to the self-indulgent painfulness of an extended session of institutional aesthetics. I do, however, think that radical social equity, that self-reflexivity, knowledge-sharing and risk-taking are the greater parts of the kind of institution I want to be a part of, and that a core part of our practice is developing the critical language and ability as individuals to do these things well. I defer to the speakers who follow to give us an insight into what this looks like in practice.

1. Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum* September 2005, vol. 44, iss.1: 100–106.
2. *Ibid.*, p.104.
3. Hito Steyerl, 'The Institution of Critique', European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (EIPCP) (2006) <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0106/steyerl/en> (Accessed 31 May 2014.)
4. For a full discussion of this critique, see Anthony Davies, 'Take Me I'm Yours: Neoliberalising the Cultural Institution', *Mute* (2007), <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/take-me-im-yours-neoliberalising-cultural-institution> (Accessed 4 June 2014.)
5. See for example Jérôme Sans and Marc Sanchez (eds.), *What do we expect from an art institution in the 21st Century?* (Paris: Palais de Tokyo, 2002), accompanying an exhibition of the same name.
6. See Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, 'Harnessing the means of production', in ed. Jonas Ekeberg, *New Institutionalism* (Office for Contemporary Art Norway: 2003), pp.59-87.
7. See Julia Bryan Wilson, 'A Curriculum for Institutional Critique, or the Professionalization of Conceptual Art', *New Institutionalism*, in ed. Jonas Ekeberg, *New Institutionalism* (Office for Contemporary Art Norway: 2003), pp.89-109.
8. Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, 'New Institutionalism Revisited', *On Curating* iss.21. Dec 2013, p.13.
9. Sven-Olov Wallenstein, 'Institutional Desires', in ed. Nina Möntmann, *Art and its Institutions*, (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 114-123, cit. p.121.
10. Michel Foucault, 'What is Critique', *Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Questions and Twentieth-Century Answers*, in ed. James Schmidt, (University of California Press, 1997), p.28.
11. Brian Holmes, 'Extradisciplinary Investigations: Towards a New Critique of Institutions' (2007) <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0106/holmes/en> (Accessed 3 June 2014.)
12. Gerald Raunig, 'Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming' (2007), http://eipcp.net/transversal/0106/raunig/en/base_edit. (Accessed 14 May 2014.)
13. See 'We were learning by doing', an interview with Charles Esche, in eds. Kolb and Flückiger, *On Curating* iss.21. Dec 2013, pp.24-28.
14. See 'Both a mild and radical change', an interview with Liesbeth Bik in eds. Kolb and Flückiger, *On Curating* iss.21. Dec 2013, pp.63-66.

The texture of otherness—ready to savour it? Kyongfa CHE

In this presentation I would like to reflect on the condition of institutionally initiated cultural exchange, how neo-liberal modes of cultural production impact on modes of exchange, and the nature of the relationships created through such exchange. The visible outcomes produced by institutions have a lot to do with the ways in which they prioritise efficiency and effectiveness, and seek to avoid risk in the process, rather than seeing it as potentiality, and engaging with the contingencies and dynamics of relationships. Avoiding risk further influences the kind of agency they are able to create or choose, what those agencies are supposed to do and through what sort of process, and what kind of outcome is to be produced.

The Multifaceted Curator Workshop

My first participation in international cultural exchange program was a curatorial workshop co-organised by Asia Europe Foundation and Goethe Institute Jakarta, to which 16 curators including myself from Asia and Europe were invited and talk about their practices. Titled The Multifaceted Curator, the week-long program was intended to discuss the curator's roles in the context of increasing cultural exchange between the two regions, as well as facilitating information and knowledge on curatorial practice. The project also aimed to initiate an actual collaboration, to implement 'new curatorial cooperation'. The workshop was planned so that curators could introduce projects that involved elements of cultural exchange in order to inform each other, discuss prepared topics, and then proceed to come up with ideas for a potential collaborative project. I can't remember the details of the discussion and conversation, but I do remember finding both the setting and process rather stressful. There was no common ground, either in terms of the curators' interests or ways of working, or in the social and cultural contexts which determine their curatorial strategies as to what kind of artwork is produced, who to introduce the work to, and how. Nor was there a conceptual thread that might draw together such diversity around a common interest or issue.

For example, a curator talked about his exhibitions in white cube galleries in several countries, while another curator talked about learning about art through practice and working as a curator/facilitator within a community in Malaysia through various activities. Everyone was talking about the roles of curators and art, but without mutual understanding of what they meant by art, let alone curating.

Secondly, the mission of the workshop project (and the institution) being to bridge Asia and Europe through curatorial practice, the participants were represented as cultural agents from either side.

On top of this, there was also a language issue, or different modes of communication, and how much participants were used to performing speech in English. It was as if the entire situation fell into a stereotypical East vs West situation where Asian curators tended to be more reserved,

hesitant, receptive and clumsy in articulating views and opinions, while those from Europe were more eloquent, confident and sounded more convincing. Frustration grew on both sides, building up a psychological block among the participants, and the atmosphere grew stifling.

The organisers had a tough time facilitating the situation, and eventually tried to shift the discussion towards collaboration as a result of the workshop. Interestingly, it was that moment when the curators faced the same pressure to produce a constructive outcome of exchange, despite the fact that the process barely allowed them to digest, or further reflect on their own practice, rather to simply see differences. The compromise eventually made was that we would organise a virtual project to continue the dialogue, but it kind of withered if I remember correctly.

Looking back, the whole process was interesting to see how a hasty process of cultural 'exchange' can lead to a lack of generosity and mind space to carefully listen and ponder upon differences on one hand, and take a position in order to communicate with and influence others on the other. At the same time, with institutionally initiated cultural exchange, a goal, or a mission, is typically pre-set, where a certain understanding of cultures, regions or nations, as well as the politics between them is already inscribed. In the case of the workshop, the existing power dynamics between cultures were transposed onto personal relationships.

Intendants for Cultural Diversity Project

In 2007, my collaborators and I received a funding for a two-year research and exhibition project, as 'intendants' (administrators) for a cultural diversity project. This came from the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture (the foundation later merged with Mondriaan Foundation to Mondriaan Funds). Throughout the development of the project, it seemed to us more and more that their idea of multiculturalism was rather paternalistic (like 'we' need to embrace 'them'), as well as a euphoric celebration of differences (i.e. 'we are all humans after all'). We were also uncomfortable with the way in which minorities were represented, without much consideration towards how the Dutch society creates differences, which is very much related to social and financial inequality and the production of socially and culturally subordinated subjects.

For our project, therefore, we proposed to organise a series of discursive events and an exhibition in order to pose questions such as: What is culture and what is difference? Where does the recognition of 'cultural' difference begin, and end into assimilation? What kind of alterity do we overlook? Which forms of coexistence (and subjectivities) can we project and exercise in place of hegemonic power-struggles in accelerated process of globalisation? We talked a lot about the term 'cultural exchange'—it was as if we needed to come up with another term, since exchange essentially is an economic/transactional act, you give something and you take something else back. What needed

to be exercised was not only exchange; it is more like we take something out of our own cultural baggage and put it on a plate, and taste someone else's and share our articulation of what the flavour and texture are like. There, many elements come into play—choice, risk, inclinations, prejudices, trust, openness to share other's perceptions, and the readiness to be challenged or regarded as incomprehensible.

So what we did was to gather artists for the exhibition, and thinkers we wanted to work with in Indonesia and do a workshop in order to dwell on those questions together. This happened in September 2008. The choice of the place was a conscious one; we needed to be away from the Dutch context and be in a place where most of us, except the local participants, were equally unfamiliar or equally aliens, so that participants consciously or unconsciously became more attentive towards what was said or heard. It was also important that in Indonesia, English could be a common language, but not a dominant one. And lastly, I knew some cultural organisations and people there, and with them we could share our ideas and some of them were supportive in letting us use their spaces for semi-closed workshops and organising public events.

The objective of the workshop was to try to mutually facilitate a dialogue that reflected on ideas about how subjectivities are constructed or influenced by myriad forces, and to explore where our common consciousness lies. In order to set up a platform for people coming from different backgrounds to feed each other, used images presented by every participant as a point of departure. We asked everyone to present one or two specific images (but not artwork) that depicted a recent social transformation which could either be quite universal or context-specific, and to describe their own perspective and personal feeling towards what that transformation brought about in terms of the condition of culture and the state of individual and collective subjectivity. After that, the discussion opened up for everyone else to share their reading of the images, as well as their reaction towards what was articulated by the speaker, and there were of course very different readings and various ways of relating images to their own contexts—so it became not only an exercise in making connections or learning about different social realities, but also an exercise in assessing one's own episteme, beliefs and inclinations. There were moments of disagreement, or uncertainty about how one was perceived and understood, but there was a common attitude of giving a chance or time for others to articulate in the way they do, or ask questions without an hidden intention to convince or attack the other, or simply taking time to understand, or dwelling on the state of ambivalence.

It was a very special moment, and on the last day we decided to write, after we went home, short texts on how or what we thought we experienced, and to share those texts, but we could not find a way to register those personal experiences in the actual production—in this case, artwork and exhibition. It would have been very wrong anyway to impose on the artists to do so. After all, the experience resists representation and I always find it difficult to talk about it because there is always something missed out...

The context of Taipei Contemporary Art Center Meiya CHENG

Taipei Contemporary Art Center (TCAC) was founded in 2010. The institution is run by an association composed of active curators, artists and scholars based in Taiwan. Most of the programs produced in this art center are self-organized and curated by art professionals, including symposia, presentations, exhibits, screenings, performances and talks.

The founding of TCAC was not a coincidence. There are six million people in Taipei and new Taipei City, but only 1.5 city museums for modern art and contemporary art. (MoCA Taipei is considered as an art center since it has no acquisition.) The public art institution is insufficient for the art production and for the community. Secondly, under the ideology of creative cultural industry in cultural policy, contemporary art has been considered a good business, and as merely business. The investment in art production in the public sector flows into commercial galleries, art fairs and any projects that expect profit returns. Thus, there are more and more overseas touring exhibits taking place in Taipei's public museums, which are introduced and produced by commercial companies, and the profit from entry tickets goes to these companies. The shortage of public facilities in contemporary art and the shifts in cultural policy has raised criticism among the art community; to a degree, this was the context of TCAC's founding.

In 2008, Austrian artist Jun Yang participated in the Taipei Biennale curated by Manray Hsu and Vasif Kortun. His participating project: 'A Contemporary Art Centre, Taipei (A Proposal)' included a temporary pavilion outside of Taipei Fine Art Museum, which worked as a temporary art center; a weekend gathering, and a special issue in collaboration with *Artco Magazine*. Before the project Jun Yang had worked with a few public art institutions in Taipei and he was aware of the influence of the changing cultural policy on the institutions. He proposed that Taipei needed an independent art institution run by art professionals, in which the programs are not interfered with by the interests of politicians or the commercial sector, to maintain the autonomy of contemporary art.

The event, 'A Weekend Gathering', was realized through fundraising by the artist. He invited around 50 Taiwanese active art professionals including curators, artists, scholars, and activists to stay in a hotel in the suburb of Taipei City for three whole days. It was an unprecedented event in Taipei. It is common that people who work in art circles sometimes don't talk to each other for various reasons, thus, it is always difficult to form a united and strong voice in the interests of the art community. When the cultural policy has changed the condition of art production, individual art workers can not stand together or form an alliance to fight for it. 'A Weekend Gathering' was an attempt to initiate dialogue in art circles, and seek a basic understanding with each other. It took three months to convince the art professionals to take up the invitation. In the three days, lots of issues in higher education, museums, institutions and cultural policies were brought up in formal and informal conversations. There wasn't an instant conclusion reached or a collective action to

be decided towards the issues in the gathering, however, in the following few years, quite a few actions took place by various art professionals. Protests in front of museums and the Taipei Culture Bureau, the founding of a new academic art journal to archive Taiwanese art practices, the opening of a few new art spaces, all happened in these several years (2009–2012.) Not all of the actions were initiated or encouraged by TCAC, but most actions and protests on cultural policies were initiated by the participants of the weekend gathering.

