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Published by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation
16-20 Goodhope Street
Paddington NSW 2021
ABN 25 122 280 200
www.sherman-scaf.org.au

in partnership with

Queensland Art Gallery
Stanley Place, South Brisbane
PO Box 3686 South Brisbane Qld 4101
www.qag.qld.gov.au

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First published 2009

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry
Author: Weir, Kathryn, 1967-
Title: The view from elsewhere / Kathryn Weir, Mark Nash.
ISBN: 9780957738249 (pbk.)
Subjects: Video art—Exhibitions.
Other Authors/Contributors:
Nash, Mark, 1947-
Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation.
Queensland Art Gallery.
Dewey Number: 778.59074943



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Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation
Advisory Board Doug Hall AM, John Kaldor AM,
Dr Claire Roberts, Michael Whitworth
Project Team
Chairman, Executive Director Dr Gene Sherman
National and International Art Advisor Anna Waldmann
Associate Director Amanda Henry
General Manager – Artistic and Educational
Programmes Dolla S. Merrillees

Editor Fiona Egan
Proofreading Arabella Lee
Design Mark Gowing

Printed in Australia by Southern Colour

The view from elsewhere
Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation
19 March – 13 June 2009

Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane
1 August – 15 November 2009

Some of these works may only be shown in Brisbane

Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation is a not-for-profit
organisation providing a platform for innovative visual
artists primarily from Asia and the Pacific Rim. All donations
over \$2 are tax deductible and will support our exhibition,
educational, public and artist-in-residence programmes.

The view
from elsewhere

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Kathryn Weir
Mark Nash

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It is with great pleasure that I join Gene Sherman in introducing this exciting project.

'The view from elsewhere' is an exhibition of film, video and installation works reflecting contemporary video art and cinema practice across Asia and the Middle East. Curated by Kathryn Weir, our Curatorial Manager International Art and the Australian Cinémathèque, it initiates an energetic new partnership between Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (SCAF) in Sydney and the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane.

The project comprises a series of screenings – taking place in the SCAF gallery space two nights and one afternoon per week – and 'Small acts', an exhibition of installed video works. The integration of a screening program and an exhibition represents an innovative curatorial strategy, which both creates relationships between moving image works produced for various audiences and contexts, and alludes to the historical specificities of art and cinema production. 'The view from elsewhere' will subsequently be presented at the Queensland Art Gallery's Gallery of Modern Art and Australian Cinémathèque from 1 August to 15 November 2009. The project occurs at a point in time when significant numbers of younger artists are returning to performance-based video works using a simple digital camera, and when the freedom experienced by contemporary filmmakers with digital technology is allowing fluid responses to different situations, as well as a high degree of realism.

Through many of its programs, particularly the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT), the Queensland Art Gallery has contributed in an important way to awareness among audiences that there are many histories of art explicit to different cultural traditions and to local or regional responses to modernisation. Alongside other biennial and triennial exhibitions in Asia and the Middle East – including Busan, Gwangju, Guangzhou, Istanbul, Shanghai, Sharjah, Singapore, Sydney, Taipei and Yokohama – the APT has inspired audiences to engage with

these histories and practices, and to probe the dominance of European and American models in the stories we tell about art.

Consequently this affiliation between the Queensland Art Gallery and SCAF reflects a shared interest in work that may fall outside established genealogies of art practice, and in contemporary visual culture from Asia and the Middle East. 'The view from elsewhere' also signifies the unique nature of the Australian Cinémathèque within the Gallery of Modern Art, recognising as it does the vital importance of film and video as key art forms of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Many of the works screened address particular aesthetic, social and political contexts, while also extending the possibilities of cinematic and artistic expression. Along with the video works in the exhibition they point to the plurality of approaches in contemporary visual culture, to new ways of seeing and understanding. It is especially fitting that this project has emerged from a collaboration, an open conversation sparked by a mutual engagement with the art of our region.

I would like to offer my thanks to Gene Sherman and Anna Waldmann for their enthusiasm for this project, as proposed by Kathryn Weir. Mark Nash, Head of Curating Contemporary Art, Royal College of Art, London, who has been a great supporter of the Australian Cinémathèque, has also contributed to the development of the content for 'The view from elsewhere' and has written a very thoughtful catalogue essay that places the exhibition in the context of recent artistic and exhibition practice.

As Gene writes in her introduction, we have been in discussion about the complementary interests and aspirations of our two institutions for some time. I think it is entirely appropriate that the formal launch of what we all intend to be an ongoing relationship is taking place in 2009, an APT year. The core values of the project – its expansiveness and openness to diverse ideas and methodologies – are also the guiding principles of 'The view from elsewhere'. I am delighted that the Queensland Art Gallery has been able to join the talented SCAF team in showcasing these marvellous works and I look forward to realising many exciting projects together in the future.

Introduction
Dr Gene Sherman
Chairman, Executive Director
Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation

For Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (SCAF), 2009 is to be the year of cinema and architecture. With the Queensland Art Gallery an enthusiastic partner in a suite of exhibitions, the year begins with 'The view from elsewhere', a stimulating presentation of film, video and installation works curated by Kathryn Weir. Including features, documentary, video art and experimental film, and incorporating free night and weekend screenings, the exhibition is accompanied by this SCAF publication, interviews led by renowned broadcaster Margaret Throsby, and a forum of international and national speakers.

How did SCAF, a fledgling Sydney-based private foundation, with no template on hand and no specific direction to chart, arrive at this substantial collaboration with Brisbane's venerable and esteemed state art museum?

For 2009 at least, answers are readily identified and mesh seamlessly with SCAF's mission statement and vision for the future: to champion research and exhibitions of contemporary art, primarily but not exclusively from Asia and the Pacific Rim, through significant projects by the region's most innovative artists.

More fundamentally, the answers lie in the freedom afforded by a private foundation to experiment and expand horizons beyond what had been a private commercial gallery's twenty-one year programme; the freedom, significantly, to enhance and develop partnerships with like-minded and similarly driven major, as well as more modestly funded, institutions.

Founded in 1986, Sherman Galleries' two- to three-venue complex and highly qualified staff nurtured and managed some twenty-seven senior, mid-generation and talented emerging artists over more than two decades. By definition a large, serious, commercial gallery's primary focus lies in the ongoing development of carefully selected practitioners' careers, while building and maintaining significant collections, both institutional and private. The Gallery's artist-in-residence space and programme, the modest catalogues published for

each of the twelve to twenty-two annual exhibitions, Saturday panel discussions run by the late Andrea Stretton, as well as day and evening educational sessions, made up a continuum that kept the thirteen-strong Gallery staff active and engaged. Minispaces – Sherman Artbox and 2³ (TwoCubes) – allowed the flexing of youthful curatorial muscle, and decades of volunteer and internship management developed interests and experience in mentoring the next generation.

Sherman Galleries and the Queensland Art Gallery, the major state visual arts institution in Brisbane, found surprising common ground in the twenty years that spanned 1986–2006 – and a little beyond. Doug Hall, the Director at the time, and Dr Caroline Turner, Deputy Director until 2000, had a world-stage vision for the relatively fledgling institution: concentrate on the neighbourhood, on the here-and-now, and build relationships, understanding and a collection that would, if managed with imagination, integrity and a collegial spirit, serve as an art world leader. The Asia-Pacific Triennials of Contemporary Art were spawned and the Queensland Art Gallery, together with the expanded innovatory Gallery of Modern Art – since 2007 with energetic and intelligent Director Tony Ellwood at the helm – has become an undisputed world centre for the display and knowledge dissemination of contemporary art from our region.

The private Gallery in Sydney concurred with the Queensland Art Gallery vision. Separately and independently, efforts were concentrated on artist- and exhibition-sharing in Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Korea. The yearly schedule comprised at least nine exhibitions of represented artists (several of whom were Asian-Australians or Asia-based), with a minimum of three programming slots allocated to invited artists largely from the Asia-Pacific, including Turkey and Israel. From 1989 to 2002, when Sherman Galleries operated over both the Goodhope and Hargrave Street spaces, curated group shows and invited artists comprised a greater percentage of exhibition scheduling.

Taking into account the vast discrepancy in scale, budget and ambition, a surprising number of Asian contemporary artists exhibited over time at both Queensland Art Gallery and Sherman Galleries. From Xu Bing to Wenda Gu; from Nusra Latif Qureshi to Zhang Huan and Song Dong; with Yin Xiu Zhen, Lee Ming Wei, Kutlug Ataman, Guan Wei, Ah Xian and John Young, to name just a few, the exhibiting and residency links were easily identified and a clear connection was established, albeit within the confines of parameters that traditionally separate private galleries and publicly funded institutions.

SCAF was launched in 2008 after two long-planned major forums on art and philanthropy, one of which focused specifically on private foundation initiatives in Asia. Publications followed, documenting papers by international and national speakers, among them Elaine Ng (Editor, *Art AsiaPacific*); Terry Smith (Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Pittsburgh and Visiting Professor, Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney); Professor Nicholas Jose (Chair of Australian Studies, Harvard University 2009–10 and judge of the inaugural Man Asia Literary Prize); Rupert Myer AM (Chairman of The Myer Family Company Pty Ltd, Chair of the Council of the National Gallery of Australia and author of the *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry*, 2002), and Carrillo Gantner AO (Chairman of Asialink 1992–2005).

The new emphasis was clear. Supporting the long-term advancement of a specific group of artists was no longer on the agenda. Nor was the development of particular collections. The commercial imperative had disappeared and what remained was the core set of interests that amplified when the founder of a private commercial gallery transformed into the founder of a private foundation. Sherman Galleries' marginal activities became the Foundation's central focus.

SCAF's first initiative saw a cross-institutional major survey of work by Ai Weiwei, establishing the Foundation's planned partnering tradition. Campbelltown Arts Centre in Sydney's north-western suburbs was invited to participate in a substantial programme and publication relating to the work of this twenty-first century seminal figure. Queensland Art Gallery's focus on Ai Weiwei in the 5th Asia-Pacific Art Triennial overlapped with the artist's 2006 Sherman Visual Arts Residency, adding weight to the nexus of common interests and ideas.

Large-scale commissioned works by Jonathan Jones and Jitish Kallat completed SCAF's 2008 programme, testifying yet again to the conceptual and aesthetic cross-interests of the large state institution and relatively small but intensely focused private foundation. (Jones's work won the inaugural Xstrata Coal Indigenous Emerging Artist Award at Queensland Art Gallery in 2006 and Jitish Kallat's key *Public Notice-1* was, by many accounts, a standout feature in the 2006 Asia-Pacific Triennial.)

Architecture, film, fashion, the decorative arts and design, sound art and contemporary music currently amplify the already expanded notion of art in museums, where installation, new media and performance art have held sway since the 1970s. With 'The view from elsewhere', the Brisbane art

museum and Sydney-based foundation have finally found expression in an important collaborative project.

My warmest thanks to Anna Waldmann for her wise guidance, and to Lynne Seear, Queensland Art Gallery Deputy Director, Curatorial and Collection Development, whose conversations with me in Sydney during Ai Weiwei's SCAF April 2008 opening ultimately led to this film exhibition. Heartfelt gratitude to Tony Ellwood for his creative, insightful and immediate response to the ideas presented. Grateful thanks to Mark Nash for his incisive and original essay, and deep appreciation to curator Kathryn Weir for her thoughtful, experienced curatorship and respectful collaborative approach to the many participants in what we hope will be a groundbreaking and original show.

To Brian Sherman, who continues to underpin all my efforts both professional and personal, I say thank you *mille fois*.

'Gesture is the name of this intersection between life and art, act and power, general and particular, text and execution. It is a moment of life subtracted from the context of individual biography as well as the moment of art subtracted from the neutrality of aesthetics: it is pure praxis.' *Giorgio Agamben*¹

When Chinese artist Qiu Zhijie holds up a mini DV camera, rotates, and films himself in *Landscape*, 1999, the backdrop to his face shifts from continent to continent but the artist appears unmoved, his gaze steady into the lens. The viewer is drawn to a still point outside geography, as cities and monuments swirl around the video dervish. Qiu physically disorients by emptying the depicted places of their usual spatio-temporal relationships. His very particular view cannot be easily assimilated as 'here' is also always 'there' and 'elsewhere'. The still and moving panorama gestures towards the possibility of displacing points of reference and transforming understandings, moving from the known towards the unknown. 'The view from elsewhere' and 'Small acts' draw together film and video works from different contexts and networks of distribution, ranging across feature film, documentary, experimental film, short film and video art. Just as *Landscape* disrupts expectations, the other works in the exhibition and screening programme also point to the particular that is unsettling, the indigestible and the untranslatable. Within the framework of 'The view from elsewhere' the conversation in which they engage calls for an openness to the unfamiliar, for a sense of not knowing.

The video screenings in 'The view from elsewhere' underline the importance of realist approaches and local knowledge in recent art and film practice. Documentary forms are widespread in contemporary art, not only in film and video. In a post-medium situation, process- and concept-driven art projects frequently respond to particular locations, recording and intervening in them. In film, features and documentaries are increasingly experienced as modes rather than distinct genres, with directors meticulously

QIU Zhijie [25] [89]

KIMSOOJA [26] [86]

LEE Wen [27] [87]

dissecting particular interactions and 'small events'.² Story, memory, testimonial, narrative, character and observation are sources equally for documentary and feature modes, making the two increasingly difficult to distinguish.

The associated exhibition 'Small acts' traces a resurgence in video art of simple performance-based acts to camera, using direct and quirky means to effect powerful disruptions. The situations created in the videos variously involve humour, physical gestures and feats of endurance, and are often 'un-speakable' or untranslatable acts. A significant number of artists today are using straightforward technical approaches to create these performance video works, which resonate with the period of the inception of video art and performance art in the 1960s and 1970s. This technical simplicity, which allows for more direct forms of artistic expression, less constrained by production values and process, parallels the enormous creative freedom offered by digital video to the current generation of feature and documentary filmmakers profiled in the screening programme.

Local knowledge and 'cultural translation'

In any context, whatever is local is necessarily more precisely distinguished. An awareness that conversations and distinctions are complex elsewhere, even while these conversations may be unfamiliar or incomprehensible, is the key to questioning local distinctions. The fine-grained specificity of much of the work in 'The view from elsewhere' and 'Small acts' frames the particular, offers the unexpected and disrupts accepted understandings. When Kimsooja lies on the street in Cairo in the position of a homeless woman (*A Homeless Woman – Cairo*, 2001), or sits with a hand extended in Lagos (*A Beggar Woman – Lagos*, 2001), her body draws a curious crowd and opens up issues of refuge and responsibility. Her act of empathy underlines an equivalence of bodies and a sense that what is here participates in what is elsewhere, and vice versa. In a gesture of cultural and aesthetic provocation recorded in the video work *Journey of a Yellow Man no. 13: Fragmented Bodies/Shifting Ground*, 1999, Singaporean artist Lee Wen walked through Brisbane covered in yellow pigment and carrying an ox's heart, to the surprise and discomfort of passers-by. The recording of one's self performing simple acts offers a degree zero of observational, low-fi filmmaking, and also, in the case of many artists in 'Small acts', a gesture of artistic transformation and conviction in a complex aesthetic, political and economic context.