The space and the institution

In 2009, a group of artists, curators and critics decided to form an association and proposed to found a brand new art institution. We hosted a public press conference to announce the founding of the association, and invited representatives of government and corporations to present the blueprint of an art center. There wasn't a productive response from the government, but a private foundation owned by a real estate company proposed to offer the association a free space for two years. We analyzed a lot before taking up the offer. The main concern is if the art center will encourage gentrification. However, it seems unlikely that an art center's two years existence will help a few blocks' gentrification, which takes another 30 years for the developer to buy off. Also in the sponsorship contract it was clearly written that the corporation can not interfere the programs. Our programs are often socially engaged projects, and we even hosted a series of symposia to criticize the phenomenon of gentrification, in which the corporation that offered the space was mentioned.

From 2010 to 2012, we occupied the two whole four floor buildings and hosted over 200 programs. Most programs are self-organized by cultural producers. Here I briefly introduced our concept of the space design.

We put the office in the ground floor, behind the transparent glass façade. Most institutions would hide the office somewhere unseen to the public. For us, the most important element of an institution is the people who work in it and for it, particularly when it's an institution made possible mostly by volunteering work. Thus, we made the office space visible and accessible to the public and to the art community. It also means to emphasize a concept: the public institution is made for the public sphere, and the decision making should be transparent to the art community.

The second floor is a gathering/presentation/conference space. The third and fourth floor is an exhibition space. Most of the exhibits are the final results or products of art production, however, the process of the art production is hidden or not being emphasized. We put more focus on the process, namely, the dialogues between the culture producers, artists and curators, and the discussions on the conditions of exhibition production, cultural policies or issues in the public realm. The space design reflects our thoughts and considerations for an institution—an art center

should be a friendly place for art professionals and cultural producers to gather together, to progress dialogue, and where outcomes are generated out of idea exchange.

From 2013 to 2014 we moved to a much smaller space because the space sponsor contract was terminated and we had to pay rental. In between we even moved the whole art center into an artist's apartment for several months while the funding was secured. No matter if the space is big or small, we still keep the ideas and the programs running. In 2014, there was a protest called 'sunflower movement' initiated by university students who occupied the parliament (Legislative Yuan) and the streets in the neighborhood for three weeks. During the protest we moved our office to the street, set up a temporary tent and screened videos related to the issues from our archive. Over two weeks there were discussions and dialogues about the issues brought up by the protests in the tent, which became a gathering spot for the art circle. The public institution is by essence part of the societal structure. To reflect and to respond to the issues is always the crucial responsibility of a public institution. A public institution can exist in a gathering, on the street, or any other place, according to the context and the conditions.

Exhibitions as examples

I would introduce three exhibitions that took place in TCAC to provide a brief view and perspective of this institution. The first one is 'Museum is Flat'. It was an exhibition of the documentary videos and photographs of a continuous weekend protest and performance in front of Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM) by the artist Zoe Sun in 2011. In 2011, the director of TFAM commissioned a commercial company which is chaired by her daughter to produce a series of overseas touring exhibits for the museum, and take the profit from the entry tickets. The scandal was later revealed by the media and raised criticism in art community. On the continuous three weekends, the artist did performances in the public square in front of the museum which later led the resignation of the museum director.

The second exhibition was the artist YAO Jui-Chung's long term project, 'Mirage—the disused public property in Taiwan'. It was a survey of the public facilities in Taiwan, built upon the wrong policies and later are abandoned for various reasons. He organized workshops in universities and sent the students back to their hometowns to survey disused public facilities and take documentary photos. He asked the government to reveal the budget for those facilities for his titular academic research and published the figures in a series of books. The disused properties were built often related to the corruption of local government, irresponsible politicians' cheques in elections, and the urban planning of impulsive modernization which lacks long term vision and the balance of ecology. The launch of the series of publications caught mass media attention, and the prime minister of Taiwan called for a meeting with the artists and the team. In the meeting Yao urged them to revive those facilities, and to open up some of them for non-profit organizations or cultural workers.

The third exhibition is 'Trading Futures', which was co-curated by me and Pauline Yao in 2012. It was a project done on the eve of the first phrase of TCAC (2010–2012), when we were about to leave the space and the operation money had run out. In the show, we invited projects to discuss the public institution, art labor, the exchange value

of art, the context of culture production etc. We set up a rule—to invite a collector to purchase the whole show without any knowledge of the content and bear the risks of getting nothing at the end, but have to pay for it in advance. The title 'Trading Futures' was borrowed from the term 'future trade' in the capital market. Instead of expecting the future profit out of art, I was hoping that collectors could be involved in the future event—the exhibition, and bear the risks of art production as much as artists, curators, and the public institution, not merely be a consumer of the art object. The exhibition meant to challenge the relationship between the contributors in art production. For example, the project by artist duo Sun Yuan and Pen Yu, 'Open Sesame', is a legal agreement between the collector and the artists, which requires the collector to guard Sun Yuan's toy gun collection. The artist has the right to ask for their collection back when the Chinese government lift the ban on weapon possession. In this project, the collector becomes the guardian of the artwork but doesn't hold the ownership; his responsibility is similar to the classical definition of the 'curator' or the public institution, the carer of artworks. The artists become the patrons who contribute their labor to the public institution, and to the collector (gun collector).

The three above mentioned projects address the issues with which TCAC is concerned—the environment/context of art production and social issues. Till now, TCAC has been run by an association, and maintained as an open platform for artists and curators to realize their experimental projects with critical thinking.

Identity as Articulation: Reconsidering the Discursive Framework of Taiwanese Indigenous Artistic Practices
Fang-Tze HSU

Before I start with my presentation titled 'Identity as Articulation', I would like to follow my English tutor's suggestion to clarify what I mean by 'articulate' and 'articulation'. Of course, I am not referring to the definition provided by the Oxford dictionary that defines articulate as 'having or showing the ability to speak fluently and coherently.'¹ I am using this term in reference to Stuart Hall's cultural studies approach in the context of ideology. In Hall's essay 'The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees,' Hall traces this concept back to Gramsci's argument on ideology. Specifically, it is an analysis of how a group that has specific interests tries to connect with other people, groups, economic arrangements (what Marx called means of production), ideas, and property to carry out their interests. As Hall indicates, articulation is 'a form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made?'²

In Jennifer Daryl Slack's studies on Hall's concept of articulation, she also points out 'articulation works at the level of the epistemological, the political, and the strategic.'³ She indicates, 'Epistemologically, articulation is a way of thinking the structures of what we know as a play of correspondences, non-correspondences and contradictions, as fragments in the constitution of what we take to be unities. Politically, articulation is a way of foregrounding the structure and play of power that is entailed in relations of dominance and subordination. Strategically, articulation provides a mechanism for shaping intervention within a particular social formation, conjuncture or context.'⁴

Why is it so important for me to draw the artistic practices of artists with indigenous origins into the frame of articulation? After the Dutch occupation beginning in 1624, followed by the Spanish occupation in 1662 and the Ching dynasty in 1683, Japan took control of Taiwan in 1895 and governed it for almost eighty years. As most colonial governments did, the Japanese took a census across the island together with the first physical anthropological survey of the aboriginal people. In 1928, Kanori Ino proposed the first comprehensive classification system of Formosan aborigines together with Torii Ryuzo's photographic documentation. This categorisation was then adopted by the Kuomintang's Republic of China, which took control of Taiwan in 1945.

If we reconsider the categorisation of aboriginal tribes in Taiwan through Hall's definition of articulation, these so-called biological units of tribes also embody the political and economic agenda of the Japanese colonial exploitation of Taiwan. The process of creating connections between the various individuals of communities can be found in a vernacular image of the time circulated via postcards and advertisements. Meanwhile, the sense of authenticity held by the indigenous body in Taiwan is continuously consumed by the nation-building agenda in order to

represent the originality of 'Taiwanese' in differentiation from the 'Chineseness' of mainland China.

Since 2001, artist and educator Walis Labai has contemplated this question through *The Invisible Project*, which he has developed into several series. The second series of *The Invisible Project* is titled *Invisible Project—Invisible People Series* (2006). Derived from those widely circulated vernacular representations of indigenous people in Taiwan, Walis Labai's work depicts the vanishing subjectivity of indigenes and even the fictionality of the subject itself. In *The Invisible Project*, archival images of indigenous people from other regions of the world were mashed together with images of indigenous people from Taiwan. Through the visual effect created by a lenticular print (the process creates an effect similar to holography), the subject in the photo constantly appears and disappears in front of viewers. The vanishing images address the contingency of the scientific ethnography that authorises who they are and with which tribe they identify themselves.

In 2000, there was an artistic incident triggered by the rejection of Rahic Talif's driftwood sculpture by the jury of the Tourism Bureau of the East Coast National Scenic Area. This abstract sculpture by Talif, widely considered the pioneer in utilising driftwood for art in Taiwan, was criticised as not 'indigenous enough' during the jury process.⁵ Again, what constitutes the sense of indigenes in the circumstance of art is also articulation. As Hall emphasised in his writing about articulation, 'Under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made?'⁶ In the context of Talif's incident, if his ethnic origin could not connect him to the category of indigenous art, what do these connections between the subject of indigenous art and certain artistic expressions imply? After this particular incident, Talif refused to participate in any exhibition or curatorial project titling him as an indigenous artist.

Formed in the spring of 2002, the Ideology Tribe proclaimed its existence to the public through the self-initiation of an artists' residency project along the Chin-Tsun Beach. The members of the Ideology Tribe come from all over Taiwan, and their identity is not based on ethnicity. There were around twenty-seven people who participated in the residency, and all of them are counted as members of the Ideology Tribe. They are not bound by a particular tribal identity or specific material. One of the artists describes the Ideology Tribe as a group of clouds. Unless they 'rain', others will not recognise their possibilities. In the first and only published art history writing about contemporary indigenous art in Taiwan, the author, Lu Mei-Fen, indicated that the formulation of the Ideology Tribe has shaken the general perception about indigenous art in Taiwan from several perspectives. On the one hand, their exercises that attempt to rediscover the subjectivity of the individual have polarised viewing experiences between the Han and indigenous peoples. On the other hand, the various origins and even nationalities of Ideology Tribe members have deconstructed the traditional ethnographical art history

writing that categorised artwork based on ethnicity and tribe.

As the first artist heavily utilising driftwood in the making of art, Talif not only opened up a new aesthetic domain but also established a collective mode of working. He transformed the artistic process of making and the master-apprentice relationship into a way of revitalising the traditional kaput, which is an age-based social system in Amis tribes. Adopting the nature of the medium, collaboration among members of the Ideology Tribe is by default an ongoing exchange embedded in their individual creative processes. However, as curator Lin Yu-Shih points out, there are several metaphorical similarities between the artists from the Ideology Tribe and driftwood. Since the majority of the artists experienced a sense of local exile due to the urbanisation and industrial transformation of Taiwan during 80s and 90s, they were stigmatised by their indigenous origin in the city and alienated by their urbanised life history at home. The image of driftwood is very much reminiscent of their collective history of constantly drifting and relocating. Their displacement and unemployment are also shared by a whole generation of indigenous people whose lives have been strongly affected by the cheap labour imported from regions such as Southeast Asia.

My research about the Ideology Tribe is aimed at deciphering how the art-making practices of the selected four artists are circulated in the art world and how the value of their works intertwines with the representation that is dominated by governmental cultural discourse(s). Therefore, the fieldwork component of my research was to not only unveil the interconnection between the artists and the surrounding agencies, but also to investigate how this interrelationship articulates the meanings of their works. I implemented the multi-sited ethnographical research approach and mapped out the connections between artists and their agencies. Then, I represented these interviewees individually, including the artists, the independent curators, the local cultural policy makers, and the museum curators. Quoting from one of the founders of interpretive anthropology, Clifford Geertz, through inducing their knowledge about the ecosystem that they belonged to, I am presenting this 'social [phenomenon] by placing them in local frames of awareness.'⁷ Now allow me to explain my methodology: In order to react to the crisis of anthropology due to the time-space compression of globalisation, anthropologist George Marcus has established the multi-sited ethnographical research approach. He suggests that instead of focusing our research subject on a singular location, we should follow a specific trajectory of our research subject and identify other circumstances in which our research subject might be situated.

Culture is like a dynamic body of water. At any time, there are multiple ripples interacting with each other. Each ripple represents a specific social phenomenon. The wave created by the ripple is the discourse that surrounds the specific social phenomenon. My research on these works channels the aesthetic value through its own specific socio-political dimension. In a sense, I hope to place the artistic practices of the Ideology Tribe more firmly amidst materials and social practice instead of a purely art historical tradition. Fei-Yu comes from the Tao tribe. The Tao people live exclusively on Orchid Island and have suffered from their proximity to nuclear-waste storage facilities since 1982. Therefore, Fei-Yu's core themes concern the anti-nuclear energy waste movement, and he has participated in the

anti-nuclear energy protest since 1996. At the time, Fei-Yu was an art school student, and he is one of the few artists in the Ideology Tribe who have had academic training. The experience of studying outside of the Tao tribe allowed him to better recognise his own identity and take responsibility for issues concerning the Tao people. Making art is a way of producing propaganda and protest for him. The skulls that appear in his paintings symbolise the death and toxicity experienced by his people and their culture.

During the days that I stayed in the field in Taitung, I saw A-Shui's works in public spaces extensively. A-Shui's main medium is driftwood, to which he adheres metals, stones, cement, and other kinds of solid materials to support the structure. These materials also highlight the texture and lines of his woodcarving. Among the four artists that I interviewed, A-Shui has the best living conditions as an 'occupational artist.' An 'occupational artist' refers to the history of public art policy in Taiwan.⁸ A-Shui's work very much feeds a need for the developing local tourism and branding project of Taitung.

I met with Ruby Swana through an introduction by independent curator Lee Yun-Yi Lee, whose writing contributes to the feminist discourse on art. Ruby's art-making practices generally involve following the original shape of the driftwood, reconstructing it into specific structures and ornamenting it with varying types of luminescent materials. Despite having no formal training in art, Ruby has a booming artistic career as an indigenous artist in Taiwan. In 2009, she participated in the Lantern Festival at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada, and in the annual exhibition of the Contemporary Austronesian Art Project in the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts (KMFA), which was promoted as the showcase of the masters of contemporary indigenous art.

Like most of the Ideology Tribe's work, An Sheng-Hui's art practice is a dialogical process with driftwood. The narrative of her work comes from a fusion of current events and her interpretation of the driftwood's specific shape. It is rare to see carving marks on her work. By applying layers of weaving, piling, and cording, she tries to keep the shape of the driftwood as intact as possible. During this process, her concepts and themes fluctuate and mature as reflected in the raw material. Together with Ruby Swana, An Sheng-Hui's career started to kick off with support from the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts after their inaugural exhibition titled *The Drifting and Mooring in My Life*, curated by Lin Yu-Shin in 2002. Even though members of the Ideology Tribe constituted a majority of the Contemporary Austronesian Art Project, initiated by the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Art in 2004, their unique artistic contributions, which went beyond the categorisation of tribes acknowledged by most art historians of the time, were totally ignored by museum curators and researchers. In order to distinguish Taiwan from Mainland China, the Ideology Tribe's works have been re-appropriated by the political agenda that intends to rebuild Taiwan's Austronesian identity by emphasising the artists' ethnic origins as 'indigenous Taiwanese' rather than focusing on their artistic contributions to the discourse.

I would like to end my presentation by showing the video work of another artist, Cheng En-Man. Cheng En-Man's practices very much reconnect the indigenous issues in Taiwan with the subaltern discourse of the Global South. Sharing the Ideology Tribe's concern about the political

implications of artistic practices, En-Man aims to redefine and rearticulate her identity as an indigenous person from Taiwan through pursuing historical justice and retelling her personal life experience in order to shift the focus from the end meaning of being 'indigenous' and redirect the conversation to serve a larger political purpose through cultural production.

1. Oxford Dictionary online <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/articulate>. (Accessed 3 May, 2014.)
2. Stuart Hall, 'The Problem of Ideology— Marxism without Guarantees', *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (1986): 28–44.
3. Jennifer Daryl Slack, 'The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.112.
4. Ibid.
5. Yu-Shih Lin, 'The New Narrative between the Border of History and Art—The Independent Curatorship and the Development of the Contemporary Taiwanese Indigenous Art.' 19 May 2010 <http://haipis.blogspot.com/> (Accessed 3 May, 2014.)
6. Stuart Hall, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), p.141.
7. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), p.6.
8. Yun-Yi Li, *The Arcana Book of Dulan Art Community* (Taipei: National Cultural and Arts Foundation, 2007), p.64.

Re-examining What do you mean, we?
Bruce E. Phillips

In the next 20 minutes I am going to talk about dodgy Howick politicians, homelessness, and self-psychoanalysis in relation to the exhibition *What do you mean, we?* However, to first respond to today's topic 'alternative modes of practice' I thought I would start my talk with this statement from the curator Maria Lind:

*Curating is "business as usual" in terms of putting together an exhibition, organizing a commission, programming a screening series, et cetera. "The curatorial" goes further, implying a methodology that takes art as its starting point but then situates it in relation to specific contexts, times, and questions in order to challenge the status quo.*¹

Whenever there is a claim of being 'alternative' it is imperative that we ask the obvious question: alternative to what exactly? In this statement Lind begins to address this question. She claims that there is a great difference between the perfunctory act of 'curating' and the rigor that is exercised in 'the curatorial', which denotes a methodology. I believe there is also a significant political divide at play between Lind's two distinctions highlighting that there is an agency exercised when one curates. By considering the curatorial as an alternative mode of practice it is possible to further question the key aspects of curation such as: what context curators are working within, how curators create context, what artists curators select, the processes curators employ, and most importantly what motivates curators.

All of these aspects influence the creation and realisation of an exhibition, what artistic practices are given visibility and ultimately what topics are included in the discourse. For better or worse, it is the curator that is given agency over such crucial aspects of exhibition making. Due to the freedom that the profession often allows, it is all too convenient for curators to simply take the road of functional curation and not entertain the self-reflexive position that Lind's notion of the curatorial offers. As the critic Terry Smith writes: 'the curator is a creative producer of exhibitions, it is a deception to pretend to be absent.'²

These questions of practice were very much present in my mind while researching for the 2012 Te Tuhi exhibition *What do you mean, we?* By re-examining this exhibition today it is an opportunity for me to question whether or not it was effective in critically questioning curatorial agency.

What do you mean, we? grouped together an international selection of artists who had investigated the psychology of prejudice by employing a range of innovative strategies from self-psychoanalysis to voluntary homelessness. I had two motivations for curating this exhibition: to engage with the local socio-political context of Te Tuhi and to encourage artistic practices that were engaging with the complex root cause of prejudice.

I was relatively new to Auckland when I started researching for the show and it was possibly for this reason

that the context of Te Tuhi was of great interest to me. However, also at this time Auckland had undergone great change in governance through the rapid merger of eight regional councils into one 'Super City' government—a change that challenged perceived social borders as much as it tangibly changed the legal and political ones.

Te Tuhi was very much caught up in this rapid change and has throughout its history undergone numerous other urban challenges and shifts. Te Tuhi is a unique organisation in New Zealand because it has a dual function as firstly a contemporary art space and secondly a community centre. Originally named the Pakuranga Arts Society, Te Tuhi was built in 1975 to meet the needs of the then brand new suburb of Pakuranga.



Te Tuhi Carnival 2011. Photo: Sam Hartnett

In its infancy, Pakuranga was known for being the new and up-n-coming suburb for the white middle class. However, since then Pakuranga has grown to become a much more ethnically diverse area. According to the 2013 census, Pakuranga Central's demographic is made up of: 48.2% European, 40.3% Asian, 9.1% Māori, 9.7% Pacific Islander, 1.9% Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, and 1.5% other—that ever elusive statistical category.³

Reflecting this diversity, Te Tuhi has over time become a crucial hub for many local communities and groups but also further afield to include neighbouring areas such as Botany, Howick, Panmure, Otahuhu, and Auckland Central. Te Tuhi hosts a range of activities from Indian weddings to Muslim prayer groups—and from senior citizen bingo to orchestras. Needless to say, Te Tuhi is a busy and active hub where various groups and communities converge. However, the white middleclass still has a strong cultural and political presence in this area. The negative side of which has a point of making itself known.



Images sourced from the Right Wing Resistance blog:
http://rwrnz.blogspot.co.nz/2011_03_01_archive.html



<http://rwrnz.blogspot.co.nz/2011/07/new-photo.html>

In 2011, Pakuranga was one of three areas in New Zealand chosen by the Right Wing Resistance to distribute their 'Asian Invasion' pamphlets. For those that do not know, the Right Wing Resistance is the more confrontational arm of the National Front who are active in areas such as Christchurch and the south eastern suburbs of Auckland. Unsurprisingly this group is staunchly nationalistic, confusingly neo-nazi and disgustingly phobic of any difference.

Also, in the nearby suburb of Howick the local iwi Ngai Tai have been the victim of repeated political and public opposition. The tensions here without a doubt go back to colonial grievances of the 19th century but re-sparked back in 2004 when Ngai Tai had their whare wananga burnt down. Te Whare Tupuna o Torere⁴ was built in 1936 upon invitation of a local woman Emelia Maud Nixon for her Garden of Memories—a peace garden gifted to Howick with the intention of recognising Ngai Tai as tangata whenua, and also to memorialise suffragettes. Following the arson from 2004–2012 Ngai Tai had further struggles in facing dubious local politics that hindered the reconstruction process.

In 2010, TVNZ's *Marae* current affairs programme recorded a heated incident that occurred when Michael Williams and David Collings (respectively former and current chairman of the Howick local board) deliberately disrupted a turning of the soil ceremony for the new whare by parking Collings' campaign van in front of the garden's entrance.⁵ After much opposition throughout the consent process the whare is now built but unfortunately there is still much heated opposition to its use. For instance, it is not to be used as a marae because Pākehā locals didn't want congregations of people lingering about the area.⁶

If this wasn't enough, Pākehā Howick residents later formed further opposition by petitioning against Ngai Tai to oppose the official naming of the new Super City ward after

the prominent Chief Te Irirangi. As a result the decision was all too readily overturned by Rodney Hyde, the former Minister of Local Government, in favour of the English name Howick. As you can see in this map, it is a remarkable fact that this whole area is gathered under the name of Howick—given that the ward precinct encompasses an area significantly larger in size than the suburb of Howick including Pakuranga, Botany and Flatbush all of which have a more ethnically diverse population.

It is this naive resistance to anything perceived to be Māori or of colour that is emblematic of the Pākehā psyche throughout NZ. Leading stories in national media of 2011 highlighted the predominance of these attitudes, such as Paul Henry's comment that the Governor General Sir Anand Satyanand doesn't look or sound like a New Zealander⁷; Prime Minister John Key's 'Tūhoe cannibalism joke'⁸; and John Banks' vilification of Polynesian young men being pot smokers who burgle the 'good folk' of Epsom.⁹ There was also an incident where Māori performers were physically assaulted by drunk fans during the opening ceremony of the Rugby World Cup¹⁰; and of course the 2011 election played on the interests of Pākehā from the likes of Act Party leader Don Brash who answered 'no' when asked if Māori have a special place in New Zealand.¹¹

The fear, guilt and hate that fuels the Pākehā perspective would be of no surprise to any of us here today. However, simply identifying that a prejudice occurs doesn't explain how or why it forms. It is this very problem that I attempted to explore through the exhibition—to provide insight into the psychology of prejudice by considering how artists are increasingly adopting innovative strategies in response to how and why particular bias forms.