Cinema that remains close to life in real locations, frequently involving non-professional actors, has been significantly

enabled by the development of lightweight and affordable digital technology. The specific qualities and possibilities of digital video have been discussed in depth by filmmakers and critics. In his film *10 on Ten*, 2004, Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami reflects on the technical freedoms of digital production with a limited crew and on the advantages of using a small, unobtrusive digital camera:

Abbas KIAROSTAMI [28] [74]

'The video camera gives both the director and viewer the possibility of discovery. In this way, the camera eliminates the artifice so implanted in the industry. It gives you the possibility of expanding the dimensions of cinema and getting rid of clichés, traditions, imposed forms and pretentious aesthetics ... This camera frees cinema from the clutches of the tools of production, capital and censorship. It permits the kind of experimentation that has nothing to do with the overuse of putting several cameras side by side ... Now we can consider that filmmaking is not that different from writing a book, making a sculpture or painting a picture. You no longer really need investment and investors to make a film nor do you need all sorts of skills. All of the necessary skills are self-contained in this small camera. This camera allows artists to work alone again ... With its impact on cinema, this new phenomenon will bring about structural and fundamental changes in the concept of film, cinema, directing, cinematography, editing, acting and so on. The digital camera is a very firm and valid invitation to return the *auteur* to the scene.'

Lav Diaz from the Philippines, recognised as one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary cinema for his digital features of extreme duration, underlines how the internet and digital cameras have given people their own media and freedom from financial control:

'The relatively cheap digital video has started a cinema revolution in all of Southeast Asia. Not only in the Philippines, but in the whole region, a new independent cinema is emerging that works predominantly with digital video. Countries like Malaysia that never had an independent cinema are all of a sudden producing all these unusual films that are increasingly successful in international festivals. Digital is liberation theology.'³

The results of this freedom often work to undermine official history and established genres, stereotypes and generalisations. Official endorsement of the universal characteristics and benefits of modernisation, as associated with a transcendent idea of progress, is one such framework that is shaken.⁴

Many works in 'The view from elsewhere' point to specific stories of the effects of modernisation and displacement. Wang Jianwei's

WANG Jianwei [29] [79]

Living Elsewhere, 1999, follows a collection of dispossessed workers and peasants squatting in the half-completed villas of an abandoned housing construction project on the edge of Chengdu. A torn tissue of a landscape falling between urban and rural zones is visible through the open concrete multi-storey grids. Some of the residents turn the land between the shells of housing blocks over to cultivation in order to assure a food supply. In *Quarter no. 4/11*, 2007, Ranu Ghosh follows the redevelopment of an area in South Kolkata where Jay Engineering Works previously produced sewing machines and other consumer goods. The Communist-led government of West Bengal ceded the land to private developers and the workers were evicted with scant compensation. Shambu Prasad Singh refused to move, remaining with his family in the factory living quarters and lodging an application in the court. Ghosh started documenting the area when the factory closed in 2003 but was unable to enter the construction site. She decided to give the camera to Singh, who was able to film what she could not. In this collaboration with a participant-witness, Ghosh places the means of telling a very particular story in the hands of an outsider to the filmmaking field, who in turn offers a unique and specific insight into urban post-industrial transformation. Using a parallel strategy of revealing the particular in counterpoint to statistical generalisations about economic displacement and forced migration, Gülsün Karamustafa records four young Romanian children who would usually remain invisible. *Stairway*, 2001, shows the children working as street performers who play accordion and sing on an old stairway in Istanbul, seeking a quick source of income. They are allowed to stay in Turkey for only three months, after which they will be replaced by others. In *Unawarded Performances*, 2005, Karamustafa interviews Moldavian women in the homes in Istanbul where they are employed as carers for affluent geriatrics. The women speak of being separated from their children who would not survive without the regular remittances arriving from Turkey.

Pointing to cultural and economic constellations, linguistic and religious relationships, and relationships created by movements of populations, 'The view from elsewhere' draws the greater part of the works presented from Asia, Central Asia (an area emerging from its extended isolation due to the Cold War) and the Middle East. The political and economic context for the show is created by the watershed year of 1989, which saw uprisings and political revolutions in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and transition in Iran with the death of Khomeini. The first Gulf War followed in 1991 with its new political

Ranu GHOSH [30] [69]

Gülsün KARAMUSTAFA [31] [73]

fault lines. In this aftermath of Cold War politics, Islamic states became the focus of the United States' international military strategy and aggression. The importance of Islam as a factor of identity from the Middle East to South Asia increased, and China and India consolidated their international economic power. In the Middle East, military conflict escalated once again from the end of 2008 in the Gaza Strip, after a six-month ceasefire expired on 19 December. 'The view from elsewhere' reflects how the political and economic context described above flows through to artistic practice and curatorial strategies.

The model of exhibitions centring on geo-cultural regions is largely outmoded and many curators and theorists are searching for other ways of defining fields of practice and international conversations. Geo-cultural regions are not what they were once imagined to be; they are more clearly recognised as historical and political constructions bolstered by particular systems of thought. In his essay 'Rethinking the meaning of regions: translation and catastrophe', cultural theorist Jon Solomon comments:

'Needless to say, throughout the period of colonial modernity, these spatial regions were understood to be organised temporally in essentially hierarchical fashion, with one region "ahead" of all the others. The current move from nation-states to civilisations, on the one hand, and from geo-cultural macro regions to postmodern networked forms of organisation, on the other, brings new attention to the way in which global regions and their attendant spatio-temporal hierarchies are being reorganised.'⁵

The physical geography previously assumed to define local conversations has been largely replaced by networked forms of organisation and conversation, and the idea of regions needs to be rethought altogether. There is a concomitant move from 'nation states' to 'civilisations' or other ways of creating identity through a variety of relationships. Solomon goes on to discuss how 'translation' as an ongoing practice can help reinvent regions beyond the 'clash' or 'dialogue' of civilisation, offering as it does the chance to think in terms of changing, generative relationships, rather than established identities. In her essay 'More thoughts on cultural translation', Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests that languages can be known, but not cultures, and that languages 'lead you to a certain lingual memory, which then begins to make you participants in a cultural production'. No simple mediation exists between cultures, nor are borders dissolving, whether cultural or political:

'How is it that anybody's home today is "our globalised world?"

Because things move fast? Because there are specific groups of migrants who have crowded old Europe? As walls have gone up

YU Cheng-Ta [32] [93]

between the US and Mexico, between Israel and Palestine, and neither India nor China will let the Tibetans cross a border, we are wishfully thinking of a world without borders, because European states can cross into each other?'⁶

She points to the colonial and parochial foundation of a focus on mobility and borders. According to Spivak, translation cannot occur in an abstract way as 'cultural translation'; it must be grounded in the materiality and specificity of language.

In his video series 'Ventriloquists – Introduction', 2008, Yu Cheng-Ta approaches foreigners living in Taiwan (subjects from Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, South Africa and the United States found on the streets of Taipei) and asks them to repeat to the camera what the artist whispers to them – the words to introduce themselves in Mandarin. Yu is partly visible hiding behind the speaker, who imitates by ear without understanding the language of this act of self-presentation. When the work is shown, the interpretation of vocabulary and phonetic tones is at times hilariously funny to a Mandarin-speaking audience, a phenomenon not without parallels to the stereotyping of 'Orientals' speaking pidgin English in Hollywood films from the early period onwards. In a statement about the work, Yu refers to 'his foreigners' as instruments that 'play out a language that is not really a language, and thus creates laughing points'. He continues: 'I (the man in black behind them) am like the drifting power, which comes in and out of their body, resulting in the state of virtual identity and drifting subjectivity.'⁷

Nam June PAIK [33] [88]

Takahiko IIMURA [33] [85]

Performance and transformative gestures

Nam June Paik's *Hands and Face*, 1961, is one of the earliest examples of a video performance by an artist. Paik uses his hands to hide his face and appears to be in a trance. Takahiko Iimura, a key figure in film, video, performance and conceptual art in Japan, America and Europe, began making experimental films in Tokyo at the beginning of the 1960s. Upon travelling to New York in 1966, he participated alongside Paik and Yoko Ono in avant-garde conversations on the nature of art, the artist and the audience. In *AIUEONN Six*, 1994, Iimura explores the particular qualities of a letter or a character, and the tension between universal qualities and the cultural inscription of sound, the vocal organs and the face. The work has been presented as a single-channel video, an installation of six monitors, and a live performance in which the artist interacts with the video projection.

Structures of language and the creation of meaning are ongoing concerns of Iimura's and he often makes the construction of

video works overt in order to disrupt habitual viewing patterns. *AIUEONN Six* juxtaposes the letters in the Latin alphabet for vowel sounds in English with hiragana characters representing Japanese vowels. Computer effects distort limura's face to exaggerate his expressions in pronouncing the six Japanese vowel sounds, A, I, U, O and E, as well as NN, and the sounds move out of synchronisation with the image. The effect is comical but it also enacts a powerful separation of image, sound and character or letter, underlining their conventional nature. The juxtaposition of characters for Japanese and English vowels grounds the work in the specifics of language, while limura's distorted facial performance points to both the bodily materiality of language and its possible transformation. Similarly to Yoko Ono and Nam June Paik, the reception of limura's work in Europe and the United States either claimed him as an undifferentiated member of the New York avant-garde or pushed him into the position of cultural interpreter for the 'West' of generalised ideas of time, space, body and language in the 'East'. Today there is a greater awareness of both the existence of many different histories of contemporary art specific to or drawing on different cultural traditions and the development of independent modernisms and avant-garde expressions.

The effusion of performance activity in the late 1960s and early 1970s was related to other forms emerging in the same period, including body art, fluxus, conceptual art, happenings and video art. The term 'performance art' was first used around 1970. The direct relationship it created between the artist and the audience embodied a movement against the institutionalisation and commercialisation of art in museums and private galleries. In fact, the works were quickly assimilated by art institutions, with video tapes and other documents of performances soon exhibited and sold. Performance art was an important form across Asia from the late 1970s, earlier in Japan. Yoko Ono is now seen a key figure in the field, although in the 1960s and 1970s she was primarily associated with avant-garde music and then with the Fluxus group. Her most important early performance work is *Cut Piece*, first presented in Kyoto in July 1964 as part of 'Contemporary American Avant-Garde Music Concert: Insound and Instructure', with Ono billed as an American musician rather than a Japanese-American artist. Ono sat on the stage in her best suit and members of the audience were invited to come forward, take a pair of scissors and cut pieces of her clothing. On this occasion, one member of the audience threatened her with the scissors, striking an aggressive pose. Presented in Tokyo in August of the same year as 'Yoko Ono Farewell Concert: Strip-Tease Show', the

work has been described by Ono as a 'ritual of giving' where it is not what the artist chooses to give but what the audience chooses to take; she called the striptease the apogee of the arts and the summit of what the human being wants to express. Her work is conceived as completed by the audience, and necessarily collaborative. In Tokyo, however, the reviews were critical and Ono was not well received as either a member of the New York avant-garde or a Japanese-American woman artist.

limura has described Ono's return to Japan at this time as part of her 'strategy for the West'. When *Cut Piece* was presented in New York's Carnegie Hall in 1965, it was filmed by celebrated documentary filmmakers the Maysles brothers, and seems to have been received as an exotic striptease. Art historian Jieun Rhee's careful analysis of the cultural reception of *Cut Piece* concludes:

'Making use of her idiosyncratic position of dual identity – Japanese artist in the West and New York avant-gardist in Japan – Ono played an "exotic body" in both settings. *Cut Piece*, in this regard, claims its pivotal position in Ono's oeuvre expressing the issue of "otherness". It fed into the respective expectations of differently situated audiences, each yearning to see the "other" unveiled.'⁸

In the context of the current revival of interest in performance art, it is interesting to note how certain periods and contexts have called forth different expressions in this field. In the boom period of the 1980s artists in Japan moved to electronic media combined with performance, while in China video and performance were used as expressions of artistic freedom and protest in the context of government surveillance and repression. In the area from South Asia to the Middle East, these video acts also reinvigorated long performance traditions specific to particular parts of the region. Where in the past performance has been presented and understood in many ways – socio-political comments or protests, expressions of individual alienation, tests of endurance or of the viewing limits of the audience, and so on – much contemporary work in this vein is more playful. Less ideologically driven, it nevertheless expresses the politics of transformation through its insistence on simple gestures that exceed known forms of art-making or languages. Influential contemporary philosopher Giorgio Agamben states that 'the gesture is essentially always a gesture of not being able to figure something out in language'.⁹ The video work records a bodily language that disrupts as it reveals possibilities; possibilities that, while not yet recognised, shift established understandings. Performing to camera, the artist's body is the subject and the object of art, the audience an

interlocutor, and the video work underlines the nature of cinema not as image but as a dynamic gesture in a conversation.¹⁰ In *Simple Gesture and Temporary Sculpture*, 2008, Tanaka Koki stages short visual events that include ephemeral sculptural elements. While there are points of similarity with the temporary sculptures of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm, Tanaka's practice is more fluid, less about the effort to bend objects to the artist's will. Where Wurm might achieve a momentary point of stasis on a precariously balanced piece of furniture, Tanaka more whimsically opens a bottle and spins around in place to draw a circle of liquid in the dirt or attempts to make a tower of sliced bread on a riverbank on a windy day.

The predominance of performance in contemporary video practice underlines Agamben's observation about the contemporary period: 'An age that has lost its gestures is, for this reason, obsessed by them. For human beings who have lost every sense of naturalness, each single gesture becomes a destiny.'¹¹ Such gestures become statements of possibility; acts affirming art and life. Many of the artists in 'Small acts' also use visual and physical jokes that contain what may not be said. Guy Ben-Ner and Kiran Subbaiah play the artist as comic, reflexive performer, using materials to hand in the home to create simple visual effects reminiscent of early cinema. Both artists underline the handmade feel of the work and the domestic context, and consciously make light of cultural value and grand narrative. In *Flight Rehearsals*, 2003, Subbaiah defies the laws of gravity and puts his method of flight into action, playing with conventions of perspective and scale while he is about it. Ben-Ner's work in 'Small acts', *Moby Dick*, 2000, transforms the artist's kitchen into the setting for Melville's epic novel, while he and his daughter play all the characters and riff on the physical comedy of the silent era.