What I found of further interest was that the strategies that I could see artists working with also had correlations with recent research in cognitive psychology. Cognitive psychologists have found that prejudice stems from an innate human need to categorise the world and mentally define difference. So while prejudice can be consciously addressed, it is not something that can be easily changed by modifying one's behaviour or attitude.

Most prejudice is deeply hidden in our subconscious and surreptitiously leaks through slippages in language and behaviour, insidiously effecting our relationships with others. It is for this reason that no one is exempt from creating prejudice but also this realisation has shown that prejudice cannot be eliminated by just telling people to stop being discriminatory in fact this type of approach has been found to escalate the issue.

Also, given the ramifications of the global financial crisis, it is more important than ever that a greater understanding and new strategies are formed to mediate the negative effects of prejudice, because it is often in tough financial times when resources and jobs are hard to come by that issues like xenophobia or sexism escalate. Strategically, I wanted to curate an exhibition that would surreptitiously engage with local politics in a sideways way that wouldn't didactically tell people what to think but rather lead people to acknowledge their own latent bias.

Curatorially there was one exhibition in particular that influenced me. This was *Black is Black Ain't* a 2008 show curated by Hamza Walker at the Renaissance Society in Chicago. This exhibition considered the politics of African American identity but did so not by capitalising on the identity of the artists but rather considered the cultural

construct of race. This consideration of race as a social/cultural construct, I believe, created an important shift away from an ethnological paradigm to one of psychology in curation—an investigation that opened the topic of race up to non-African American artists. Tom Johnson was one of these artists whose work I also included in *What do you mean, we?*



Tom Johnson, *What a black man feels like*, 2004, (still) video, 29 min, 4:3, colour. Courtesy of the artist.

In his work, *What a black man feels like*, the video camera becomes the confidant as the artist delves into his own psyche. As a form of self-psychoanalysis Johnson's repetitive monologue painfully teases out the latent meaning of a single phrase to probe for hidden racial fears. It is humorous to watch at first but after 30 minutes it becomes almost painful to witness—as it proves an agonising process for him to neurotically deconstruct his subconscious. By using Tom Johnson's work as the starting point for the exhibition I researched other artists and investigated how a group exhibition of this nature might help to apologetically address the racial tension and other forms of prejudice that were present in Te Tuhi's socio-political context of that time.¹²

Performance in its various forms featured prominently in *What do you mean we?* as a means to disclose personal neurosis, attain lived understanding, or to intervene into public space to confront the social conscience. An example of this is Amanda Heng's performance series *Let's walk*.



Amanda Heng, *Let's Walk*, 1999–2001, (still) Singapore, 1999, video, 120 min, 4:3, colour. Courtesy of the artist.

Originally performed in Singapore, at a time that performance art was illegal, Heng took to the streets unannounced biting a high-heel shoe and walking back-wards down busy streets with aid of a handheld vanity mirror. This surreal Fluxus-like public happening was created in direct response to the then growing gender inequality in employment during the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. Apparently during this time beauty salons made a roaring trade as women had makeovers and plastic surgery to increase the potential of them being hired.



boat-people.org, *Muffled Protest*, 2010, (still) digital video, 7 min 16 sec, 16:9, colour. Courtesy of the artists.

Also, adopting surrealist and activist sensibilities in the public realm was *Muffled Protest* by artist collective boat-people.org. Occurring in cities across Australia, participants wrapped their heads in the Australian flag and stood silently en masse and individually as a silent protest against Australia's imprisonment of asylum seekers.



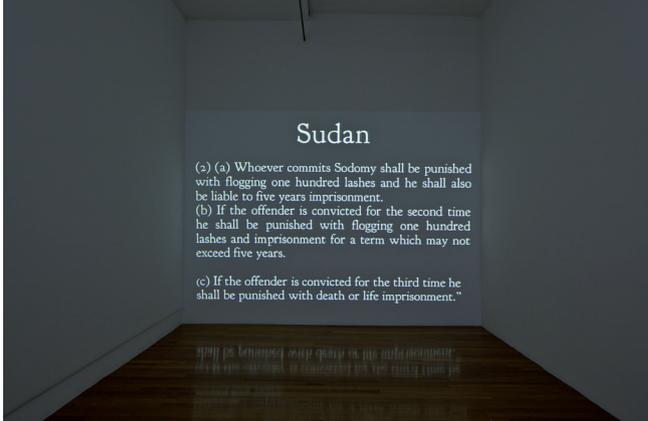
Kalisolaite 'Uhila, *Mo'ui Tukuhausia*, 2012, documentation of a two-week performance between 19 March –1 April 2012. Photos by Bruce E. Phillips, courtesy of Te Tuhi.

In a public intervention of a longer duration, Kalisolaite 'Uhila's work *Mo'ui Tukuhausia* provided the exhibition's only live performance. Over a two week period during the first month of the show, 'Uhila lived homeless around the grounds of Te Tuhi in attempt to gain a greater understanding of what it might mean to be homeless. 'Uhila's presence reflected the best and worst of our local constituents. He was referred to as 'that thing!' by one visitor, was spat on by another, and was even accused of not smelling enough of 'urine and faeces'. While simultaneously, 'Uhila was being donated so much food that regular visits to the City Mission were required to offload the generous excess. Overall the most accepting were children who would come bounding up to him uninhibited. These extremely different responses are surprising given that 'Uhila made no assertive effort to elicit any reaction at all. He was merely being. He was a still silent presence onto which people projected their own subconscious thoughts, feelings or fears. Now nominated for Auckland Art Gallery's 2014 Walters Prize, it will be interesting to see how he adapts this work for a new social situation.



Newell Harry, *The natives are restless*, 2006 –12, (installation view) neon, Helvetica neue light (snow white), timer. Courtesy of Te Tuhi, the artist and Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

In other works, language was deconstructed and appropriated to reveal telling semiotic slippages or blatant injustice. For instance, in this neon work Newell Harry compressed the sentence 'THE NATIVES ARE RESTLESS' until it is almost illegible. The sentence was also momentarily disrupted when the text times-out to reveal the word 'AR ... S ... ES'. By injecting mischievous wit into a phrase laden with latent colonial fear, Harry questions the hidden meanings within language and subverts the semiotic codes at play.



What do you mean, we? (installation view). Photo: Sam Hartnett.



Colin Nairn, *God is dead*, 2011. Courtesy of Te Tuhi and the artist. Information included in this work was sourced from: <http://ilga.org/ilga/en/index.html>

In Colin Nairn's video work *God is Dead* he animated the legislation of the 79 countries where it is currently illegal to be openly homosexual to scroll down the wall. As this list scrolls by in conceptualist calm, the legal justification of discrimination reads like a list of sanitised insults and also takes on a sadistic tone as penalties such as life imprisonment and one hundred lashes scroll by.



Rangituhia Hollis, *Kia mate mangō-pare*, 2012, audio by the Puehu whanau. Digital video, 5 min, 16:9, black and white. Courtesy of Te Tuhi and the artist.

In a completely different approach to those mentioned was this video work by Rangituhia Hollis titled *Kia mate mangō-pare*. From the summit of Mangere Mountain, Hollis animated spectre-like mangō-pare to swim through the sky as if encircling prey. To Hollis' iwi Ngāti Porou, the hammer-head shark is a symbol of strength and resilience—even in death the shark is known to thrash and fight. So by superimposing these animated ghost like entities he creates a haunting virtual reality where past trauma lurks visibly in the present—as a way to imbue significant locations with the ongoing impact of colonisation. For me, Hollis' work together with Tom Johnson's bookend the concept of the exhibition for they both delve into the past to find some way forward.

In addition to the artworks, I also invited three other writers, Fear Brampton, Danny Butt and Melissa Laing to contribute exhibition essays. A couple of months before the opening I invited them all to attend an evening to discuss the show and we also installed the exhibition a week in advance so that they had time to experience the show and respond. These texts, together with my own, were made available to visitors as they entered the gallery. This was important as I was aware that my curation of the exhibition would have been influenced by my own latent bias. For after all, as a heterosexual Pākehā male I know very little about being the victim of prejudice but everything about being the demographic of the perpetrator. Therefore, by opening up the contextualisation of the exhibition to others it offered the potential for the curation to be questioned and expanded.

I began my talk by considering Maria Lind's distinction between 'curation' being business as usual and 'the curatorial' being guided by a critical methodology. In re-examining *What do you mean, we?* it has occurred to me that it was actually not a great example of Lind's notion of the curatorial because there were certainly many instances that the standard convention of curating was practiced. However, what I can say for certain is that by questioning the conservative tendencies in my own practice it did allow

me to have a self-reflexive perspective to challenge my motivations. And I believe that this questioning resulted in an exhibition that opened up new opportunities for artists, gave visibility to particular forms of artistic enquiry, and also effectively engaged within a local context.

In conclusion what I want to say is this: If we acknowledge that the practice of curating inherently involves exercising a political agency it becomes no longer satisfactory to practice in a conventional manner. This proposition challenges us to incessantly consider alternate modes of practice that might further benefit artists and the communities that we serve.

- For further information about *What do you mean, we?* please see Te Tuhi's free downloadable publication by visiting: <http://www.tetuhi.org.nz/exhibitions/publications.php>

1. Maria Lind. in Jens Hoffmann and Maria Lind, 'To Show or not to Show', *Mousse Magazine*, no. 31, November 2011. <http://moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=759>
2. Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012), p.46.
3. Statistics New Zealand, 2013 *Census Quick Stats about place: Pakuranga Central*. New Zealand Government. http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place.aspx?request_value=13491&tabname=Culturaldiversity (Accessed 16 June, 2014.)
4. The whare has since been renamed to Te Whare Wananga O Wairoa. See: Simon Smith and Scott Morgan, *Education in new whare*. 26 March, 2014. Eastern Courier. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/eastern-courier/9864538/Education-in-new-whare>
5. Marae, TV ONE. *Whareniui built in Howick is burnt down Marae investigates*. TVNZ. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5XufbofBkU> (Accessed 23 June 2014.)
6. Ibid.
7. Not to mention Paul Henry's insulting of Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit over her surname which caused an international uproar, or his juvenile comments about Indian service-station attendants. Paul Henry, *Breakfast*, TVNZ, 1 October 2010 and 1 April 2009.
8. James Meikle. 'New Zealand's prime minister apologises for cannibalism joke' *The Guardian*, 13 May 2010 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/13/john-key-apologises-cannibalism-joke> (accessed 12 January 2012)
9. TV3 News, John Banks labeled a redneck. TV3 News. 15 November, 2011. <http://www.3news.co.nz/John-Banks-labelled-a-redneck/tabid/419/articleID/232830/Default.aspx> (Accessed 23 June 2014.)
10. Sharon Lundy. 'Waka Cup paddler's ribs broken in "cowardly" attack'. *New Zealand Herald*, 13 September, 2011. <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?cid=1&objectid=10751504> (Accessed 10 January 2012.)
11. An attitude shared by 81 per cent of TV One viewers. See: <http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/most-kiwis-don-tthink-maori-hold-special-place-4158363> (Accessed 10 January 2012.)
12. Due to the limitations of this paper I discuss 7 out of the 10 artists included in the exhibition. For further information about all artists and works in the exhibition please see Te Tuhi's free downloadable publication by visiting: <http://www.tetuhi.org.nz/exhibitions/publications.php>

The position of curator in Indonesia is a profession that was born as an improvised response to the development of contemporary art in a society without infrastructure, or any adequate cultural strategy (policy). Rather than see it as part of an effort to deal with poverty—a perspective that is often used for this non-infrastructure situation—I would like to reflect on my experience of being involved in a more fluid and open field of contemporary arts, where the curatorial position extends to art as part of a social movement, and also to the arts that grow in the public marketplace.

It is very problematic, and indeed challenging, to talk about cultural exchange at a time when Indonesia is being widely exposed as part of an emergent global art market. This has been reviewed in many international publications, where Indonesia is mostly represented through numbers: how much is Indonesian art being sold for at auctions, how many works are sold in international art fairs, and so on. How do you give value to idea of exchange in this period of intensified capitalistic exchange through art? What is the role of the curator in this particular situation? How can an individual curator act as an extension from this situation, playing a role as an individual institution?

What is the meaning of 'being international'?

Working within a very dynamic and at the same time challenging scene as there is in Indonesia, there is no established national institution as a way of marking the achievements of artists, curators and cultural workers. For this reason having exhibitions abroad and being recognised internationally is a really big deal for many artists.

After a period of two decades, contemporary art is now facing new challenges that force it to reflect upon its position, and its role in contributing not only to the development of art infrastructure, but also in affirming artists' vision and stance with regard to the latest social phenomena, and the shifts in general aesthetic ideas. Such repositioning gives rise to the idea to make a response to the rapid flow of art globalisation, to assert the presence of Indonesian art on the great stage of the international art world. The desire to become international, however, must be articulated based on the needs of the local context, instead of merely using an external reference about such internationalisation.

Most of the art events we consider as being international in character have the ambition to represent 'the world'. There is invariably a demand to provide the audience with representations of various countries, to maintain a politically correct stance, and to introduce groups that have thus far been considered marginal. As interpretations for the concept of 'internationalisation' expand, most art events start to resemble the UN's General Assembly.

Although it has become a lot easier to become 'international', it is still a luxury in many places and can only come about in countries with an established infrastructure

and with strong support from the state. I work in a city called Jogjakarta, small city that had been known as the cultural capital of Indonesia since the most important art school is there and many artists live there.

In Jogjakarta the issue of internationalism presented us with the challenge to set a strategy, in order to position ourselves on the international art map. Working with the city's unique creative tradition, long history, and a social-political context that has intrigued many researchers and cultural thinkers due to its strong postcolonial character, the biennale model we have established now proposes to create a new meaning to the concept of international(ism). Politically, this is also a strategic approach.

Jogja Equator Biennale is series of biennales dedicated as a new offer. The choice to work with countries around the equator reveals the skill of art practitioners in the Yogyakarta Biennale Foundation (Yayasan Biennale Yogyakarta) in reading trends occurring on an international stage, at a time when there are strong streams that move the global aesthetic discourses in the same direction. When internationalism is seen as the representation of a variety of countries, artists and works of art from very different continents gather within one space and time, and intensive exchanges between two different countries cannot be thoroughly explored. The problem of the limited infrastructure that the Indonesian art practitioners face gives rise to the wish to position ourselves within the global art arena using a different approach, one that also enables encounters with 'the Other'.

I curated the first edition of this biennale, and had the opportunity to work with India, with co curator Suman Gopinath. Appointed by the board of the Foundation just six months before, I questioned how I could work in a very short time, and presenting contemporary arts from a place I have never been, even though I had a lot of knowledge about it. I've always been a big fan of Indian contemporary culture; I read Indian literature, I adore Indian food, I read many Indian thinkers. But how to work with Indian curators I've never met, and to bring Indian artists to be exhibited in Indonesia? And at the same time, how to offer criticality to the public in Jogja, since I still believe that is the role of the biennale in our art scene?

I decided to take the risk of choosing the exhibition over process. (I think this is the first time I've really admitted this though.) Aside from being given so little time, preparing the big show only in six months, I felt the strong need for a Jogjakarta audience to see a 'good exhibition' from their perspective. I was very lucky that my co-curator Suman shared that thought with me. We wanted to have more intercultural exchange processes, to bring more artists to work in other places, to create a shared experience of working together—but I consider this as a starting point rather than a final project. So, we worked more for the exhibition outcome, while at the same time trying to create many other public programmes as part of the process, rather

than be bothered by the notion of cultural exchange. I feel like it happened right away, and in many different ways. We had three artists come to make works there for periods of four and six weeks, and some others who came during opening week. We exhibited a total of 25 artists from Indonesia and 17 from India. And after the title, *Shadow Lines*, we put: *Indonesia Meets India*.

And of course, I heard those kind of critiques that I had worried about before: why is there no sense of collaboration in the meeting? Why does it seem that we simply put artworks from India next to Indonesian artists' works, and provide a bit of narrative around the theme of spirituality, religiosity and diversity as our framework?

Back to my idea as the role of curator as extension of institution. When making an international exhibition the huge task of practically delivering it is equal to the task of introducing the content of the exhibition to its local audience. I feel it is very important for the audience to experience a space for meeting other kinds of art, or other narratives from a place quite far away, but also embodied in our history. The Indonesian artworks and Indian ones somehow share similar visual symbols, that's what all my volunteers working so hard realising all those works discovered, with me and Suman trying to tell them what the meaning of each symbol in India and how it is so different from our interpretation of the objects. Contoh, cabe, mata, bindi.

The lack of public institutions that connect contemporary art and local society in Indonesia encouraged us to create a memorable exhibition for the local audience, to 'educate' them about differences. Again, this is usually a task for institutions in many other countries.

Learning together had been focus of my practice in the last three years; there is no art history department in Indonesia. All curators have to learn for themselves. And more and more many of the younger generation are practicing as curators in many different ways, so I have initiated some discussions and forums for young curators where we can share. When I have guest curators from abroad sometimes I ask them to talk to this young group as well. And similar forums have also been initiated for young artists and young critics.

Educating collectors also had been important part of the curator's role in Indonesia. There was no market for new media arts, video or photography until seven years ago, while many artists were creating works within this medium. Exhibiting this new work you also have to create the new market, so that artists can continue to make work. We are also working on bringing collectors to be patrons, since there is no real culture of philanthropy in Indonesia. For the Jogja Biennale, particularly in the first edition, we created what we called Jogja Biennale's Friends; in the end they contributed 35% towards the budget. Not only creating this circle, most important is how you maintain their interest and focus, to see the significance and value of having a public institution like the biennale in the middle of the market stream.

Being a curator who is not fully independent—I am affiliated with a space that runs commercial activities, but at the same time collaborate with various institutions—I see that, as individual entities, curators in Indonesia are always required to engage in cultural movements around them. Being self-employed, or 'part-time workers', in Harald

Szeemann's language, causes curators to give themselves over to many (mutual) interests and to do more in the scope of their work. At this point, the individual grows into an institution, with a complex role that must be sustained.



James Luna, *Urban (Almost) Rituals*, Wellington, 14 May, 2009.
Commissioned by Te Papa Tongarewa for One Day Sculpture.
Photo: Stephen Rowe.

In July 1993, alongside senior Māori artists Emily Schuster, Arnold Manaaki Wilson, Paki Harrison, Hirini Melbourne, John Tahuparae, Fred Graham and others, artist Lisa Reihana and myself—the two youngest of a delegation of 11—travelled to Seattle to the final venue of the exhibition *Te Waka Toi: Contemporary Māori art from New Zealand*.

The exhibition, curated by Te Waka Toi, the Māori division of Creative New Zealand, was an exhibition of painting, sculpture and textiles drawn from senior Māori artists 'representative of the range of work being created by Māori artists'² of the time, but its aim was not to operate purely as an exhibition, it was also proposed as a cultural exchange between Māori and the Indigenous people in the USA and Canada. An exhibition handout that accompanied the exhibition in Seattle said, 'The opportunity to present this exhibition to the Northwest arts community highlights a long-held wish by Māori artists to reinforce interaction between Māori and Native artists over a number of years both in the USA, Canada and New Zealand.'³

It was a search, as Te Waka Toi Chair Cliff Whiting said, '...to find out about other tribal peoples and how their culture, their arts and their way of life survive, especially in the fast-moving, hard hitting American culture.'⁴

The exhibition toured America for two years, opening at the Museum of Man in San Deigo in March 1992 and travelling to three other venues: The Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, the Field Museum in Chicago, and Thomas Burke Memorial State Museum in Seattle. Over 60 Māori artists, tohunga, curators and others travelled to support the exhibition and to engage with the indigenous peoples of the areas the exhibition was shown in. It was my first major international art trip and foundational for many reasons. It was the trip where I first experienced the work of Native Performance artist James Luna. The performance, *The History of the Luiseño People*, took the form of a poroporoaki or farewell to his Uncle whose passing he had missed because he was, as part of his urban reality, 'off the

reservation' at the time. Luna's performance instilled from that point an interest in not only his work, but also in indigenous performance art in the USA and Canada, the work of Rebecca Belmore, Lori Blondeau, Terrance Houle and many others.

It was also where I experienced, on a large scale, the absence almost entirely of contemporary indigenous art and artists from mainstream art institutions, both in Seattle, Vancouver and in New York at the Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Again it was my first experience of those cultural institutions outside of books, and contemporary Native American art was missing, present only if you knew, within the work of Jackson Pollock, Joseph Beuys and others.

It was interesting for me to see at the Museum of Modern Art last year that some of that had changed and indigenous art was exhibited alongside non indigenous art in a collection based show. In the show a work by Keith Haring, *Totem*, was exhibited beside and in relationship with a Hopi Kachina. There was also work by Pudlo Pudlat in juxtaposition with other mainstream artists and there were others.

The experience, however, also cemented that I was perhaps in the right place at the right time. That as an emerging curator at the National Art Gallery, I had the opportunity—in a small country and with the advent of biculturalism in the 1990s—and perhaps the responsibility, of ensuring contemporary Māori art was seen as art. The responsibility to ensure it would not be viewed as contemporary Native American art was, in a natural history context related to flora and fauna, or if shown at all outside of that, historicised, marginalised and shown through an anthropological lens as a continuation of culture only, as an adjunct always, to the customary. I thought I could perhaps do something. I could, through my work, open space and make visible contemporary Māori art and artists, curate for a Māori audience and include our thinking and ways of being in an intellectual world I felt Māori were at the time, largely locked outside of.

My ideas were definitely tempered through what I understood of the indigenous experience in the USA, but also by the *Te Waka Toi* exhibition I was there to support. Although an exhibition focused on contemporary Māori art, *Te Waka Toi: Contemporary Māori art from New Zealand* was not able to break the ethnographic frame in the USA and be toured through the art gallery tour circuit. It instead toured through the American museums circuit, utilising connections made and networks developed and leveraged almost a decade earlier through the *Te Māori* exhibition which toured America in 1984. *Te Māori*, which lead me into the museum/art gallery world in the first place, was a turning point for Māori art. It caused a paradigm shift in the way that Māori art was valued and viewed in New Zealand and radically transformed New Zealand museum and art gallery practices.