Hiwa K's act of tap dancing to the sound of his own heartbeat in a building that previously housed Saddam Hussein's security forces is political and transformative as a profanation of a historic space of power. *Moon Calendar / Iraq*, no date, shows Hiwa K walking through the neighbourhood where he played as a child, and then rehearsing within the building. His planned live performance before an audience never took place. The viewer is conscious that this act both affirms life and draws attention to the trauma within the walls where prisoners were tortured and killed. Agamben points to this transformative power when he describes the sphere of gesture as pure means; that is, 'those means that emancipate themselves from their relation to an end while still remaining means'.¹² Umut Sakallioğlu's

TANAKA Koki [34] [92]

Kiran SUBBAIAH [35] [91]

Guy BEN-NER [36] [84]

Hiwa K [37] [86]

Umut SAKALLIOĞLU [38] [89]

Bani ABIDI [39] [82]

Almagul MENLIBAYEVA [40] [76]

Shaarbek AMANKUL [41] [66]

Rally, 2006-07, enacts the codification of forms of protest and public demonstration, suggesting that while political acts may become conventional, standing up and shouting on the street is a potential performance that unites across the political spectrum. Intertitles record the names of the various groups whose demonstrations the artist joins as a participant observer/performer, testifying incidentally to the activation of key democratic freedoms in the context of Turkey's protracted application to join the European Union. Bani Abidi's *Anthems*, 2000, plays out a breakdown in conversation, with the artist performing as two women in neighbouring flats dancing to popular Indian and Pakistani songs and gradually cranking up the volume to drown each other out.

In *Headcharge*, 2007, Almagul Menlibayeva points to the specific cultural inscription of bodies and sexuality in a playful performance by the artist and three other women. The four spiritual companions move from dancing and singing to live music at a girls' night out at a restaurant – where they feast with their fingers on roasted sheep's head – to cavorting in the mountains with a herd of sheep under a wide sky, the brief appearance of male escorts, and a final riotous tangle of massed and moving woolly backs, and smearings of mud and excrement. Where performances with blood and excrement in the European performance art canon by the Vienna Actionists, or indeed by Mike Parr in Australia, set out to push the limits of both performer's and viewer's tolerance, Menlibayeva's scenarios playfully elaborate on Kazakh symbolic associations and link sheep, sex, the society of women, abject smears and references to shamanic practices in a complex and high energy interweaving of frames. Shaarbek Amankul's *Duba*, 2007, shows a Kyrgyz woman shaman performing a ritual cleansing, making indescribable full-body sounds and completely absorbed in her internal spiritual process. Where Menlibayeva innovates within a cultural field, Amankul takes an almost ethnographic approach in her presentation of shamanic practice, allowing it to remain hermetic, a bodily experience beyond language. The alterity of the woman shaman is respected. In their absolute difference as forms of experience, shamanic rituals and spirit possession provide strong examples of cultural forms that resist assimilation. Exoticising fascination or complete misunderstanding are frequent responses; a stroke of programming ingenuity I encountered on the French/German cultural television channel, Arte, somehow allowed Jean Rouch's celebrated film of West African *Hauka* cult possession involving the inversion of colonial power, *Les maîtres fous*, 1955, to be included in a thematic evening on vampires.

Conversations in other languages

The context in which works are shown is always both political and aesthetic. When they are drawn into conversation with other works at a particular time and with particular audiences the way in which they are understood changes. Many of the works in 'The view from elsewhere' speak to shared subjects or related situations using different cinematic forms. Wang Jianwei's *Hostage*, 2008, re-stages the Cultural Revolution environment of re-education camps and communal farming. The action plays out on an austere set somewhat reminiscent of Lars von Trier's *Dogville*, 2003, with red brick walls on three sides forming an enclosure containing a minimum of furniture and props, and a mass of actors concurrently performing a choreography of daily tasks side-by-side within this claustrophobic space: a woman works constantly on a sewing machine, groups dress and exercise, some are chained together, some study or have meetings. The camera may focus on a single activity and sometimes the action freezes to emphasise this. A reflection on forced conditions in which Wang suggests that we are all hostages to ideological systems, *Hostage* was originally part of an installation. The video work was then entitled *Money* because it was partly inspired by an image on a renminbi banknote of 1965. In Jia Zhangke's *Sanxia Haoren (Still Life)*, 2006, the banknote depicting a gorge in the Three Gorges Dam is proudly displayed to the newly arrived demolition labourer (the film's male protagonist, Sanming), as evidence of the national fame of the project to which his toil will contribute; a moment that points to the persistence of ideological frameworks instilled during the Cultural Revolution and afterwards. At the end of the film, Sanming returns home to Shanxi to work in the coal mines, where the pay is much higher and the work much more dangerous. This life is depicted in Hu Jie's extraordinary documentary, *Remote Mountain*, 1996, filmed at Qilian Mountain in Qinghai. It follows coal-ingrained peasants working in extreme conditions in the tiny, primitive coalmines which exploit the Northwest's rich mineral resources at the cost of many miners' lives.

Taste of Noodles, 2006, a documentary video by Thai artist Sutthirat Supaparinya, points to the great variety and local specificity of noodle culture across the Mekong basin. Vietnamese noodle-eaters delineate fine differences between Vietnamese noodle dishes and flavours, while drawing broad contrasts with Thai noodles, and vice versa. Knowing that there are other ways of cooking noodle soup opens up a space of not knowing, tasting, comparing and perhaps finding indescribable flavours and textures that displace previous distinctions and offer

WANG Jianwei [42] [79]

JIA Zhangke [44] [73]

HU Jie [46] [72]

Sutthirat SUPAPARINYA [47] [79]

a new palate. In the last sequence of the work, a Thai man says, laughing: 'I always taste a variety of noodles. It's called *change*.' Context is all in art and film, as in food and conversations. To take an example from the European provinces, when a *Manceau* eats *rillettes*, the local rustic shredded pork pâté, but speaks of liking ethnic food (perhaps particularly Indian food because their knowledge of sauces is comparable to the French mastery of this element), the use of 'ethnic' is a marker of ignorance supported by a context in which the word has arisen to define by opposition things French and European. It is a question in this context of who has power to define and who is not always already familiar with the other's culture. 'Ethnic' food, music, jewellery, clothing and objects have all constituted brands for commercial activity promoting these aspects of a lifestyle supposedly cosmopolitan but clearly parochial. In the United States, Mexican food is simply considered American, as are other assimilated culinary traditions. The engaged awareness of and sustained curiosity about other systems of knowledge, aesthetics and cultural production (or finer culinary points), constitutes a cosmopolitan openness more difficult to attain when the understandings and preoccupations of a local cultural context are felt to define contemporary conversations internationally, or are the only known points of reference. The deep symbolic relationship between understanding and eating is discussed by philosopher Jacques Derrida as 'a cultural a priori' in the West, where comprehending is a form of incorporation:

'Our culture rests on a structure of sacrifice. We are all mixed up in an eating of flesh – real or symbolic. In the past, I have spoken about the West's phallic "logocentrism". Now I would like to broaden this with the prefix carno- (flesh): "carnophallogocentrism". We are all – vegetarians as well – carnivores in the symbolic sense.'¹³

To bring these questions of distinction, digestion and incorporation to the foreground of consciousness involves a respect for what cannot be eaten, understood or assimilated, what Derrida calls the 'untranslatable' in a text: that which remains alien and displaces the ground of possible understanding. In a conversation or an exhibition, this means cultivating an openness to what is not known or cannot be known. The question is how to listen, observe, pause and be silent on the ground of 'elsewhere'.

Endnotes

- 1 Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000, p. 80.
- 2 The director of the International Documentary Festival, Marseille, Jean-Pierre Rehm, has stated that he does not believe in a category called documentary filmmaking, only in good filmmakers: 'Everybody talks about documentaries these days, and they are being released in movie houses, but the real characteristic of the documentary is that it celebrates the small event. We think we know everything about what happens all over the planet, but it's the small event that brings the picture home.' See Joan Dupont, 'When films talk to one another', *International Herald Tribune*, 8 July 2005, <<http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/07/07/features/DUPONT.php>>.
- 3 Tilman Baumgärtel, 'Lav Diaz: "Digital is liberation theology"', <<http://www.greencine.com/central/lavdiaz/>>, 7 September 2007.
- 4 Giorgio Agamben points to this as a form of repression, where 'secular' modernism (in which secularisation 'does nothing but displace the heavenly monarchy onto an earthly monarchy, leaving its power intact') 'guarantees the exercise of power by carrying it back to a sacred model': Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, Zone Books, New York, 2007, p. 77.
- 5 Jon Solomon, 'Rethinking the meaning of regions: translation and catastrophe', <<http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0608/solomon/en>>, March 2008.
- 6 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'More thoughts on cultural translation', <<http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0608/spivak/en>>, published April 2008.
- 7 Yu Cheng-Ta, unpublished artist statement, <<http://yuchengta.blogspot.com>>.
- 8 Jieun Rhee, 'Performing the other: Yoko Ono's Cut Piece', *Art History*, vol 28, no. 1, February 2005, pp. 96–118, quotation p. 98.
- 9 Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, op. cit., p. 59.
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 56.
- 11 *ibid.*, p. 53.
- 12 *ibid.*, p. x.
- 13 Daniel Birnbaum and Anders Olsson, 'An interview with Jacques Derrida on the limits of digestion', *e-flux journal* #2, <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/33>>, January 2009.



QIU Zhijie

Landscape, 1999

Mini DV, 4:3, colour, stereo, 8:40 mins

Purchased 2004. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant
Collection Queensland Art Gallery



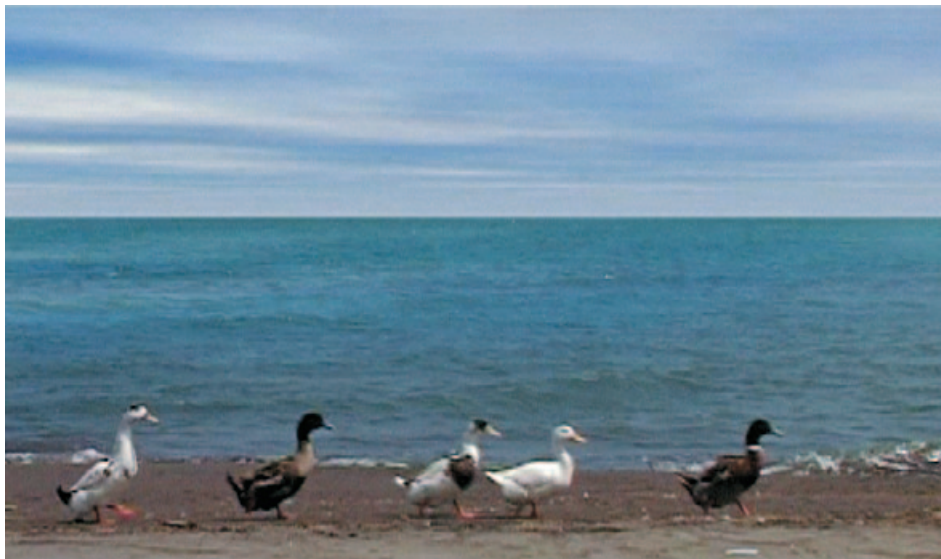
KIMSOOJA
A Homeless Woman – Cairo, 2001
 DV, 4:3, colour, silent, 6:33 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and Galleria Continua, Beijing



KIMSOOJA
A Beggar Woman – Lagos, 2001
 DV, 4:3, colour, silent, 8:50 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and Galleria Continua, Beijing



LEE Wen
**Journey of a Yellow Man no. 13:
 Fragmented Bodies/Shifting Ground, 1999**
 DV CAM transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, stereo, 10:30 mins
 Purchased 2000. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation
 Collection Queensland Art Gallery
 Photograph: Andrea Higgins



Abbas Kiarostami
Five Long Takes Dedicated to Yasujiro Ozu, 2004
 DV, 1.66:1, colour, sound, 74:00 mins
 Courtesy the artist and MK2, Paris
 Image courtesy the artist and British Film Institute



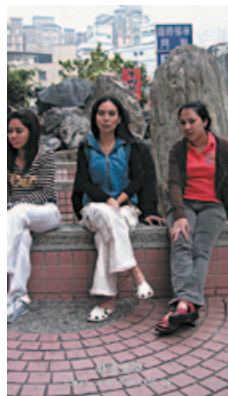
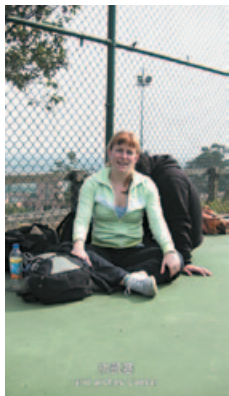
Wang Jianwei
Living Elsewhere, 1999
 DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 40:00 mins
 Image courtesy the artist



Ranu GHOSH
Quarter no. 4/11, 2007
 DVCAM, DVD 16:9, b/w & colour, sound, 13:00 mins
 Image courtesy the artist



Gülsün KARAMUSTAFA
Stairway, 2001
 DV, 16:9, b/w, sound, 4:46 mins
 Image courtesy the artist



YU Cheng-Ta
'Ventriloquists – Introduction' series, 2008
 DV transferred to DVD, 16:9, colour, sound, 16:36 mins
 Image courtesy the artist



Takahiko IIMURA
Performance: AIUEONN Six, 1994
 Videotape, 4:3, colour, stereo, 8:00 mins
 Courtesy The James C Sourris Collection. Purchased 1999 with funds from James C Sourris through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Collection Queensland Art Gallery

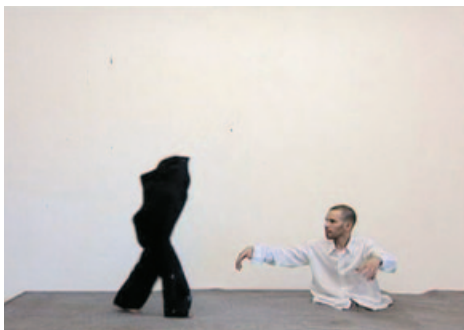
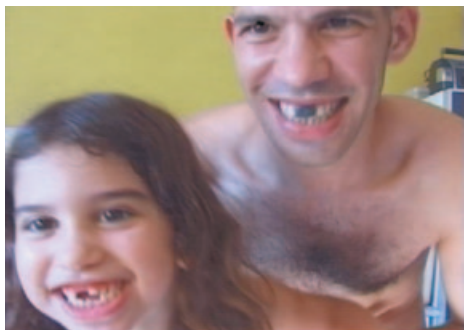
Nam June PAIK
Hands and Face, 1961
 Video, 4:3, b/w, silent, 1:42 mins
 Image courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York



TANAKA Koki
Simple Gesture and Temporary Sculpture, 2008
 DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 3:26 mins
 Image courtesy the artist



Kiran SUBBIAH
Flight Rehearsals, 2003
 DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 4:40 mins
 Image courtesy the artist



Guy BEN-NER
Moby Dick, 2000
 DV, 4:3, colour, silent, 12:35 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and Postmasters Gallery, New York