As *Te Māori* indigenous curator Hirini Moko Mead wrote,

*The Metropolitan [was] the centre of the world of art. By taking our art to New York, we altered its status and changed overnight the perception of it by people at home and abroad. We brought Māori art out of the closet, out from obscurity, out from anonymity, and out of the cupboard of primitive contextualisation. In fact, we rescued it and freed it from the limiting intellectual climate of New Zealand, releasing it so it could be seen by the world.*⁵

Not only did *Te Māori* shift the ground for customary Māori art and culture in New Zealand, it also gained recognition for contemporary Māori art within the art mainstream 30 years after the first attempts of the Modern Māori artists who emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. Those artists, including Ralph Hotere, Paratene Matchitt, Arnold Manaaki Wilson, Muru Walters, Sewlyn Muru, Kataraina Mataira, Marilyn Webb, Cath Brown and others, are now often referred to as the Māori modernists—the first to engage with international modern art and are acknowledged as the founders of the contemporary Māori art movement. Mainstream art galleries, including the then National Art Gallery, started collecting contemporary Māori art seriously in the mid to late 1980s, and New Zealand art history began to regard contemporary Māori art as an important and developing art movement unique to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Jumping ahead a few years to 1996 and with the opening of Te Papa in 1997, my next involvement with international indigenous art was through Ian Wedde, who I worked alongside on a 'day one' or opening exhibition project, *Art Now Looks Back*, a contemporary project focused on time, tourism and technology. It was through that project I was introduced to the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative in Sydney and to my long time colleagues and friends, Brenda Croft, Hetti Perkins and artists Michael Riley and Tracey Moffatt. Boomalli was described in 1996 by Australian academic Niko Papapastergiadis as one of the most '...innovative strategies in the representation of Aboriginal art'. It was a strategy that was undertaken by the artists themselves. Through Boomalli he said, '...urbanisation was no longer automatically defined as synonymous with acculturation, the work of artists such as the late Gordon Bennett and Judy Watson highlighted that the '... dynamism of identity was neither diluted as it was mixed nor suspended as it was urbanised. It was not 'an indicator of fake personas, declining values or corrupted culture...it was instead, 'a strategy for working within and between different positions...'⁶

All art is contemporary in the sense that it is of its time, yet it can be approached only from the vantage-point of the ever-changing present. Māori culture of which contemporary Māori art is a part of, can be defined by both its continuity and its relationship with our rich ancestral culture and past but also by its ability to continually move, change and, renew itself. So Contemporary Māori art, like Māori people and the culture post-colonisation, deals with ideas of the constructed, the changing, and the redefinition of the self and world.

I almost used an uncompromising text work—'*not an animal or a plant*'—by Australian Aboriginal artist Vernon Ah Kee as the title of my paper. The work relates to the idea of survivance in my current paper title, which I referenced from Gerald Vizenor's writing in the 2013 *Sakahān* exhibition catalogue. Gerald is a senior academic and Professor of

Native American studies in the United States, and survivance, although I had not heard it before, is an understood term in the US and Canada. It is a term which is a conflation of two words, survival and resistance, used often in discourse related to contemporary indigenous art and the post-colonial condition. Ah Kee's work, like much contemporary indigenous art in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the US over the past decade or more, upends a colonial notion. It is very clever, very clear and very precise work with no ambiguity in the message. In one sharp move, with this work, Ah Kee deconstructs an outmoded racist and colonial notion that confined and limited Aboriginal people while simultaneously creating a new and alternative position, which asserts indigenous authority, presence and sovereignty.

I am declaring on my own behalf, that of my family and my people that 'I am not an animal or a plant'. In 1901 when Australia ceased being a collection of British colonies simply sharing a land mass and became a federated country, the Aborigine, the native people of the land, were excluded from the new nation's Constitution and the many arbitrary rights of citizenship that accompanied all its new citizens.

...relegated to a status less than human ergo, an 'animal or a plant'. This truly degrading and derogatory act is not surprising given the prevailing beliefs and attitudes towards the Aborigine at the time. What is surprising, or shocking, is that it wasn't until May 1967...by virtue of a national referendum, removed the Aborigine from under the heel of quasi-slavery and 'property' and placed this othered 'thing' within the Constitution proper, albeit as wards of various forms of legislation...Nevertheless, the Aborigine was transformed from a Aboriginal 'thing' of scientific curiosity and public derision, into an Aboriginal people of romanticised curiosity and political derision.⁷

The significance of sovereignty for indigenous art is echoed in the writing of Native American artist, curator and academic Jolene Rickard. Rickard said, '[t]he work of Indigenous artists needs to be understood through the clarifying lens of sovereignty and self-determination, not just in terms of assimilation, colonisation and identity politics... Sovereignty is the border that shifts Indigenous experience from a victimised stance to a strategic one.'⁸

Further to his work, Ah Kee is said to have commented when visiting Canada in 2006 for a project, 'the Australian [Aboriginal] experience was not just "like" the Aboriginal Canada experience,' it was, he said, 'exactly the same...'⁹ Métis artist and critical writer David Garneau in his 2010 article for *Fuse* magazine, 'Little distance between us', also talked about the connection between indigenous people in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US, and the 'visceral experience'¹⁰ of discovering our shared experiences and sometimes parallel histories, even though we live oceans apart.

Contemporary indigenous art, the rubric Contemporary Māori fits within, is now too various to be easily defined. However the following ideas are some thoughts about what might characterise contemporary indigenous art. They are ideas that take their lead from discussions with David Garneau about Native Canadian art and various writings. I think they can be applied and align with Contemporary

Māori art as the contemporary conditions and context are similar. So some ideas that characterise contemporary indigenous art is that it is an art that might:

- Assert indigenous presence
- Signify and display different ways of knowing and being
- Locate personal, familial or tribal experience in a global context
- Demonstrate bi-cultural competence
- Unsettle the line between customary and contemporary
- Embody resistance
- Deconstruct false representation or construct alternatives
- Disrupt national myths
- Resist ideological closure or fixed position

Garneau in his *Fuse* magazine article also spoke about the 'significant catalyst' and confluence of influence of a curatorial collective representative of the four countries. That curatorial collective was created in 2003 and was made up of Native Canadian art curator Lee-Ann Martin (Canada), Australian Aboriginal art curator Brenda Croft (Australia), Native American art curator Margaret Archuleta (USA) and myself. We came together to plan an international exhibition of indigenous art which in the end did not eventuate, but as part of the exhibition development we successfully established the first thematic residency at the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada devoted to contemporary indigenous artists. We selected artists for that seven-week residency programme, in which six artists from New Zealand were included.

The residency coincided with a further initiative developed by Martin, an important symposium for indigenous art curators—*Making a Noise! Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community*¹¹—that provided the opportunity for curators in this field to present and discuss issues related to indigenous curatorial practices. The symposium, being indigenous-led and focused, was perhaps the first of its kind. We had come of age, as Paul Chaat Smith quipped in his book *Everything You Know About Indians Is Wrong*; ours, he said, '...is the first generation to have enough writers and artists achieving success in the dominant culture to make a crowd...'¹²

An additional symposium—*Vision Space Desire; Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity*—pushed that experience out further and was developed by the National Museum of the American Indian. The symposium was developed to coincide with another, *Multiple Modernities and the Global Salon*, created by the 2007 Venice Biennale Artistic Director Robert Storr. Both were held in Venice in 2005, with *Vision Space Desire* following Robert Storr's symposium which we all also attended. As well as Storr's symposium, *Vision Space Desire* followed on from the success of two Native biennale projects that occurred in 2005: Rebecca Belmore's video-based installation *Fountain* and James Luna's performance and installation *Emendatio*. Belmore was the first Aboriginal woman to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale. *Emendatio* was not however, the American project at Venice in 2005, it was instead, a proactive initiative to create indigenous presence in Venice by the National Museum of the Native American Indian under the leadership of Rick West. It was part of '... a larger effort for Indians to be present in the world.'¹³ Luna's project claimed Venice as part

of Indian history by paying homage to Pablo Tac, a Luiseño Indian—the same tribe as Luna—who in 1834 went to Rome from the San Luis Rey Mission in California to study for the Catholic priesthood.

Vision Space Desire was future-focused and asked where to from here for indigenous art. It was an international conversation between invited artists, curators, museum directors, academics and critics from various parts of world. It included both indigenous and non indigenous invited participants. The non indigenous participants included Jean Fisher, Gerard Mosquerdo and Salah Hassan, and concentrated on 'moving our collective understanding forward', with one discussion fixed on creating 'new strategies to frame the ways non-Western cultures are regarded in the global art world.'¹⁴ An initiative proposed from the symposium but yet to be realised, that I would like to see happen, was to found an international indigenous art journal, using the model of Salah Hassan's *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African art*.

There have been other projects: *Stop (the) Gap, Indigenous Art in Motion*, held in Adelaide, Australia in 2011, initiated and developed by Australian Aboriginal curator Brenda Croft, which centred on the liminal space of experimental film, video, digital art and performance and used curatorial input for the selection of artists and development of the exhibition from David Garneau (Canada), Kathleen Ash-Milby (USA) and myself (New Zealand) as curatorial advisers. There was *Close Encounters; The Next 500 Years* in 2012, developed by a curatorial collective of indigenous art curators made up of Native Canadian curators Candice Hopkins, Jenny Western, Steve Loft and Lee-Ann Martin. *Close Encounters* was a project fixed on the latent potential that exists within current contemporary indigenous art, its growing global significance, and offered artists, curators and writers, 'speculative, critical and aesthetic mediations on our collective future.'¹⁵ *Close Encounters* again drew on curatorial advice and 'on the ground' connections from myself and others for its development, so there is a bit of practice model-developing here.

The final project I am going to mention is *Sakahan*, the groundbreaking, extraordinary and aptly named exhibition (which means to 'start a fire' in Algonquin language—the language of the indigenous people of Ottawa), that opened at the National Gallery of Canada May 2013. It was the first major exhibition of international indigenous art and was curated by Greg Hill, Candice Hopkins and Christine Lalonde. *Sakahan* captured and presented 'cultural, political and social moments emerging around the world'¹⁶ related to indigenous art. The strength and scale of *Sakahan* has unequivocally altered the terrain for the collection, study and exhibition of contemporary indigenous art globally by providing an international platform for us to present and critically engage from. It is a project that, documenta in style, is proposed to occur every five years with the National Gallery of Canada committing to two more, the next of which will occur in the 2018 and the final in 2023.

I wanted to finish with some words from my colleague and friend Mohawk curator and academic Steve Loft, that give a further definition of indigenous art. Loft's words are:

An Indigenous art history constitutes a trajectory of adaptability and cultural connectivity perfectly in

keeping with Indigenous world views and customary, as well as contemporary, artistic practices. It is tied up in histories that include both pre and post-contact epistemologies. It is customary and contemporary, reserve based and urban, tribal and hybrid, empirical and cosmological, living, dynamic and in constant flux.¹⁷

1. Gerald Viznor, 'Native Cosmometric Art', *Sakahān, International Indigenous Art* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2013), p.42.
2. *Te Waka Toi, Contemporary Māori art from New Zealand* exhibition hand out, Thomas Burke Memorial State Museum, Seattle, 1993, p.2.
3. *Ibid.*, p.3.
4. Carol Ivory, *Te Waka Toi Returns from the USA* exhibition hand out [reprinted from *Mana Magazine*], 1994, p.3.
5. Hirini Moko Mead, 'From obscurity to international art', *Magnificent Te Māori, Te Māori whakahirahira: he korero whakanui i Te Māori*, 1986.
6. Nikos Papastergiadis, 'Aboriginality and its audience', Abstracts, *New Aboriginalities* (SWAPP, 1996), p.10.
7. Vernon Ah Kee, 'not an animal or a plant', artist statement, Milani Gallery, Brisbane, Australia, 2006.
8. Jolene Rickard, 'Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand', *Aperture* 139, Spring 1995, p.1.
9. Vernon Ah Kee in correspondence with Michelle LaVallee, June 2008; *Vernon Ah Kee: Blow Your House In*, McKenzie Art Gallery, 2009, p.3.
10. David Garneau, 'Little Distance Between Us', *Fuse*, 4 October 2010. <http://fusemagazine.org/2010/10/little-distance-between-us-2> (Accessed 28 April 2014.)
11. Lee-Ann Martin, *Making a Noise, Aboriginal perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community* (Banff: Banff International Curatorial Institute, 2004).
12. Paul Chaat Smith, 'On Romanticism', *Everything You Know About Indians is Wrong*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p.26.
13. W. Richard West, Jr, 'At the Table, in the Big Tent', *Vision, Space, Desire, Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity*, (Smithsonian Institute, 2006), p.10.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Lee-Ann Martin, *Close Encounters: The Next 500 years* project proposal, email correspondence with the author, July 2010.
16. Shari Austin, *Sakahān, International Indigenous Art*, National Gallery of Canada, 2013.
17. Steve Loft, Reflections on 20 years of Aboriginal art, Ryerson University, 2010 http://www.trudeaufoundation.ca/sites/default/files/u5/reflections_on_20_years_of_aboriginal_art_-_steven_loft.pdf (Accessed 3 October 2014.)

Participant Biographies

Fiona Amundsen's academic background in social anthropology has been fundamental in defining her thinking and approach to photographic representation, documentary practice, and historical trauma, along with its subsequent imaging. Utilising pseudo-ethnographic methods, her practice employs photography to articulate philosophical and anthropological objectives concerning the representation of Anglo-American and Japanese pre/post World War Two histories, and their established images and corresponding narratives. Working in a project, or field-work orientated manner, the aim is to question how specific cities acknowledge their military histories, battles, and traumas within public and/or memorial sites. Recent projects have focused on the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park (*The First City in History*, 2010), the 1941 Japanese initiated Pearl Harbour attack (*Operation Magic*, 2012), and *The Imperial Body* (2014), which focuses on the contentious Japanese Yasukuni Shrine and the plight of Ben Kuroki, the only American of Japanese decent permitted to fight in aerial combat in the Asia Pacific Theatre of WWII.

Kyongfa CHE is currently working as a curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. She received a MA in Art History and Theory (20th century) from Goldsmiths College, University of London (2000), and completed a postgraduate course in Critical Studies at Malmö Art Academy, University of Lund, Sweden (2006). Working as independent curator until 2012, she organised exhibitions and discursive projects including *Omnilogue: Journey to the West* (2012) hosted by Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi, and organised by the Japan Foundation; *Fog Dossier* (2010), an exhibition based on collaborative research with the artist Jeuno JE Kim at Art Sonje Center in Seoul and *The Demon of Comparisons* (2009), a two-year research and exhibition project co-curated with Binna Choi and Cosmin Costinas at Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam.

Meiya CHENG is a freelance curator, and is currently Chair of Taipei Contemporary Art Center (TCAC). She lives and works in Taipei. Cheng's practice focuses on the exchange mechanisms of labour and value, and the structural issues involved in art production. She has previously worked as a curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (2006–2008). Selected curated exhibitions include *Augmenting the World*, The 6th Taipei Digital Art Festival, international section (2011); *Trading Futures* (co-curated with Pauline Yao, TCAC, 2012) and the Urban Nomad Film Festival video art section (TCAC, 2010). An exhibition currently in development is 6th Queens International (co-curated with Hitomi Iwasaki, Queens Museum, NYC). She has been invited to participate in international forums and seminars including the Asia Triennial Manchester (2011) and the Asia Pacific Triennial (2012). She has contributed to magazines including *Artco Monthly* (Taiwan); *Art and Investment* (China) and *Broadsheet* (Australia). In 2013 she edited the reader *Does Europe Matter?* (part of Goethe Institute's transnational project *Europe (to the power of) n*, directed by Barbara Steiner.

Karl Chitham is a curator, artist and commentator. He began curating and writing in the late 1990s as a member of various artist run initiatives. Chitham has held a number of curatorial positions at public galleries around New Zealand. In his current role as the Curator of Art at Rotorua Museum Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa, he has worked on numerous projects including *Eddie Clemens—Ask The Dust*; *Flow Riders: Tracing Kōwhaiwhai Traditions*; *Surface Treatments: The Art of James Turkington* and *Matatoki: Contemporary Māori Carving* (all 2013). Other projects in development are a survey exhibition of Dutch born artist Walter Bakkenes, and contemporary art exhibition, *Phantom City*.

Stephen Cleland is a curator and writer living in Auckland. He has worked for public organisations in Auckland and Christchurch and is currently Curator of Contemporary Art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (for a one year tenure). Previously he was Director, The Physics Room, Christchurch (2010–2012); Curator, Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, Auckland (2008–2010) and co-founder and curator of the Window project at The

University of Auckland (2002–2007). He has curated a number of group shows including *Measure the city with the body* (ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT, Auckland and The Physics Room, Christchurch, 2011–2012), *Modern Physics* (2009), *Unpacking My Library* (2010) and *Wall of Sound* (2010) at Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, Auckland. He is currently developing the 2014 Walters Prize exhibition and publication and is curating the 2014 Chartwell Collection exhibition along with a number of publications in association with Auckland Art Gallery.

Andrew Clifford is Director of Lopdell House Gallery, soon to reopen in Titirangi with a new building and the new name, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery. From 2007–2013 he was Curator at The University of Auckland's Centre for Art Studies. He is also a freelance writer with interests that span contemporary art, performance, new media and music, and is a regular contributor to publications throughout the Asia Pacific region. Recent essays have been published in books about Len Lye, Sean Kerr, Reuben Paterson, and a chapter on invented instruments for *Home, Land and Sea: Situating Music in Aotearoa* (2011). Recent exhibitions include Auckland Council's *Living Room 2011: Metropolis Dreaming* (2011), the Reuben Paterson survey *Bottled Lightning* (2012) and Sean Kerr's *Bruce danced if Victoria Sang...* (2010). Between 2002 and 2007, Clifford produced music programmes for Radio New Zealand, preceded by 10 years producing and presenting a variety of shows for 95bFM. He is a trustee for the Len Lye Foundation, Audio Foundation and CIRCUIT Artist Film and Video Aotearoa New Zealand.

Abby Cunnane has worked Assistant Director at ST PAUL St Gallery since March this year. Prior to this she was Assistant Curator at City Gallery Wellington, 2007–2013. In 2012 she took a year's leave to travel to Edinburgh, where she studied creative non-fiction, worked at Collective Gallery, and on a number of associated writing projects. Recent projects include *New Revised Edition: Nick Austin, Andrew Barber, Nicola Farquhar and John Ward-Knox* (City Gallery Wellington, 2013); *The Obstinate Object: Contemporary New Zealand Sculpture* (co-curated with Aaron Lister, City Gallery Wellington, 2012) and *The Distance Plan*, an ongoing collaboration with Amy Howden-Chapman.

Jenny Fraser was born in Far North Queensland. She is a 'digital native' working within a fluid screen-based practice. Having worked on short films and documentaries, her practice as an artist/curator has also been partly defined through a strong commitment to collaboration with others, leading to founding networks such as the Blackout New Media Arts Collective, and cyberTribe—an online gallery that facilitates the production and exhibition of Indigenous art internationally. She has completed a Master of Indigenous Wellbeing at Southern Cross University in Lismore, New South Wales.

Erin Gleeson is co-founder and Artistic Director of SA SA BASSAC, a non-profit gallery and reading room in Phnom Penh dedicated to curating, mediating, and archiving contemporary visual culture in and from Cambodia. Projects in 2013 include *Sights and Sounds: Global Film and Video*, The Jewish Museum, NYC; *FIELDS: an itinerant inquiry across the Kingdom of Cambodia* (co-curated with Vera Mey); the exhibition and publication *Phnom Penh: Rescue Archaeology*, ifa, Berlin + Stuttgart; *IN RESIDENCE*, the visual art programme of Season of Cambodia, NYC (co-curated with Leeza Ahmady) and *If The World Changed*, 4th Singapore Biennale (co-curated with 27 others). She has collaborated on talks and panels with a number of partners including Asia Art Archive (Hong Kong and NYC); Para/Site Art Space; Artsonje Center; 6th Asia Pacific Triennial; Bard College; Tokyo Wonder Site and Young Curator's Workshop, 8th Berlin Biennale. Gleeson was a nominee of the Independent Vision Award from Independent Curators International (2012) and a recipient of the Foundation for Arts Initiatives travel grant (2013–2014). She is based between Phnom Penh and Berlin.

Rebecca Ann Hobbs is Australian born, from Wulgurukaba country. She is a contemporary fine art practitioner and currently a member of the academic staff at Manukau Institute of Technology, Otara, Auckland. She works with new media to create video and still images that celebrate dynamic bodies and their relationship to specific sites. Hobbs has been selected to participate in international exhibitions in Australia, France, Germany, Poland, Sweden and the USA. In 2002 she received the Australian Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship, allowing her to undertake tertiary education at the California Institute of the Arts, where she completed an MA in Fine Arts in 2005.

Candice Hopkins is originally from Whitehorse, Yukon and is a member of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. An independent curator and writer, she is based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She has held curatorial positions at the National Gallery of Canada, the Western Front (Vancouver), and the Walter Phillips Gallery (Banff Centre, Banff) and received her MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. Hopkins' writings on history, art and vernacular architecture have been published by MIT Press, BlackDog Publishing, New York University and the National Museum of the American Indian, among others, and she has lectured widely including at the Witte de With, Tate Modern, and the Dakar Biennale. In 2012 Hopkins was invited to present a keynote lecture on the "sovereign imagination" for DOCUMENTA (13).

Her recent projects include *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years* (2011), a multi-site exhibition in Winnipeg co-curated with Lee-Ann Martin, Steve Loft and Jenny Western, and *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art* (2013), co-curated with Greg Hill and Christine Lalonde, the National Gallery of Canada's largest survey of contemporary Indigenous art. Hopkins is co-curator of *Unsettled Landscapes*, the first of SITE Santa Fe's new series of biennial exhibitions, SITElines, focused on new art from the Americas, opening July 2014.

HSU Fang-Tze is a Singapore based art writer and research fellow in the Cultural Studies in Asia programme of the National University of Singapore, where she is currently pursuing her PhD. She holds an MA in Arts Administration and Policy with an emphasis on curatorial practices from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She served as the digital collection manager for the Asia Art Archive from 2010 to 2013, and was appointed as a curator for the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art in 2013. Her research interests include contemporary knowledge formation and production, Cold War aesthetics, the relationship between memories, philosophies of technology, and the embodiment of artistic praxis in everyday life. Her writings on related subjects can be found in *Artco Monthly* (a Taiwan-based art magazine published in traditional mandarin) and LEAP (Beijing-based bilingual art magazine).

Charlotte Huddleston has been the Director of ST PAUL St Gallery since 2010. In that time she has worked on a number of projects that specifically engage with ideas of agency, collectivity and exchange from within the institution of the university gallery, both on and offsite. These include *Local Time: Horotiu* (2012), *Assembly* (co-curated with Melissa Laing and Vera Mey, 2012), *FIELDS: an itinerant inquiry across the Kingdom of Cambodia* (2013), and in 2014 with Sakiko Sugawa as the inaugural ST PAUL St Gallery Research Fellow.

Aaron Kreisler is Curator at Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand. Recent exhibitions include *Sound Full: Sound in Contemporary Australian and New Zealand Art* (with Dr. Caleb Kelly, DPAG and City Gallery, Wellington, 2012–2014); *CONTACT. Artists from Aotearoa/New Zealand* (co-curator Leonhard Emmerling, Frankfurter Kunstverein, 2012); *AMONG THE MACHINES* (co-curator Dr Susan Ballard, DPAG, 2013); *Seung Yul Oh: MOAMOA* (co-curated with Aaron Lister, DPAG and City Gallery Wellington, 2013–2014) and *Where do I end and you begin* (co-curated with Theminkosi Goniwe, Richard Hylton, Kathleen Ritter

and Vidya Shivadas, City Art Centre, Edinburgh, 2014). Through the Gallery's Visiting Artists Programme he has commissioned and written about artists including Steve Carr, Spencer Finch, Alicia Frankovich, Dane Mitchell, Nina Katchadourian, David Clegg, Fiona Connor, and Goldin + Senneby.

Kerry Ann Lee is a visual artist, designer and educator from Wellington. Her installation, print and image-based works meditate on themes of home, dis/location and difference, playfully investigating issues of identity and hybrid cultural formations through a variety of media. An artist of third-generation Chinese descent in New Zealand, she continues to explore urban settlement and culture clash occurring in the Asia-Pacific region, in particular Chinatowns. Lee is known for her work with self-published fanzines and has researched and exhibited internationally. In September 2009 she was the inaugural artist-in-residence at island6 Art Centre Shanghai through the WARE (Wellington Asia Residency Exchange) Programme. From April to July 2012 she was the Asia New Zealand artist in residence at the Taipei Artist Village in Taiwan. Her project *Alternating Currents* is a 'open source' collaborative print publication that gives voice to unsung stories and experiences in cities.