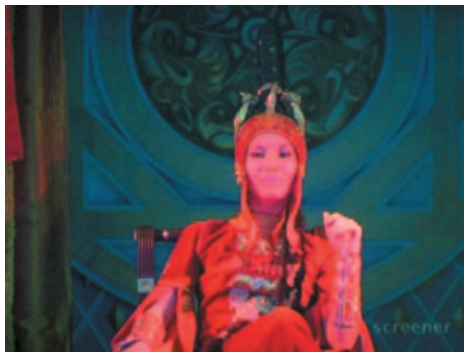
Hiwa K
Moon Calendar / Iraq, no date
 Hi-8, 4:3, colour, stereo, 12:00 mins
 Image courtesy the artist



Umut SAKALLIOĞLU
Rally, 2006–07
 Mini DV / Hi-8, 4:3, colour, sound, 3:47 mins
 Image courtesy the artist



Bani ABIDI
Anthems, 2000
 Video, 4:3, colour, sound, 2:25 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and Green Cardamom, London



Almagul MENLIBAYEVA
Headcharge, 2007
 Mini DV, 16:9, colour, sound, 12:30 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and Galerie Davide Gallo, Berlin



Shaarbek AMANKUL
Duba, 2007
 DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 9:00 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and B'Art: Bishkek Art Center



WANG Jianwei
Hostage, 2008
HD video, 16:9, colour, sound, 32:00 mins
Image courtesy the artist



JIA Zhangke
Sanxia Haoren (Still Life), 2006
HD, 1.85:1, colour, sound, 108:00 mins
Image courtesy the artist and Memento Films International



HU Jie
Remote Mountain, 1996
 DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 40:00 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and Visible Record Ltd



Sutthirat SUPAPARINYA
Huong Vi Pho (Taste of Noodles), 2006
 Mini DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 20:00 mins
 Image courtesy the artist

'The latter half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of differently situated artists all across the third world whose acknowledged presence shaped a hermeneutic retake on the (political) unconscious of the contemporary. It necessitated the relatively privileged interlocutor – the artist – to assume the position of a conspicuously underprivileged subject of an unequal social order, and this led to reasonably located (regional, national, third world) interventions in and through art.' *Geeta Kapur*¹

'Here, there, elsewhere'

This familiar phrase contains an opposition – here: there – which supported the colonial and exoticist imagination for the last century or more, and adds a third term, 'elsewhere', neither one nor the other. Neither the familiarity of 'here', nor the alterity of 'there', but in between, somewhere else, elsewhere. These three terms can be mapped onto the vectors of Cold War politics: capitalist, socialist, non-aligned. These blocs were not monolithic – there were tensions within them, particularly in the Socialist bloc, as evidenced by the Sino-Soviet split. The non-aligned movement was relatively short-lived. The capitalist bloc, which seemed for much of the last decade more secure than ever, now appears to be morphing into some form of state capitalism, which owes as much to Chinese President Jiang Zemin as it does to the Chair of the US Federal Reserve!

When the developing world became largely independent in the early 1960s, relations of subordination to the colonial powers were invariably replaced by neo-colonial dependencies, particularly in the field of culture. You may recall the emblematic scene in the beginning of Ousmane Sembene's *Xala*, 1975, in which the victorious Senegalese evict the French masters only to invite them back as advisors (advisors with suitcases of cash) immediately afterwards. As a sign of cultural resistance Sembene changed the language of his films from French to one of the three main Senegalese languages, Wolof, and the struggle for cultural

independence within *Xala*'s narrative is carried by characters who insist on using this language.

Cultural studies developed a critique of the unequal power relations in newly independent cultures, which continued to be culturally subordinate through the ideological dominance of Eurocentrism.² One can briefly sketch the effects of this in the art world by reference to documenta 5 (1972), which explored work from the East (the Soviet Union, China) as well as the West, or the 1984 Havana Biennial, which sought to develop an exhibition platform for the non-aligned and postcolonial countries. Catherine David's 1996 documenta X was a notable attempt to incorporate such a critique into exhibition practice. She did not aspire to a global exhibition, confining it to the Europe (and America) she knew most about and focusing on exploring tensions and contradictions within that.

Since that time there has been an explosion of so-called global thinking and global exhibition-making, but this has rarely addressed the contradictions inherent in the global model. Some – such as Okwui Enwezor's 1997 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, 'Trade Routes: History and Geography' – asserted the importance of trade, particularly the slave trade, in the development of culture and capital across the globe. His Documenta 11 in 2002, of which I was a member of the curatorial team, is often credited with bringing the discourse of cultural and postcolonial studies fully to bear on international contemporary art. There was a greater range of artists and ethnicities from around the world, but it was not a non-aligned or 'third world' exhibition. On the contrary, it attempted to force dialogues between critical discourses on contemporary political and social issues while retaining a relative autonomy for the aesthetics of the work of art.

Faced with the critiques of Eurocentrism, many curators set out to put the record straight, so to speak; to rediscover the art of the rest of the world. Perhaps the most emblematic of these would be Jean-Hubert Martin's 1989 exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, 'Magiciens de la Terre', and his 2000 Biennale de Lyon, 'Sharing Exoticisms'. Martin juxtaposed contemporary works from artists from Africa and Asia with artefacts that had a cultural and religious significance. Much criticised at the time as a romantic and 'essentialising' approach to culture, Martin nevertheless was able to expose the contradiction in exhibitions of contemporary art that were unable to connect the contemporary to local cultural conditions. His work is part of a particular ongoing conversation between Africa, Asia and the West. In the past the West sought to adapt and incorporate

aspects of Oriental and African aesthetics into its cultural vocabulary and to blend the 'other' into its own terms; for example, British Georgian Chinoiserie or the 1920s vogue for the primitive in Parisian art circles. It has been much more difficult to restore the alterity of this art; to put it back into its symbolic, often religious, or ritualistic context.

The issue then became how to connect Western with non-Western; European work with African or Asian work. Unfortunately for these new cultural ethnographers, the artists whose work they were exploring did not 'stay put' in these categories. Where and when they could, they moved to centres of artistic creativity, often in the West, producing new and fascinatingly hybrid forms; for example, the reworking of modernist art cinema by Wong Kar Wai in Hong Kong or Tsai Ming-Liang in Taiwan. (Exhibition labels coped with this complexity of multiple locations by stating nationality or country of birth as well as that of residency.) Not only was there the question of competing art histories – for example, Western and Asian – but there was the further philosophical difficulty for Western curators and art historians of how to think about non-Western art in terms other than those developed by the West. This is the philosophical issue that shadows exhibitions such as 'The view from elsewhere'. We have selected a range of artists whose work engages in complex dialogues with its culture of location as well as with national and international aesthetics. Western art theory continues to form a dominant frame for understanding this work even if one must put it under 'erasure', to adopt the term from Derrida. Some of the most successful Chinese artists, such as Ai Weiwei and Yang Fudong, exploit both traditional Chinese and Western aesthetic codes; a 'double consciousness' – to take the phrase of the historian and civil rights activist, W.E.B. Dubois – or a state of being Western and non-Western at the same time.

Australia and New Zealand have their own place in this history. On the one hand, they developed modes of art practice in dialogue with those in London, Paris, New York or Los Angeles; on the other, they began to recognise, or indeed create, the conditions for the work of first nations artists. In both countries these movements were also tied up with efforts to gain cultural independence. (Australia and New Zealand still share a monarch with the United Kingdom, for example.) The Biennale of Sydney represents an early and successful attempt to connect the continent with the contemporary art world. The Queensland Art Gallery's Asia-Pacific Triennial is an attempt to connect Australia to regional culture and politics.

Writers, critics and curators have tried to think about location in relation to the art world in terms of a local/global opposition, and

have created various neologisms to express a new dynamic balance between these forces; for example, 'glocal'. Artists, after all, however international, still return to a local place to produce their work,³ bringing with them something of the knowledge and experience from that wider place and reincorporating the global into the local.

More recently there have been a number of attempts to start from elsewhere, following, whether consciously or not, the example of the 1984 Havana Biennial, which focused on artists from Latin America and the Caribbean who live or have their cultural roots there.⁴ The 2007 Guangzhou Triennial, 'Farewell to Post-colonialism', for instance, attempted to begin the debate as to what a contemporary art culture would look like if one started from Asia, rather than from hegemonic Western models. This was an admirable attempt, although one could argue that it simply reversed the terms of the 'here: there' opposition. The postcolonial debate, which Chinese curators felt subordinated their country to Western influence and ideology, was replaced with a Chinese focus, with all the attendant problems of nationalism and ethnic hegemony that might entail. But it was a start, and one which recognises that we have returned to a multi-polar world (China, India, Russia, Europe, the United States and so on); a world, it is hoped, that will reshape the art worlds that these regions support and circulate between them.

The turn to documentary

In recent years there has been a massive turn to documentary in the art world.⁵ Documenta11 was instrumental in presenting a range of moving image work within a predominantly realist aesthetic. Historians of realism would take us back to the work of Emile Zola and socially engaged narratives which presented, almost in pictorial form, the difficult life of working people in nineteenth-century Europe. Or back to the development of photography and early cinema, which permitted the colonisation and appropriation of the world by the analog and, subsequently, digital image. When artists or filmmakers such as Lida Abdul or Apichatpong Weerasethakul make work in rural Afghanistan or Thailand, it contains the same charge of discovery and insistence on the conditions of life in these underdeveloped and neo-colonised countries that French readers of Emile Zola acknowledged when they 'discovered' similar conditions of life in their own country.

The use of realist representational strategies highlights the fact that there is considerable unfinished business from the postcolonial and Cold War periods. There are often uncanny parallels between the exoticist Pathé newsreels, which imported

Lida ABDUL [56] [64]

Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL
[58] [80]

otherness to the *métropoles* at the turn of the twentieth century, and artists' film and video, which can be seen to perform a similar operation in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, as many critics and theorists have often observed, realist aesthetics can appear to be hardwired into the technology of film and digital cameras. It can be difficult to make a moving image piece that is not in one way or another realist.

It might be useful to extend the debate between socially motivated, committed realism and less engaged, descriptive naturalism, which dominated nineteenth-century aesthetic theory and the rise of documentary cinema in the 1930s, to artists' work today. Western television is increasingly dominated by what has been called 'reality TV', even though it has nothing much to do with realism or reality; rather, it is a series of fantasy narratives in which the participants can achieve major changes to their life narratives, similar in fact to nineteenth-century melodrama. To call the wide variety of such forms 'documentary' is to reduce the term to a banal signifier, encompassing anything to do with an analog or digital image of reality. On the contrary, many of these forms are driven by an anti-documentary logic in that they are not at all engaged with the project of education and information which might lead to social engagement or social change – the original motivation of the documentary movement – but are concerned with passing off minor narcissistic gestures with a camera as a significant (aesthetic) statement.

Oki Hiroyuki's video diaries might be felt to participate in such aesthetic. In *The Form of the Palace of Matsumae-kun's Brothers 1*, 2006,⁶ Oki adopts an aleatory approach that is characteristic of this series of works. Nothing much appears to happen: friends chat and hang out in bars and on the snowy streets of Hokkaido. But this approach is revealed as part of an ethical inquiry – 'How should one live one's life in the coming year?' – which makes it much more substantial. Furthermore, those who know his earlier Super 8 work recognise his ongoing interest in presenting his discovery of self as an art project in itself. Oki directs us to the issue of where change comes from – in this case in the daily life of the artist – rather than to any grander gestures that give his work political significance and agency.

Abbas Kiarostami's *Five Long Takes Dedicated to Yasujiro Ozu*, 2004, develops this subjective aesthetic in terms of duration. The 74-minute film is divided into five takes of around 15 minutes each. Observing the life on the promenade at a Caspian Sea resort or, through the use of voice-over, turning a piece of flotsam in the breaking waves into an element of an action

Oki Hiroyuki [60] [77]

Abbas KIAROSTAMI [28] [74]

Amos GITAI [61] [70]

movie, Kiarostami is a master of conceptual art filmmaking. While the reference is to the fixed 'tatami', or long static shots, of classic art cinema director Yasujiro Ozu, it is also a dialogue with conceptual filmmaking by artists such as Michael Snow. Duration here is about pushing the connection between reality and representation to a Warholian impasse. At a certain point the terms reverse and the film, the simulacrum, becomes reality for the viewer. A similar process is involved in the longer version of the Oki film *The Form of the Palace of Matsumae-kun's Brothers 1*:⁷ narrative collapses when faced with the materiality of the world being filmed.

Both Oki and Kiarostami are involved in evacuating the notion of documentary, not to some sort of degree zero of signification but, rather, to an almost mystic semiosis where reality always exceeds its representation, but the representation strives to accommodate it. To use Kapur's terms, these are located interventions, but ones which insist on the facticity, materiality and 'placeness' of location and leave viewers to make their own connection to the surrounding narratives of the unequal social order they inhabit.

Amos Gitai's early film, *House (Bait)*, 1980, is a domestic narrative. It presents the story of a house in West Jerusalem: abandoned during the 1948 war by its Palestinian owner, requisitioned by the Israeli Government as 'vacant', then rented to Jewish immigrants in 1956. Its most recent purchaser attempts to transform it into a middle-class villa. The house becomes a theatre in which the former inhabitants, neighbours and building workers all appear. Here we encounter the ideas of Bertolt Brecht,⁸ who used the notion of a single event – a street scene – to develop an aesthetic concerned with developing multiple and contradictory perspectives that flesh out political and social positions. In Gitai's film the participants describe their different relationships with the house, not to build up a more complete view of the place but rather to draw out the political issues that divided (and still divide) those communities. This is clearly a located intervention, one which only an artist – or perhaps a lawyer, if there were rule of law in the West Bank – could make.

Politics and aesthetics

The film and video in our exhibition has to be seen in terms of experiments with the ethics and aesthetics of the documentary form. They are all concerned with developing a position from which viewers can, if they wish, produce some form of social and political engagement. In an intervention in a recent public debate,⁹ Stuart Hall reminded us that the project of

British cultural studies was based on Althusserian Marxism's foregrounded role of ideology, and the relative autonomy of the cultural sphere from the political and the economic. Cultural studies, Hall observed, was concerned with studying the conditions of existence and the interaction between these spheres within the current conjuncture of neo-liberal capitalism. Althusser's writings about art were symptomatic. He explored the paintings of Giorgio Morandi and performances of Strehler's Piccolo Theatre in Milan for symptoms of these broader movements. In our curating and our reflection on exhibitions such as 'The view from elsewhere', there is clearly an important place for this kind of analysis when exploring how to interpret these works in terms of shifts in the tectonic plates that connect and subtend Eastern capitalisms. ('Capitalisms' in the plural, since we have neo-liberal finance capital and the recent form of state or communist capital co-existing in the region.)

At the core of Althusserian Marxism is an idea of the subject 'hailed in the street' by a passerby: 'Hey, you ...' The recognition of oneself as the object of this call is, according to Althusser, similar to the operation of ideology in its interpellation of the subject. This linguistic formulation, adapted from the work of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, has led to a whole body of work concerned with a psychoanalytic version of cultural studies which often focuses on the subjective experience of the individual viewer, or member of the audience, and their reading (or mis-reading) of the works.

Curating in today's so-called global art world is, in my view, about facilitating a correction (to use that financial term); privileging work from formerly subordinated areas of the world; adjusting the balance sheet so it more accurately reflects artistic practice across the globe. This is, without doubt, a political gesture, but it is only successful if it also works aesthetically.

The challenge for the curator is to connect the possibilities inherent in a work with those in the place and time of the exhibition and its viewers. But the work that the artwork does on/with the spectator does not lie in its recognition as such (works pass in and out of fashion); rather, it is connected to the way (if sensitively curated) it can unsettle and surprise viewers, release them from the binary oppositions of recognition (the third world viewed from the first, for example), and expose them to different ways of seeing or thinking. This is where the 'elsewhere' – a third space – of the exhibition title comes in. It is not just the elsewhere of the artist's location, but that space which opens up within the viewer when they engage with the individual works.

Endnotes

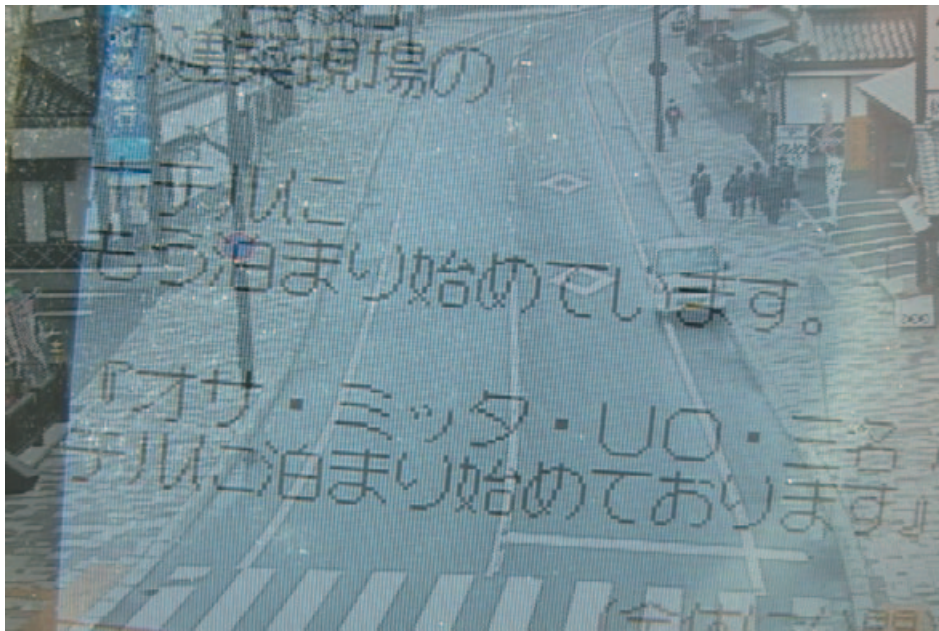
- 1 Geeta Kapur, 'Tracking images', in Mark Nash, *Experiments with Truth*, exhibition catalogue, Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, 2005, p. 106.
- 2 Ella Shohat and Rober Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, Routledge, London, 1994.
- 3 We will disregard the increasingly large group of professional nomadic artists such as Shu Li Cheng and Francis Aliys.
- 4 Since the 2nd Havana Biennial in 1986, the focus has been extended to include Africa and Asia, thus making it the most important meeting place for artists from 'non-Western' countries.
- 5 I have written about this previously; for example, in my 2002 essay for the Documenta11 catalogue, 'Art and cinema: some critical reflections' (in *Documenta11_Platform5: Exhibition*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2002), the 2005 postscript for its republication in Tanya Leighton (ed.), *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, Afterall, London, 2008, and my recent essay, 'Reality in the age of aesthetics', *Frieze*, issue 114, April 2008, pp. 118–25.
- 6 The series originated with the work *The Diary of Matsumae-kun*, 1988. This work, a city plan for Matsumae-city in Hokkaido, was submitted as Oki Hiroyuki's graduation project while studying architecture in college. In addition to the architectural draft, the design was displayed alongside various media, presenting the landscape in a Manga-like panel layout from the point of view of the fictional character 'Matsumae-kun'. The following year, the inaugural film, *A Film of Matsumae-kun*, 1989, was created. The early works in the series were captured on film in the form of a diary beginning on New Year's Day. They were marked by in-camera edits, creating a very physical sense of improvisation. The annual series was interrupted in 1996, but recommenced in 2002 with *Vision for Matsumae-kun's Death*. The newer works reflect changes in progress, such as a shift to the use of video cameras and bringing the actors to Matsumae-city for shootings. In terms of editing, material from previous series was incorporated to expand the films, giving them different forms than those in the past. The filming for *The Form of the Palace of Matsumae-kun's Brothers 1* (060316MIX), 2006, thirteenth in the series, took place over one month beginning 22 January 2006, and featured settings in Hakodate, Sapporo, Tokyo and Kochi, in addition to Matsumae-city.
- 7 There are two versions of this work: *The Form of the Palace of Matsumae-kun's Brothers 1'* (060316MIX), 2006 (62:00 mins), and *The Form of the Palace of Matsumae-kun's Brothers 1+* (060617MIX), 2006 (17:00 mins).
- 8 Bertolt Brecht, 'The street scene: a basic model for an epic theatre', in John Willett (ed. and trans.), *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, Methuen, London, 1964.
- 9 Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies and Radical Politics*, Encounter Series 6, Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster, London, February 2009.



Lida ABDUL
In Transit, 2008
35 mm film transferred to DVD, 16:9, colour, sound, 4:55 mins
Image courtesy the artist and sixpackfilm, Vienna



Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL
Primitive: A Letter to Uncle Boonmee, 2009
HDCAM, 16:9, colour, sound, 15:00 mins
Image courtesy the artist and Animate Projects Ltd, London



OKI Hiroyuki
Diary of Matsumae-kun's Love, 2008
 DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 12:00 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and ARATANIURANO



Amos GITAI
News from Home / News from House, 2005
 DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 97:00 mins
 Image courtesy the artist and AGAV Films



TSUI Kuang-Yu
Invisible City: Sea Level, 2006
 HD transferred to hard-drive, 4:3, colour, sound, 4:40 mins
 Image courtesy the artist & Eslite Gallery, Taipei



LI Wei
Mirror. Seoul 9.27, 2003
 DV transferred to DVD, 16:9, colour, sound, 8:56 mins
 Image courtesy the artist

Annotated list of works

The view from elsewhere

Lida ABDUL
b. 1973 Kabul, Afghanistan
Lives in Kabul & Los Angeles, US



In Transit, 2008
35 mm film transferred to DVD, 16:9, colour, sound, 4:55 mins
Produced in Afghanistan/Austria in English with English subtitles
/ Cinematographer Marc Tiescher / Editor Florian Grunt / Music
Damon Thomas Lee / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist
& sixpackfilm, Vienna; Courtesy of & commissioned by the OK
Center for Contemporary Art, Linz, Austria, in conjunction with
VIDEOFORMES, Clermont-Ferrand, France, with the support of the
Culture 2000 Programme of the European Union
Image this page courtesy the artist & sixpackfilm

With a practice spanning diverse media including film, performance and photography, Abdul's recent work reflects on the decades of war sustained by her native Afghanistan, and the relationship between architecture and identity. Her slow and formal films withhold from the viewer a position of complete understanding, and suggest that the reality of contemporary Kabul and its people continues to be renegotiated through memory. In *In Transit* the rusting remains of planes and tanks on the outskirts of Kabul become the playthings for children. 'These are uncanny sights,' Lida Abdul has explained, 'because the presence of these metallic giants is a symbol of sorts for the presence of the physical and psychological traumas of wars that have defined the history of Afghanistan for almost three decades now.' (<<http://www.sixpackfilm.com/catalogue.php?oid=1733&lang=en>>, accessed 15/2/09.)

Ayisha ABRAHAM
b. 1963 London, UK
Lives in Bangalore, India



Straight 8, 2005
DV & found film footage transferred to DV, 4:3, b/w & colour, stereo, 16:51 mins
Produced in India / No dialogue / Production company Filmtales

One Way, 2007
DV & found film footage transferred to DV, 16:9, b/w & colour, sound, 14:06 mins
Produced in India / English subtitles / Producers Luis Corriea & Noe Mendelle / Cinematographer Avijit Mukul / Editors Cynthia Madansky & Guarav Chandelya / Sound editor Gissy Michael / Music Clay Kelton / Key cast Shyam Bahadur / Production company Gulbenkian Foundation & LX Filmes, Portugal



You Are Here, 2008
DV, 4:3, b/w & colour, sound, 6:23 mins
Produced in India / No dialogue / Production company Filmtales with Manasa Rao, Format Studio & Yashas Shetty

Abraham approaches film and installation as spaces in which to explore the operation of contradiction, repetition and the fragmentary. Trained as a painter, her films feature aspects of Indian modernity in ways that are overtly partial and personal. Her retrieval and transfer of 16 mm and 8 mm film footage to digital, in works such as *You Are Here* and *Straight 8*, present anew fragments from a seemingly familiar and shared yet idiosyncratic family album. The documentary-like *One Way* centres on Nepalese exile Shyam Bahadur, who after spending 35 years in Bangalore as a security guard faces the possibility that he may never be able to return home.



Shaarbek AMANKUL

b. 1959 Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Lives in Bishkek



Vatan, 2005–06

DV, 4:3 letterbox, b/w & colour, sound, 4:33 mins
Produced in Kyrgyzstan / No dialogue / Print source / rights
Courtesy the artist and Bishkek Art Center

Duba, 2007

DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 6:55 mins
Produced in Kyrgyzstan in Kyrgyz / No subtitles /
Print source / rights Courtesy the artist and Bishkek Art Center

Zindan, 2007

DV transferred to DVD, 4:3 pillarbox, b/w, sound, 6:50 mins
Produced in Kyrgyzstan / No dialogue / Print source / rights
Courtesy the artist and Bishkek Art Center

Amankul's practice spans video, photography and installation and engages with a contemporary world infused with history and tradition. In the 2007 work *Duba* (which in Kyrgyz means 'cleaning the soul'), a shaman performs a traditional healing ritual. As Amankul explains, 'They use the aspect of surprise, seemingly strange or frightening behaviour and sounds that might lead to confusion within the person to be cured. The aspect of surprise wakens natural forces on a subconscious level and helps to overcome illness.' A splitscreen presentation in *Vatan* presents a multitude of images from Kyrgyzstan; against the soundtrack of a lone voice singing, the procession of images of poverty, protest, the military and growing environmental problems offers a deeply moving insight into the country's contemporary issues.



Sasithorn ARIYAVICHA

b. 1963 Bangkok, Thailand
Lives in Bangkok



My First Film, 1991

16 mm film transferred to mini DV, 4:3, b/w & colour, sound, 4:42 mins
Produced in Thailand/US / No dialogue / Key cast Anonymous / Made
in cooperation with the New School for Social Research, New York

Drifter, 1993

16 mm film transferred to mini DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 7:39 mins
Produced in Thailand/US / No dialogue / English subtitles /
Cinematographers Sasithorn Ariyavicha & Akimasa Shimma / Made
in cooperation with the New School for Social Research, New York

Birth of the Seanema, 2004

Mini DV, 4:3, b/w, silent, 70:00 mins
Produced in Thailand/US / No dialogue / English subtitles /
Script Sasithorn Ariyavicha & Pansiri Sitthichaikasem / Key
cast Anonymous people of a lost city & Chaluy Thongsook /
Production company found footage / Script reader & consultant
Pansiri Sitthichaikasem / Production crew Chitsanucha Rittiraksa,
Sakajwich Keawkamthong & Monthira Thawornwisit / Seanema
language constructor & alphabet designer Jirasak Songsangkajorn



Ariyavicha's films seem to meander past logic, underlying instead the primacy of the visual sense to access a psychological realm of language and forms. Ariyavicha has described *Drifter* as a collection of images without any intention to tell a story. The sparseness of filmic actions in the silent *Birth of the Seanema* allow beautiful invented calligraphy, with English subtitles, to hover for a moment, and then to fade away. The camera rests on urban machines, on the glass and steel materials and structures of modernism, on night scenes, and on scenes of the sea and horizon that are reminiscent of Hiroshi Sugimoto's seascapes. Combined with Ariyavicha's poetry, these sequences create a portrait of a mind's eye. Images and text appear in an ebbing rhythm. Her 'image collections' allow a meditative, daydream-like space where imaginary images are invoked through the acts of looking, looking past and reading. A dragonfly tells us: 'I am your forgotten memories.' 'I am your invented memories,' says another.

Akjoltoy BEKBOLOTOV

b. 1983 Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Lives in Bishkek

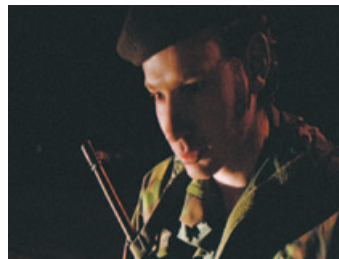
**Kam Sanabanyz (Everything Is OK), 2007**

DVCAM, transferred to Betacam SP, 4:3, colour, sound, 17:00 mins
Produced in Kyrgyzstan in Kyrgyz with English subtitles /
Producers Altynai Koychumanova & Aktan Arym Kubat /
Cinematographer Michail Petrov / Editors Akjoltoy Bekbolotov &
Izat Abdraimov/ Sound Izat Abdraimov / Key cast Balkhash Uulu
Renat & Turat Uulu Kuban / Production company Kyrgyzstan-Turkey
'Manas' University, Fund of the Development Cinema with the
support of the Hivos Fund / Distribution Kyrgyzstan-Turkey 'Manas'
University / Distributor Gulbara Tolomushova / Print source/rights
Courtesy the artist & Gulbara Tolomushova

Bekbolotov began his career working in a film studio as a clip-maker and as an actor in short film before graduating from Kyrgyzstan-Turkey 'Manas' University in 2007. In his native Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan official statistics account for the existence of approximately 24,000 homeless children, but the unofficial number is considerably higher. Made in Bekbolotov's graduation year, *Everything Is OK* follows a homeless orphan, Sheraly, who takes runaway Kyyalbek under his wing. He tries to protect Kyyalbek from the 'bad habits' of the homeless world. Each evening Sheraly visits his mother's grave to recount the daily events from an invented life at grammar school, telling her that 'everything is ok'. When Kyyalbek asks why he is lying, Sheraly explains that his mother had already had a hard life and he does not want to worry her in the afterlife.