Ngahiraka Mason, Indigenous Curator Māori Art, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki has over 15 years experience as a curator. Her most recent exhibition *Five Maori Painters* (2014), was an intergenerational exhibition that looked in depth at the tradition of Māori painting through to the present day. Her interest and passion is old knowledge and new understandings within indigenous sites of knowledge to generate awareness of the value of culture.

Vera Mey is Curator at the Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore, a research centre of Nanyang Technological University. She was Assistant Director at ST PAUL St Gallery between 2011–2014. Projects include *Local Time: Horotiu* (2012); *Assembly* (co-curated with Charlotte Huddleston and Melissa Laing, 2012); *In Spite of Ourselves: Approaching Documentary* (co-curated with Fiona Amundsen and Dienneke Jansen, 2012) at ST PAUL St Gallery and The Dowse Art Museum and *Instructions for living* (2011) at The New Zealand Film Archive. In 2012, she convened the inaugural ST PAUL St Gallery Curatorial Symposium. In that year she was also selected for the Asia New Zealand Foundation/Creative New Zealand curator tour to South Korea, Japan, and China to further research in the region. In 2013, she was curator in residence at Arts Initiative Tokyo, as well as convener of the AUT University Master of Arts Management Curatorial Strategy paper. She convened the ST PAUL St Gallery 2013 Curatorial Symposium as part of Biljana Ciric's ongoing seminar series, From a history of exhibitions towards a future of exhibition making. Most recently with Erin Gleeson, SA/SA/BASSAC/, Phnom Penh, she curated the non-productive nomadic residency *FIELDS: an itinerant inquiry across the Kingdom of Cambodia* (2013).

Lucreccia Quintanilla grew up in El Salvador and New York. Since her teens she has lived in Australia, where she is now a mother and a candidate for a Master of Fine Arts by Research at Monash University, Melbourne, having been awarded with an Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship. Over the past 10 years Quintanilla has curated music events around ideas of diaspora, culture and sound. Working collaboratively as much as possible, Quintanilla engages with these ideas through sound, DJing, writing, teaching, painting and installation, as well as through participatory works. Quintanilla's work has been shown in Berlin, Chicago and Yogyakarta, as well as in New Zealand and Australia.

Ahilapalapa Rands is currently working as the Education Intern at Artspace NZ, a contemporary gallery on Karangahape Road in Auckland. In 2013 she co-curated *Close To Home*, the 6th Tautai Tertiary Exhibition at ST PAUL St Gallery with her mum, Melanie Rands. She is currently curating a group show at Artspace, which will open in September this year. Rands graduated in 2009 with a Bachelor of Visual Arts from AUT University. During her studies she worked in video and performance installation. Along with Maila Urale, Linda T and Chris Fitzgerald she is one of the founding members of D.A.N.C.E. art club, who have been working together since 2008. Rands is a fourth generation New Zealander on her father's side and second on her mother's side, with links to Hawai'i, Tongareva, Fiji, Samoa, England and Scotland.

Natalie Robertson was born in Kawerau, New Zealand (Ngati Porou, Clan Donnachaidh). Robertson's photographic and moving image practice engages with conflicting settler and indigenous relationships to land and place, exploring Māori knowledge practices and cultural landscapes. She also writes on photography in Te Ao Māori. Much of her practice is based in Te Tai Rawhiti, the East Cape region of her tribal homelands. A Senior Lecturer at AUT University, Auckland, Natalie received an MFA (First Class Honours) from the University of Auckland. She has exhibited extensively throughout New Zealand and internationally (including China, USA, England, France, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Lithuania, Denmark, Brazil, Rarotonga and Australia). Robertson is a member of the collective Local Time, established in 2007. Local Time participated in the 5th Auckland Triennial *If you were to live here...* (2013). Local Time facilitates site-specific projects, which hone in on local and indigenous contexts.

Hanna Scott works as a contemporary curator, researcher and writer, and since 2002 has been based in Auckland. Her writing has been published in Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, New Zealand and the USA. Her exhibition *Sightseeing* (2010) was an innovative photography exhibition made entirely of postcards. Her professional experience includes roles as Acting Curator, Contemporary Art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2010–2011), Director at Artspace NZ (2002) and Art Development Curator at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth (1999–2001). She is currently Manager Arts and Culture Programming, Auckland Council and is a Trustee of Artspace NZ (2012–2014).

Nick Spratt is a founding co-director of the artist-run space RM on Karangahape Road, Auckland. He started the space with B.K. Anderson, Lorna Bailey, Zoe Drayton, Vaughan Gunson and Joyoti Wylie in 1997. He is based in Auckland and balances his involvement with RM and the Corban Estate Arts Centre with his practice as an artist and graphic designer.

Sakiko Sugawa is co-founder of Social Kitchen, a social and cultural center in Kyoto. She is currently in Auckland as ST PAUL St Gallery's Research Fellow. Sugawa's praxis is underpinned by long-term projects with an emphasis on collaboration. These typically take shape around social relationships, forms, structures and places that correspond to specific political and social issues. Through these small-scale projects Sugawa's work aligns with resistance to the impact of local and global injustices, and to inequalities created by capitalism.

Besides numerous small projects she organises at Social Kitchen, Sugawa has also co-founded projects abroad such as the experimental educational platform Open University in Brooklyn (2001–present), collaborative art project *In 40 years* together with Palestinian and Israeli artists, which came about as a result of participating in the University of Ideas at Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto Residency, and the International Conference on Reconstruction of Japan at Perth Institution of Contemporary Art, as part of *Alternating Currents*, Perth, Australia (2011).

Alia Swastika works freelance for Ark Galerie in Yogyakarta (2008–present). She was co-curator of the Jogja Biennale XI in November 2011, *Shadow Lines: Indonesia Meets India* with Suman Gopinath; one of the artistic co-directors for Gwangju Biennale IX in South Korea, 2012, and curated a special exhibition of Indonesian artists in Art Dubai, 2012. Swastika has curated exhibitions with significant Indonesian artists including Eko Nugroho, Tintin Wulia, Wimo Ambala Bayang, and Jompet Kuswidananto. Selected international exhibitions include *The Past The Forgotten Time*, Amsterdam, Jakarta, Semarang, Shanghai, Singapore (2007–2008); *Manifesto: The New Aesthetic of Seven Indonesian Artists*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore (2010), and *Wall Street Arts: Exhibition of Graffiti Artists from Jakarta and Paris*, Salihara Gallery, Jakarta (2011). She has written texts for the Kuandu Biennale in Taipei (2010) and *Transfiguration: Indonesian Mythologies* (2011). In 2005 she was part of a staff exchange programme in UfaFabrik, Berlin, Germany. In 2006, she participated in the fellowship programme organised by Kelola Foundation and funded by Asian Cultural Council. In 2008 she undertook a curatorial residency at BizArt, Shanghai. She has recently been granted a research fellowship at the National Art Gallery, Singapore.

Taarati Taiaroa (Ngāti Tūwharetoa | Ngāti Apa) has been with artist run space RM, Auckland since August 2012. She has a research-based practice that often uses archives to investigate and expose small narratives. While she regularly works on large research projects in collaboration with other artists, she also maintains a personal practice. Taiaroa has an interest in exhibiting histories and recently submitted a Masters thesis surveying the history of Māori art exhibitions, in Museums and Cultural Heritage Studies at The University of Auckland.

Megan Tamati-Quennell is the Curator of Modern and Contemporary Māori and Indigenous Art at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Tamati-Quennell has specialist interest in the work of the first generation Māori artists post World War Two; Mana wahine—Māori women artists of the 1970s and 1980s; the 'Māori Internationals'—the artists that developed with the advent of biculturalism, a postmodern construct peculiar to New Zealand and global Indigenous art with particular focus on modern and contemporary Indigenous art in Australia, Canada and the United States.

Programme

All sessions were held in the Auckland Art Gallery Auditorium, corner Kitchener and Wellesley Streets, Auckland Central

Wednesday 18 June

- 5.30pm
Registration
- 5.45–6.05pm
Mihi whakatau: Elizabeth Ellis, Haerewa Chair,
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Ta-maki
- 6.05–6.15pm
Conveners' welcome: Abby Cunnane and Charlotte Huddleston
- 6.15–7.30pm
Keynote: Erin Gleeson: *The problem with sunset*

Thursday 19 June

Exchange and engagement in practice, guests and hosts

- 9.30am
Registration
- 9.45am
Opening comments from Asia New Zealand Foundation
- 10.00–10.30am
Charlotte Huddleston: *Introductory remarks: Reciprocal agency*
- 10.30–11am
Ngahiraka Mason: *Cultural awakening*
- 11.00am
Hanna Scott (2010 curator tour participant)
- 11.10am
Aaron Kreisler (2010 curator tour participant)
- 11.20am
Stephen Cleland (2010 curator tour participant)
- 11.30am—Midday
Lucreccia Quintanilla and Rebecca Ann Hobbs:
A series of calls and responses
- Midday—1pm
Lunch
- 1.00–1.30pm
Fiona Amundsen: *See you at Yasukuni*
- 1.30–2.00pm
Ahilapalapa Rands: *Winter sun: Strategies for staying warm*
- 2.00–2.30pm
Natalie Robertson: *Food, water and shelter:
Fundamental sites of exchange*
- 2.30–3.00pm
Vera Mey (2012 curator tour participant)
- 3.00pm
Andrew Clifford (2012 curator tour participant)
- 3.10pm
Mark Williams (2012 curator tour participant)
- 3.20pm
Kerry Ann Lee (Asia New Zealand Foundation residency participant)
- 3.30pm
Karl Chitham (2011 curator tour participant)
- 3.40–4.10pm
Sakiko Sugawa: *Accompaniment*
- 4.15–4.45pm
What are the roles of guest and host?
Roundtable moderated by Erin Gleeson, with Karl Chitham, Stephen Cleland, Rebecca Ann Hobbs, Aaron Kreisler, Kerry Ann Lee, Vera Mey, Lucreccia Quintanilla, Hanna Scott, Mark Williams

Friday 20 June

Alternative modes of practice: roles and responsibilities of individual and institution

- 10.00–10.30am
Abby Cunnane: *Introductory remarks: We, the institution*
- 10.30–11am
Kyongfa CHE: *The texture of otherness—ready to savour it?*
- 11.00–11.30am
Meiya CHENG: *Taipei Contemporary Art Center, institutional critique in practice*
- 11.30—midday
Nick Spratt and Taarati Taiaroa: *Artist run space as open office*
- Midday—12.30pm
What can the institution do?
Roundtable moderated by Charlotte Huddleston, with Fiona Amundsen, Kyongfa CHE, Meiya CHENG, Nick Spratt, Taarati Taiaroa, Sakiko Sugawa
- 12.30–1.30pm
Lunch
- 1.30–2.00pm
Candice Hopkins: *The consequence of participation: Ten reflections on curating Indigenous art*
- 2.00–2.30pm
HSU Fang-Tze: *Identity as an articulation—reconsidering the categorisation of Indigenous artistic practices in Taiwan based on the case of the Ideology Tribe*
- 2.30–3.00pm
Jenny Fraser: *The Other APT*
- 3.00–3.30pm
Bruce E. Phillips: *Re-examining What do you mean, we?*
- 3.30–4.00pm
Alia Swastika: *Curator as institution*
- 4–4.30pm
Megan Tamati-Quennell: *Global imaginings and survivance*
- 4.30–5.00pm
Resisting resolution: How do we feed this discussion into our practices, and the operation of our institutions?
Roundtable moderated by Ngahiraka Mason, with Candice Hopkins, HSU Fang-Tze, Aaron Kreisler, Vera Mey, Natalie Robertson, Alia Swastika, Megan Tamati-Quennell

Closing drinks at ST PAUL St Gallery