Keren CYTTER

b. 1977 Tel Aviv, Israel
Lives in Berlin, Germany and Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**New Age, 2007**

Super 16 film transferred to Betacam SP, 16:9, colour, stereo, 75:00 mins
Produced in The Netherlands in Dutch with English subtitles /
Producer Jan Willem van Dam / Cinematographer Benito Strangio /
Sound Nico Bunnik / Key cast Daisy Bremmer, Eva van Ginhoven, Daphne van den Dobbelssteen, Katelyn Brand, Kim Schonewille, Ernst Walgenbach, Nina Boas & Martijn Dane / Production company Filmstad Amsterdam / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Elisabeth Kaufmann Zürich

Artist, filmmaker and novelist Keren Cytter's works have largely developed from 'low-tech' filmic explorations, whereby friends play characters in the artist's productions, or language and repetition undermine traditional filmmaking to show states of tension and absurdity. *New Age* is a self-referential film that shows protagonist 'Daphne' as a mutable yet consistent identity (different actors take turns to play the role) who cycles through waiting, hitching rides in cars, talking with friends, and being bored at home. The film hinges on notions of fate, positioning belief systems in a vulnerable net and examining concepts such as the power of suggestion and self-fulfilling prophecy. 'The things that happen to the characters affect them with the emotional force of something they saw on television or found out about on the net. It is in this sense that the emotional and psychological filmic constructed world is aware of itself as an artifice, as filmic narrative.'

Nina FISCHER and Maroan EL SANI

Nina FISCHER
b. 1965 Emden, Germany
Lives in Berlin, Germany and Sapporo, Japan

Maroan EL SANI
b. 1966 Duisburg, Germany
Lives in Berlin, Germany and Sapporo, Japan

**Spelling Dystopia, 2009**

16 mm film transferred to HD, single-channel video, 16:9, colour, stereo, 17:16 mins
Produced in Japan/Germany in Japanese with English subtitles/
Print source/rights Courtesy the artists & Galerie EIGEN+ART, Leipzig/Berlin

Nina Fischer and Maroan el Sani have worked collaboratively since 1993, and in 2007 they became Associate Professors at Sapporo City University, Japan. Their work in film and installation has addressed sites and structures as manifestations of ideology and as repositories for a society's collective memories. *Spelling Dystopia* considers the public perception of uninhabited Hashima Island (Border Island) near Nagasaki, recently nicknamed Gunkanjima (Battleship Island). Built from concrete in 1916, the island measures 160 x 450 m and has a complex history as an important coalmining site and as a labour camp for Chinese and Korean prisoners in the Second World War. At the height of the coalmine's activity the island became the most densely populated place on earth, housing over 5000 people. In the film we see scenes of schoolchildren moving into choreographed arrangements on a large concrete space, so that their bodies spell out the characters for 'Solid Rock', 'Coal Mine' and 'Sayonara Hashima Island' in Japanese text. Voice-overs interweave the recollections of a former resident with those of students who recall the island as the location of the movie *Battle Royale*, 2000. '[T]he island appears almost as their fantasy, an imaginary playground for their games, where various images and layers of reality and fiction [are already] in a state on mingling.'

Ranu GHOSH

b. 1965 Kolkata, India
Lives in Kolkata

**Quarter no. 4/11, 2007**

DVCAM, DVD, 16:9, b/w & colour, sound, 13:00 mins
Produced in India / English subtitles / Narration Nilanjan Bhattacharya / Cinematographers Shambhu Prasad Singh & Ranu Ghosh / Editor Indrajit Das / Sound Partha Barman / Key cast Shambhu Prasad Singh

Quarter no. 4/11 addresses the implications of 60,000 factories in West Bengal being closed or declared 'sick' and suspended, with over one million workers losing their jobs. In 1993 the Jay Engineering factory in Usha, South Kolkata, was announced as a sick industry. It had a central place in the community, having produced Usha sewing machines and fans since the 1950s. In 2003 the factory land was sold, in violation of a Supreme Court order. Shambhu Prasad Singh, a former employee, refused to leave his dwelling on factory land without due compensation. Ghosh entrusted her camera to Singh so that he could record his family's life on the inside of the compound. In December 2008 the Singh family was forcibly evicted and the dwelling demolished.

Amos GITAI
b. 1950 Haifa, Israel
Lives in Israel, France and the US



News from Home / News from House, 2005
DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 97:00 mins
Produced in Israel/France/Belgium in Arabic/Hebrew with English subtitles / Script Amos Gitai / Cinematographer Haim Asias / Editor Isabelle Ingold / Sound Ravid Dvir, Alex Claude & David Gillain / Research Ayelet Tamari & Jamil Khoury / Production company Agav Films in association with ARTE (France/Germany), Artemis (Belgium), Agat Films (France), Sundance Channel (US), RAI 3 (Italy), RTBF (Belgium), YLE (Finland), Hamon (Israel), The New Fund for Israeli Cinema (Israel), Second Channel (Israel), CNC (France) / Producers Amos Gitai, Michael Tapuach, Laurent Truchot & Patrick Quinet / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Cinephil

Gitai's approach has been likened to that of an archaeologist, 'revealing, under multiple layers, a complex labyrinth of destinies' (<http://www.amosgitali.com/html/film.asp?docid=64&lang=1>, accessed 15/2/09). Gitai's portraits of a house in West Jerusalem began in 1980 with the film *House (Bait)*, and concluded 25 years later with *News from Home / News from House*. Gitai's trilogy identifies this particular house as the locus of specific experiences and contexts, with overlapping recollections and halted relationships. Stories of its history, its occupants and its redevelopments become symbolic of connections between Israel, Palestine, and the irreducible importance of individual experience. Changing political and social conditions affect not only the appearance of the building, but also the perceptions of people in whose lives it has been present.

Joana HADJITHOMAS and Khalil JOREIGE
Joana Hadjithomas Khalil Joreige
b. 1969 Beirut, Lebanon b. 1969 Beirut, Lebanon
Lives in Beirut and Paris, France Lives in Beirut



Al Film el mafkoud (The Lost Film), 2003
DV, transferred to DigiBeta, 16:9, colour, sound, 42:20 mins
Produced in Yemen in Arabic with English subtitles / Producers Françoise Gazio & Pierre Olivier Bardet / Editor Tina Baz Legal / Sound Rana Eid / Production company Idéale Audience & Abbout Production / This documentary has been realised with the support of the Jan Vrijman Fund

Hadjithomas and Joreige have worked collaboratively in their practice to create a unique body of documentary and fictional work across installations, publications, films and video. In 1999, they co-wrote and directed a fictional feature titled *Al bayt el zaher (Around the Pink House)*, a copy of which (weighing 35 kg) went missing in Yemen on the tenth anniversary of the unification of North and South. Interested in the notion of 'latency', as it includes a sense of the secret, Hadjithomas and Joreige's *The Lost Film* is an investigative and experimental work that explores not only the position of filmmakers such as themselves, but also the implications of representing and imaging the part of the world to which they belong.

Mona HATOUM
b.1952 Beirut, Lebanon
Lives in Berlin, Germany and London, UK



Measures of Distance, 1988
Videotape, 4:3, colour, stereo, 16:00 mins
Produced in Lebanon/Canada in Arabic/English / A Western Front Video Production, Vancouver / Purchased 1996 with a special allocation from the Queensland Government. Celebrating the Queensland Art Gallery's Centenary 1895–1995 / Collection Queensland Art Gallery
Image this page courtesy the artist & Jay Jopling/White Cube (London)

The sound of an animated conversation between women plays out in *Measures of Distance* while images of a naked woman, the artist's mother, are overlaid with images of handwritten letters in Arabic script. In 1975, when Hatoum was on a short trip to London, war broke out in Lebanon and the young woman found she was unable to return home. Following a brief reunion in 1981, Hatoum reads aloud her mother's letters in English, in which the older woman discusses her feelings and her desire to be involved in her daughter's life and art. The intimacy revealed by the photographs, which the artist took of her mother in the shower, are countered by the veil of letters, which are vehicles to bring the faraway close. The work explores notions of exile as well as other forms of 'proximity' and 'distance'.

HU Jie
b. 1958 Shangdong, China
Lives in Nanjing, China



INOUE Tsuki
b. 1974 Kyoto, Japan
Lives in Kyoto



Remote Mountain, 1996
DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 40:00 mins
Produced in China in Mandarin with English subtitles / Translator
Tao Fei / Distribution Visible Record Ltd / Print source/rights
Courtesy the artist and Visible Record Ltd

Though I Am Gone, 2006
DV, 4:3 letterbox, colour, sound, 68:00 mins
Produced in China in Mandarin with English subtitles / Distribution
Visible Record Ltd / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist and
Visible Record Ltd

Hu has referred to himself as 'a film labourer'. As a documentary-maker his work evidences an extraordinary sympathy and sensitivity for people in vastly different circumstances. After leaving middle school, Hu worked in a factory for a year and then entered the People's Liberation Army in 1977. He later studied painting at the Fine Art University of the Army, and then literature at the Air Force Academy, abandoning national service in 1995. In June 1995 he spent two months filming the coalminers of Quilian Mountain in Qinghai Province (Northwest China). *Remote Mountain* reveals the extreme hardship endured by peasants digging coal in crude town-owned mines. Silicosis, cave-ins and low compensation are expected outcomes in this unregulated enterprise. The later, feature-length documentary *Though I Am Gone* tells the incredible story of scholar Wang Jingyao's campaign to record the facts about his wife Bian Zhongyun's death after abuse and beating by middle school students on 5 August 1966, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in China.

Daichi o Tataku Onna (The Woman Who Is Beating the Earth), 2007
Mini DV, exhibited from DVD, 16:9, colour, sound, 21:00 mins
Produced in Japan in Japanese with English subtitles/
Cinematographer Yousuke Omori / Sound Shingo Ishikawa / Music
Grace and Rei Shibakusa / Key cast Jun Nagami, Soko Wada,
Shinobu Kawai, Rei Shibakusa & Grace

In *The Woman Who Is Beating the Earth* a woman who suffers verbal abuse and violence from her boyfriend expresses her frustration through the sounds made by utensils in the butcher shop where she works. The rhythms made by pounding meat build within her and, like an epic rock solo, her fantasies about being in a girl-band and drumming to her own beat build to a surprising crescendo. Inoue's first film has been widely acclaimed for its original handling of domestic violence.

JIA Zhangke
b. 1970 Fenyang, Shanxi Province, China
Lives in China

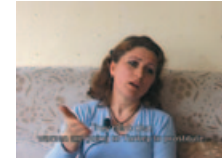


Gong gong chang suo (In Public), 2001
HD, transferred to DigiBeta, 1.85:1, colour, sound, 32:00 mins
Produced in China/South Korea in Mandarin with English subtitles/
Producer Tcha Seong-jai / Cinematographers Yu Lik-wai & Jia
Zhangke / Sound Lin Yi / Production company Jeonju International
Film Festival & the Sidus Corporation (South Korea) / Print source/
rights Courtesy the artist & Jeonju International Film Festival

Sanxia Haoren (Still Life), 2006
HD, transferred to DigiBeta, 1.85:1, colour, sound, 108:00 mins
Produced in China in Mandarin/Sichuan dialect with English
subtitles / Producers Xu Pengle, Wang Tianyun & Zhu Jiong /
Script Jia Zhangke, Sun Jianmin & Guan Na / Cinematographer
Kong Jin-lei / Editor Yu Lik-wai / Sound Lim Giong / Key cast
Zhao Tao, Han Sanming, Wang Hongwei, Li Zhubin, Xiang Haiyu,
Zhou Lin & Ma Lizhen / Production company Xstream Pictures,
Shanghai Film Group / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist &
Memento Films International

Jia is regarded as a leading figure of the 'Sixth Generation' of Chinese film directors, a generation marked by the adoption of digital video to create quickly and cheaply made works. Jia's early underground work focused on stories from his home province, while later fictional films and observational documentaries have garnered state support. In *Still Life*, which won a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 2007, the 2000-year-old town of Fengjie is about to be submerged as part of the Three Gorges Dam Project. As Jason Sanders notes, the characters in the film 'all pass through a landscape literally marked "OK for Demolition"' ('Unknown pleasures: the films of Jia Zhangke', <<http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/film/FN17127>>, accessed 10/2/09). In *Public*, Jia's first film to be shot on digital, was commissioned for the 2001 Jeonju International Film Festival, Korea. Set in the city of Datong, a once prosperous mining town, the work observes its residents as a microcosm for China.

Gülsün KARAMUSTAFÄ
b. 1946 Ankara, Turkey
Lives in Istanbul, Turkey



Stairway, 2001
DV, 16:9, b/w, sound, 4:46 mins
Produced in Turkey in Turkish/Romanian with English subtitles /
Editor ismailnecmi.com / Music Selim Atakan

Unawarded Performances, 2005
DV, 16:9, colour, sound, 24:19 mins
Produced in Turkey in Turkish/Moldovan with English subtitles /
Research assistant Arzu Ünal / Editor Kaan Öden / Music Selim Atakan

Denied a passport for 16 years (between 1970 and 1986), Karamustafa's work has centred on her position within Turkish society, and culture and identity. Working as a visual artist and filmmaker since the 1970s, she was imprisoned for a time after accusations of political activities. In *Stairway* she captures images of Romanian children who are allowed short-stay visas into Turkey: they gather at the base of the ancient Kamondo steps to play the accordion and collect money. *Unawarded Performances* documents the experiences of Gagauz women, who travel to Turkey to earn money as carers in order to provide for their families still living in Gagauzia, now an autonomous republic located in Moldova. Although the Gagauz are descended from Turks, their experiences in Romania were largely unknown in Turkey before their nationalist movement came to a head in 1990. As a minority group, they have faced oppression in terms of language, culture and faith.

KHAVN

(Khavn De La Cruz)
b. 1973 Manila, the Philippines
Lives in Manila

**Squatterpunk (Iskwaterpangk), 2007**

Mini DV, 4:3, b/w & colour, stereo, 79:00 mins
Produced in the Philippines in Tagalog with English subtitles /
Cinematographer Albert Banzon / Editor Lawrence Ang / Music The
Brockas, Bobby Balingit, Tengal & Buccino P. De Ocampo / Key cast
Hapon & the Isla Puting Bato Community / Production company
Filmless Films / Print source/rights Filmless Films

The prolific creator of Filmless Films in the Philippines, Khavn produces shorts and features all shot on digital camera. In *Squatterpunk* we witness the youth of urban communities in Manila living inside a culture of punk. Shot entirely in one day, Khavn montages digital footage (presented in gritty black and white) of these youths fossicking the garbage tip beach for useful items. The rhythm of the blaring punk music soundtrack punctuates the editing of the work.

Abbas Kiarostami

b. 1940 Tehran, Iran
Lives in Tehran

**Five Long Takes Dedicated to Yasujiro Ozu, 2004**

DV, 1.66:1, colour, sound, 74:00 mins
Produced in France/Iran/Japan / No dialogue / Producers Marin
Karmitz, Ali Reza, Shoja-Nuri & Makoto Ueda / Production company
MK2 & NHK co-production / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist
& MK2, Paris

Renowned filmmaker Kiarostami came to prominence with highly personalised takes on documentary. Since 1970 he has made over 40 films, and he has also worked as a screenwriter, film editor and art director. The hypnotic *Five Long Takes Dedicated to Yasujiro Ozu* was made only three years after his first digital film. Its careful construction belies the apparent simplicity of its depiction, paying tribute to the great Japanese filmmaker in five takes.

Brillante MENDOZA

b. 1960 San Fernando, Pampanga, the Philippines
Lives in Manila, the Philippines

**Slingshot (Tirador), 2007**

HD, 16:9 Anamorphic, colour, Dolby Surround, 86:00 mins
Produced in the Philippines in Tagalog with English subtitles/
Script Ralston Joel Jover / Producers Fernando Lapuz, Antonio
Del Rosario & Renato Esguerra / Executive Producer Didier Costet,
Swift Productions / Cinematographers Brillante Mendoza, Julius
Villanueva, Jeffrey DeLa Cruz & Gary Tria / Editor Charliebebs
Gohetia / Sound Teresa Barrozo / Key cast Nathan Lopez, Kristoffer
King, Jaclyn Jose, Jiro Manio & Coco Martin / Production company
Ignatius Films / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Ignatius
Films, Manila

Mendoza and screenwriter Ralston Joel Jover have described the frenetic shooting style employed in Mendoza's films as 'real time'. Trained in advertising, Mendoza released his first film in 2005. He has since made several feature documentary and fiction films employing the immediacy of digital technology. *Slingshot* is set in the slums of Manila, where petty theft is a daily reality and the police reign with terror. As the camera moves through the maze-like streets, the city becomes an organic, almost living thing.

Almagul MENLIBAYEVA
 b. 1969 Almaty, Kazakhstan
 Lives in Almaty and Berlin, Germany

Jihad, 2004

Mini DV, transferred to DVD, 16:9, colour, sound, 4:48 mins
 Produced in Kazakhstan / No dialogue / Producers Almagul Menlibayeva & Elena Derova / Editors Elena Derova & Almagul Menlibayeva / Cinematographer & Sound Elena Derova

I Never Forget This, 2005

Mini DV, 16:9, b/w & colour, sound, 6:20 mins
 Produced in Kazakhstan / No dialogue / Cinematographer Alexandr Prohorov / Editors Almagul Menlibayeva & Alexej Tchernyi / Music OMFO / Key cast Sayana Tezekbayeva, Saltanat Disheva & Gulnur Mukajanova

Headcharge, 2007

Mini DV, 16:9, b/w & colour, sound, 12:30 mins
 Produced in Kazakhstan / No dialogue / Cinematographer Siegfried / Music OMFO / Key cast Sayana, Saltanat, Gulnurkia, Uljan & Almagul

Menlibayeva's performance videos see her – and often other females in a group – employing an aesthetic called Romantic Punk Shamanism. Interested in an imagined pre-Soviet, pre-Islamic female realm, Menlibayeva's works reveal a shamanistic- or dervish-related freedom of the human body. Works such as *Jihad* span the cultural vocabularies of Islam, with Menlibayeva covering her body with gorgeous coloured fabrics. In other works landscape becomes a site where the naked body frees itself to explore power, sexuality and ritual.



Amir MUHAMMAD
 b. 1972 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 Lives in Kuala Lumpur



Pangyau, 2003

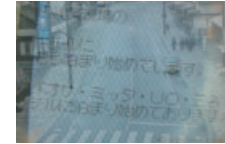
DV, 16:9, colour, sound, 13:00 mins
 Produced in Malaysia in Malay/Cantonese with English subtitles
 / Cinematographer Naeim Ghalili / Editor Zulkarnaen Kassim / Sound Jerome Kugan/ Voice-over Fahmi Fadzil

Village People Radio Show (Apa Khabar Orang Kampung), 2007

DV, 4:3, colour, stereo, 72:00 mins
 Produced in Thailand in Malay/Thai with English subtitles
 / Producer Tan Chui Mui / Cinematographer Albert Hue / Photographer Danny Lim / Editor Akashdeep Singh / Sound Hardeh Singh / Radio voice artist Bront Palarae / Production company Da Huang Pictures

Muhammad's oeuvre is characterised by a consistent questioning and re-thinking of the modes of filmic presentation. In *Pangyau* (the Cantonese word for 'friend'), a narration leads us through a Malay boy's close relationship and attraction to a Chinese schoolmate. Muhammad never places the characters involved in the story in front of the lens, which features slowed down sequences of images shot in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown. In *Village People Radio Show* Muhammad develops a portrait of a village in South Thailand where Malay-Muslims were forced to relocate after their involvement with the Communist Party of Malaya. A Thai soap opera for radio (inspired by Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*) plays throughout the documentary, interrupting or marking time with its narrative progression and ellipses. On its release in 2007 *Village People Radio Show* was banned in Malaysia, following another ban on Muhammad's work one year earlier for the film *Last Communist (Lelaki Komunis Terakhir)*, 2006.

OKI Hiroyuki
 b. 1964 Tokyo, Japan
 Lives in Kochi, Japan



May, 2004–08

DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 50:00 mins
 Produced in Japan in Japanese / No subtitles / Produced by FOU Productions / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & ARATANIURANO

Diary of Matsumae-kun's Love, 2008

DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 12:00 mins
 Produced in Japan in Japanese / No subtitles / Produced by FOU Productions / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & ARATANIURANO

Originally trained as an architect, Oki uses his camera to capture everyday life in a video diary form. His early silent 16 mm films came to prominence for their strong sense of places, their graphic forms, and their development of a homo-erotic gaze. Idyllic rural scenes are contrasted with cacophonous city scenes of eating, drinking, flirting, going to concerts, talking and waiting. In some works Oki places images one on top of the other so that disparate scenes create a new unity.

Jocelyne SAAB

b. 1948 Beirut, Lebanon
Lives in Paris, France



La Dame de Saigon (Sayidat Saigon), 1997

Betacam SP, 4:3, colour, sound, 60:00 mins
Produced in Vietnam/France in French with English subtitles /
Script Jocelyne Saab in collaboration with Catherine Lefebvre /
Narration Katia Riccabono / Cinematographer Patrick Blossier
/ Sound Pierre Donadieu / Editor Barbara Dousot / Producer
Jacques Debs / Production companies ADR Productions (France),
with the participation of the Centre National de la Cinématographie
et la Soutien de TERRES DES HOMMES (Belgium)

Important artist and filmmaker Saab's *La Dame de Saigon* follows
Doctor Duong Duinh Hoa, who left her privileged background to join
the nationalistic Vietcong. Since 1975, however, she has devoted her
life to humanitarian efforts, working tirelessly as a paediatrician to
provide much-needed medical care in regional Vietnam.

Hito STEYERL

b. 1966 Munich, Germany
Lives in Berlin, Germany



November, 2004

Super 8 film, video & found footage, transferred to Betacam SP, 4:3,
b/w & colour, stereo, 25:00 mins
Produced in Germany/Austria in German/English with English
subtitles / Cinematographer Hito Steyerl & Stefan Landorf / Editor
Stefan Landorf / Assistant director Yasmina Dekkar / Key cast Andrea
Wolf, Hito Steyerl & Uli Maichle / Commissioned by Manifesta 5 / Print
source/rights Courtesy the artist & sixpackfilm, Vienna

At 17, the artist's best friend was Andrea Wolf, a charismatic
girl who was shot in 1998 as a Kurdish terrorist. Setting up an
essayist's format, Steyerl includes footage from an early martial
arts film 'starring' Andrea, as well as other found materials and
news items relating to her life and public image. The artist's voice-
over explains: 'We are not any longer in the period of the "October"
described by Eisenstein, when the Cossacks decide to join the
Russian proletarians and internationalist brotherhood during
the Bolshevik Revolution. Now we are in the period of November.
In November, the former heroes become madmen and die in
extralegal executions somewhere on a dirty roadside and hardly
anyone takes a closer look.'

Sutthirat SUPAPARINYA

b. 1973 Chiang Mai, Thailand
Lives in Chiang Mai



Huong Vi Pho (Taste of Noodles), 2006

Mini DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 20:00 mins
Produced in Thailand/Vietnam in Thai/Vietnamese/English
with English subtitles / Research and interviewer Charunee
Chirangworapot / Sound design Nakarin Rodpat / Producer
Po Garden / Production company 'Imaging Our Mekong' Media
Fellowship Program, Unit for Social and Environmental Research,
Chiang Mai University with the support of The Rockefeller
Foundation Inc. (Southeast Asia), Inter Press Service (IPS) Asia-
Pacific, Probe Media Foundation Inc. & The Japan Foundation

The experimental videos of Supaparinya propose an interior world
that may or may not be visible in real time, and the idea that
perception is partial or mediated. Filmed across regions in Thailand
and Vietnam, the documentary *Taste of Noodles* reveals the
complexity and particularity of noodle culture, arguably the most
widespread dish of the region. As the artist points out: 'Evidently,
people have thought long and hard why they enjoyed noodles in
a certain way!' Tasting and appreciating the nuances of different
noodles become the means by which Supaparinya studies a range
of cultural distinctions, discernments, assumptions and change.

WANG Jianwei

b. 1958 Sichuan Province, China
Lives in Beijing, China



Living Elsewhere, 1999

DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 40:00 mins
Produced in China in Mandarin with English subtitles

Hostage, 2008

HD, 2.39:1, b/w & colour, sound, 33:42 mins
Produced in China / No dialogue

Wang's practice developed out of a commitment to realist
filmmaking. One of his earliest documentary-style short films,
Living Elsewhere follows the lives of four households squatting
in abandoned housing estates, their day-to-day existence relying
on cooperation between fellow inhabitants. Meanwhile, airplanes
from imagined places pass overhead. In contrast, *Hostage* features
high production values and polished direction. In this work, filmed
entirely in a sound stage, we witness the small decisions and
acquiescences within a Communist organisation that allowed
extreme abuses of power. Wang's use of 'bullet time' (popularised by
'The Matrix' series) records the raising of a Communist flag, an overt
gesture that mirrors iconic images from American propaganda.

Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL

b. 1970 Bangkok, Thailand

Lives in Bangkok



Like the Relentless Fury of the Pounding Waves, 1995

16 mm film/video, transferred to Betacam SP, 4:3, b/w, stereo, 30:00 mins

Produced in Thailand in Thai with English subtitles/ Key cast Piyaporn Tananupappisal, Juthamanee Tananupappisal, Noppadol Tungsakul, Tawin Jaidee & Chatsakkarin Pauhukul / Production company Kick the Machine / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Kick the Machine

Primitive: A Letter to Uncle Boonmee, 2009

HDCAM, 16:9, colour, sound, 15:00 mins

Produced in Thailand/UK in Thai with English subtitles/ Producers Simon Field & Keith Griffiths / Production company Illuminations Films (London) & Kick the Machine (Bangkok) / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist, Kick the Machine & Animate Projects Ltd, London / Commissioned by Animate Projects Ltd with Haus der Kunst, Munich & FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology)

Weerasethakul's extraordinary art films, shorts, art installations and stunning feature films are visually seductive, harnessing the other-worldly in the everyday. In *Like the Relentless Fury of the Pounding Waves*, the passing of time reveals itself as a mystical yet palpable force, given form by the disembodied radio and its voices. *Primitive: A Letter to Uncle Boonmee* is part of a multi-platform piece, inspired by the artist's visit to the village of Nabua in north-east Thailand, which was occupied from the 1960s to the 1980s by the Thai army. Villagers suspected of being Communist sympathisers were brutalised in this place where, ironically for Weerasethakul, 'there [exists] an ancient legend about a widow ghost who abducts any man who enters her empire'. (Weerasethakul on *Primitive*, September 2008, <http://www.animateprojects.org/films/by_project/primitive/primitive>, accessed 9/2/09.)



YOO Soon-Mi

b. Seoul, Korea

Lives in Syracuse, New York, US



ISAHN, 2004

Mini DV/Super 8 film transferred to DVCAM, 4:3, b/w & colour, stereo, 16:00 mins

Produced in US/Korea in English with English subtitles

Ssitkim: Talking to the Dead, 2004

Mini DV/Super 8 film transferred to DVCAM, 4:3, b/w & colour, stereo, 34:00 mins

Produced in US/Korea in English/Korean/Vietnamese with English subtitles

Dangerous Supplement, 2006

Mini DV/Super 8 film transferred to DVCAM, 4:3, b/w & colour, stereo, 14:00 mins

Produced in US/Korea in English with English subtitles



Much of Yoo's footage is found and retrieved and then reworked and re-presented. *ISAHN* was created by filming through the viewing hole of stereoscopic devices produced in South Korea, near the border to North Korea, so that exiled people from the North might see these places again in 3D. Yoo's narration, based on a suicide note, creates a moving insight into the experience of exile. In *Dangerous Supplement* Yoo retrieves Korean War archival footage found at the US National Archives, which depicts beautiful though fragmentary images – often from the air – of Korean life. These images were created out of a 'murderous intent' to educate soldiers about a foreign place. The artist's own footage of Panmunjom, the site on which the Korean War Armistice Agreement was signed on 27 July 1953, is interspersed. Text excerpts from Kafka's *Description of a Struggle* and Samuel Beckett's *Fizzle 6* are excerpted and melded by Yoo to create a new poem, one that speaks of a harsh mountain revealing the unobtainable by its presence.

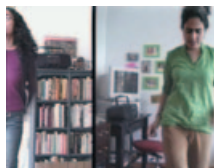


Annotated list of works

Small acts

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Bani ABIDI
b. 1971 Karachi, Pakistan
Lives in Karachi and New Delhi, India



Anthem, 2000
Mini DV, Quicktime transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, stereo, 2:25 mins
Produced in Pakistan / No dialogue / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Green Cardamom, London

Presented as a small series of antagonisms by neighbours, Abidi's *Anthem* shows two women (both played by the artist) dancing to popular songs, one from Pakistan, the other from India. As one woman's song becomes louder, the other woman turns up the volume on her stereo, each one trying to 'outdo' the other.

Vyacheslav AKHUNOV
b. 1948 Osh, Kyrgyzstan
Lives in Tashkent, Uzbekistan



Blind Alley, 2007
DV, 4:3, colour, sound, 11:15 mins
Produced in Uzbekistan / No dialogue

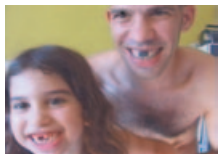
Moslem, 2008
DV, 4:3 letterbox, colour, sound, 17:41 mins
Produced in Uzbekistan / No dialogue / Key cast Bakhodir Musder

Akhunov's films and performances have explored spirituality, pop cultures and the way in which religion and spirituality imbricate identity. In *Blind Alley*, a young man wearing a backpack walks through Uzbekistan's narrow laneways. Turning corner after corner, he experiences chance encounters with the route of an older man. The man will walk up to a door and pause, not announcing his presence, before turning around and walking away. A group of fellow travellers sets out silently but purposefully, only to pause uselessly in the road, or navigate false starts and deadends. In *Moslem*, a character in American Western attire sits in a folk-furnished room. A tapestry on the back wall shows a naive scene, and Sergio Leone's 'Once upon a Time in the West' plays on a silver laptop. Flipping between this film and the Uzbek character playing at being a cowboy and practising the stance of a shooter, the film also shows the character's garb being packed away as the Islamic call to prayer sounds and the man begins his walk to the mosque.



Guy BEN-NER

b. 1969 Ramat Gan, Israel
Lives in Berlin, Germany



Moby Dick, 2000

DV transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, silent, 12:35 mins
Produced in Israel / No dialogue / English intertitles / Script based on Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* (1851) / Cinematographers Mike Israel & Guy Ben-Ner / Editors Boaz Arad & Doron Solomons / Lighting Eliran Knoler / Props Dvora Tubias / Key cast Elia, Amir, Guy & Nava Ben-Ner, Boaz Arad, Eliran Knoler, Raam Don / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Postmasters Gallery, New York

The epic 1851 novel by Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, is considered to be one of the great novels of all time due to its complex essaying of themes such as the relationships between man and the natural world, God, and the nature of revenge. In Ben-Ner's video a domestic kitchen becomes the set for the narrative of this slapstick silent film, with the artist and his daughter Elia playing most of the leading roles. The 'play-acting' has a sophisticated structure. Ben-Ner, as Captain Ahab, sports a white wooden leg with its own little drawer, like a Salvador Dalí (*Venus de Milo with Drawers*, 1936). The formal structure of the novel is mirrored by intertitles that act as Shakespearean asides. In one scene animations of menacing white fins circle the lino floor, while blue/green carpet with a hose shooting water from below stands in for the telltale clearing of the whale's blowhole in an expanse of ocean.

GHAZEL

b. 1966 Tehran, Iran
Lives in Paris, France



'Me' series, 2003–08

3-channel installation on monitors, Hi-8 transferred to DVD, 4:3, b/w & colour, sound, durations variable
Produced in France / No dialogue / English intertitles

'This work's departure point is identity – my multiple imperfect identities – though it has evolved into being more and more universal. The woman (Me) is now 'just a human being'. In this work I do not intend to talk about myself only; that is, an Iranian, a Middle Easterner, a woman. And if I use a woman (myself) it's just because I am one. Through the pretext of autobiography, I try to portray a human in our world today (regardless of gender and ethnic or racial background). The chador, which has become mostly a graphical element and a link between the scenes, is just a local colour – much like the black humour that I use in my films. The 'Me' series is an ongoing series I started in 1997. 680 scenes (about 20 hours) have been made until now.'

Takahiko IIMURA

b. 1937 Tokyo, Japan
Lives in Tokyo and New York, US



Performance: AIUEONN Six, 1994

Videotape, 4:3, colour, stereo, 8:00 mins
Produced in US in Japanese/English with Japanese/English subtitles / Print source/rights Courtesy The James C. Sourris Collection. Purchased 1999 with funds from James C. Sourris through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation. Collection Queensland Art Gallery

Since the 1960s Iimura has become a seminal figure in experimental film, with a highly attenuated approach to performance art and its representation. The body, the portrait, the inflections of sound, and the linguistic disjunction between sound and image are recurring themes in his art. In *Performance: AIUEONN Six* we see a portrait of the artist against coloured backdrops, enunciating and holding the vowel sounds from the Japanese and English language. As he makes the sound his portrait is distorted through the video image controls, giving grotesque and exaggerated results, like the coded grimaces of Japanese theatre. In an exercise exploring the effect of repetition, delay and difference, the sounds and the image of the face making the sounds do not match up after the first sequence.

Hiwa K
b. 1975 Slemany, Iraq
Lives in Mainz, Germany



Moon Calendar / Iraq, no date
Hi-8 transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, stereo, 12:00 mins
Produced in Iraq / Cinematographers Rebeen & Kazhaw
Production still this page Dairy Muhammen

In *Moon Calendar / Iraq* we see Hiwa K dancing to the rhythm of his own heartbeat, which is made audible through the transmission of a stethoscope's sound. As the dance continues the physical effort required becomes more noticeable. Hiwa K's heartbeat quickens pace until he is unable to keep control of his heart, let alone the movements of his feet. Describing the work, including its partner piece recorded in Germany and presented at Manifesta 7, Hiwa K said: 'The version shot in Germany relates more to my relation with the audience. The one shot in Saddam Hussein's former security building in Iraq is very different. Although the video only shows a rehearsal, since the performance never took place, the viewer reads the work through the context of historical events, and the traumas of people who were imprisoned, tortured and killed there.' (<<http://www.manifesta7.it/artists/378>>, accessed 15/2/09.)

KIMSOOJA
b. 1957 Teagu, Korea
Lives in New York, US



A Beggar Woman – Lagos, 2001
DV, 4:3, colour, silent, 8:50 mins
Produced in Nigeria/US / No dialogue / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Galleria Continua, Beijing

A Homeless Woman – Cairo, 2001
DV, 4:3, colour, silent, 6:33 mins
Produced in Egypt/US / No dialogue / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Galleria Continua, Beijing

Small gestures and postures, standing resolute against injustice by one's non-violent, impassive presence, have become synonymous with acts of personal resistance and protest. In a series of performances begun in the early 2000s, Kimsooja takes on the pose of marginalised and vulnerable figures in society: a homeless woman lying prone in the street or under a tree, or a beggar with hand open and still, the gesture seeking alms. In *A Beggar Woman – Lagos*, a few people press money into her hand, while later on, the hand remaining open all the while, another person steals from it. Kimsooja's art relies both on arranging her body in a symbolic form and on a physical presence that catalyses a small and immediate system of exchanges to play out for the video record. She remains a motionless figure in the frame of the video, always with her back to the audience, heightening our observation of the surrounding context.

Taiyo KIMURA
b. 1970 Kamakura-city, Japan
Lives in Sokei, Japan



Video as Drawing, 1997
DV transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, sound, 7:54 mins
Produced in Japan / No dialogue / English intertitles

Typical Japanese-English, 2005
DV transferred to DVD, colour, sound, 5:00 mins
Produced in Japan / No dialogue / English intertitles

The curious, absurd, nonsensical and chaotic appear in Kimura's works, which span sculpture, installation, performance and video. *Video as Drawing* presents a Dada-esque sequence of footage in which the artist chooses to perform a purposely useless act, such as trying to get up using only one leg while the rest of his body stays bound in a black plastic bag, or transferring the contents of one cup of orange juice to another using a tap as a straw. Another scene shows Kimura placing a plastic bag over his head and breathing its full contents of oxygen, inviting questions about our interpretations (for example, 'How real is the performance of suffocation?'). *Typical Japanese-English* shows mundane 'tasks' made strange, such as throwing a meal together in the washing machine, or drinking and smoking through the head of a small fish. Potentially, these acts invite our reflection on where acts of inanity start and our 'normal' contemporary life begins.

LEE Wen
b. 1957 Singapore
Lives in Singapore and Tokyo, Japan



Journey of a Yellow Man no. 13: Fragmented Bodies/Shifting Ground, 1999
DVCAM transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, stereo, 10:30 mins
Produced in Australia in English / Cinematographer Ben Wickes / Editors Lee Wen & Ben Wickes / Print source/rights Purchased 2000. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation. Collection Queensland Art Gallery
Production still this page Andrea Higgins

Lee first performed as 'the yellow man' in 1992. Writing about Lee's 1999 performance, Lee Weng Choy noted: 'With titles such as this, the attention is too often on terms like "yellow man", at the expense of those like "journey". But in Lee Wen's work, it is precisely through the process of "journeying" that "identity" is constructed and deconstructed.' (*Beyond the Future: The Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, exhibition catalogue, Queensland Art Gallery, 1999, p. 130.) Performed in Brisbane and recorded on digital video, this work shows the artist journeying from a suburban house, through the garden and into the city. Walking past the city's landmarks and crossing its river by ferry, Lee carried an ox's heart in his hands throughout the performance, which ended as he lay down this cargo at the doors of the Queensland Art Gallery. As he breaks open the heart, he utters the only words in the video: 'Open heart.'

LI Wei

b. 1970 Hubei, Beijing, China
Lives in Beijing

**Mirror, Seoul 9.27, 2003**

DV transferred to DVD, 16:9, colour, sound, 8:56 mins
Cinematographer Zhangzhaohui

In *Mirror* we see the video record of a performance by Li Wei wearing a large square mirror over his head and walking through a crowd of people who are gathered in Seoul on 27 September 2003 in protest of the call for troops to enter Iraq. Li Wei's head appears strangely disembodied, surrounded by the mirror he wears, almost as a yoke. In the reflected images we see people carrying placards that read 'End the occupation in Iraq'. As he journeys through the crowd his simple gesture gathers weight as an artistic and political statement with a particular context, an action that draws the fascination of the protest participants and the attendant press.

Nam June PAIK

b. 1932 Seoul, Korea, d. 2006 Miami, US

**Hands and Face, 1961**

Video, 4:3, b/w, silent, 1:42 mins
Produced in Germany / No dialogue / Cinematographer Klaus Barisch / Print source/rights Courtesy the Estate of Nam June Paik & Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York
Image this page courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Paik's works radically altered perceptions about media and the representation of physical acts, music and notions of time and spirituality, and he is considered a key figure in the early history of performance art recorded on video. The experimental film *Hands and Face* was shot by Klaus Barisch in Cologne. This work represents one of the earliest performances made specifically for its filmed record. Its simple presentation focuses on Paik's hands, which explore his face as if he is in a trance.

QIU Zhijie

b. 1969 Zhangzhou, Fujian province, China
Lives in Beijing & Hangzhou, China

**Landscape, 1999**

Mini DV, 4:3, b/w & colour, stereo, 8:40 mins
Produced in China / No dialogue / Print source/rights Purchased 2004. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant. Collection Queensland Art Gallery

Landscape opens with a sped-up scene in which family and friends pose to have their picture taken in front of a monument, and we hear the frenetic garble of the city population. As an escalator is cleared of ghostly mirages of people, Qiu begins cutting together films of himself turning in space in different locations. It is as if the viewer is involved with the artist in a spinning dance in front of famous landmarks. As Qiu has explained: 'I put different spaces together ... and used my face as a reference point, so it was like having a dream. You enter here, exit there.' (Quoted in Val Wang, 'Qiu Zhijie table of contents' <<http://www.qiuzhijie.com/html/critiques/e-003.htm>>, accessed 22/2/09.)

Umut SAKALLIOĞLU

b. 1986 Ordu, Turkey
Lives in Istanbul, Turkey

**Rally, 2006–07**

Mini DV/Hi-8 transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, sound, 3:47 mins
Produced in Turkey in Turkish with English subtitles / Cinematographer Nitu Poyzö

From November 2006 to March 2007 Sakallioğlu attended public demonstrations in Istanbul held by various groups ranging from a 'National movement supporters' demonstration against the Armenian genocide bills passed at European parliaments' and a 'Fundamentalist party supporters' rally against the visit of the Pope to Turkey' to 'A group of youngsters in an alternative promotion campaign of a jean store opening in Istikal Street'. Sakallioğlu joins nine demonstrations in all, and the cumulative effect of his involvement in these demonstrations, and the ease with which he adopts the prescribed behaviours necessary to fit in with the group, means that we become suspicious as to the sincerity of the repeat performance. By extension, the efficacy of rallies and the authenticity of participants' intentions are also undermined.

SONG Dong

b. 1966 Beijing, China

Lives in Beijing



Jump, 1999

DV transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, sound, 16:00 mins

Produced in China / No dialogue / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist and Beijing Commune

The performance art of Song Dong occupies an important place in the history of Chinese contemporary art. In his practice, calligraphy, performance, photography and filming are approached with sensitivity to the profound aspects of ordinary events, while also embracing the anachronistic and humorous. In *Jump*, Song Dong jumps up and down repeatedly in front of the Forbidden City in Beijing. As Philippe Vergne has said: 'Jump, with its Taoist absurdity, could find its roots in a traditional Chinese proverb: "Jump ... no reason not to jump ... no reason to jump."' (Quoted in 'Song Dong' <<http://latitudes.walkerart.org/artists/index.wac?id=151>>.)

Kiran SUBBAIAH

b. 1971 Sidapur, Coorg District, Kamataka, India

Lives in Bangalore, India and Amsterdam, The Netherlands



Droppings (Exercises in Gravity), 1998

DV transferred to DVD, 4:3, b/w, sound, 3:48 mins

Produced in France / No dialogue / English text / Produced with the support of Cité des Arts, Paris

Strip Tease, 1999

DV transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, silent, 2:11 mins

Produced in UK / No dialogue / English text / Produced with the support of RCA, London

Flight Rehearsals, 2003

DV transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, sound, 4:40 mins

Produced in The Netherlands in English / Produced with the support of Rijksakademie, Amsterdam



Subbaiah's practice involves a range of media, including assemblage, video and internet art. Each filmed work by Subbaiah has a distinctive personality that plays provocateur with the audience. He playfully disrupts assumptions about performance, its recording and its exhibition with humorous self-referentiality.



TANAKA Koki
b. 1975 Tochigi, Japan
Lives in Tokyo, Japan



Simple Gesture and Temporary Sculpture, 2008

DV transferred to DVD, 4:3, colour, sound and silent, 3:26 mins
Produced in Japan / No dialogue

Tanaka's art practice relies on a physical engagement with objects and the behaviour of his body in relation to these objects. In *Simple Gesture and Temporary Sculpture* the artist walks up cardboard boxes to mount the roof of a shed and then climbs back down a ladder. Wryly humorous and with a wink to the absurd, Tanaka practices what Donald Eubank suggests is a 'School of Doing Things, an update on Mono-ha – the School of Things' ('Eight must-sees as Mori Art embraces "excess"', *The Japan Times*, 18/10/07). The video becomes the only means by which ephemeral art and performances can be preserved.

TSUI Kuang-Yu
b. 1974 Taipei, Taiwan
Lives in Taipei



The Shortcut to the Systematic Life: Superficial Life, 2002

DV transferred to hard-drive, 4:3, colour, sound, 10:36 mins
Produced in Taipei / No dialogue / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Eslite Gallery, Taipei

Invisible City: Sea Level, 2006

HD transferred to hard-drive, 4:3, colour, sound, 4:40 mins
Produced in The Netherlands/ No dialogue / Print source/rights Courtesy the artist & Eslite Gallery, Taipei

The Shortcut to the Systematic Life: Superficial Life sees Tsui travel through the city and, in an acknowledgement that there are particular modes of dress to suit different activities, occupations, types of movement and considerations of safety, he changes his outfit for each context. The 'short-cut' refers to the fact that these outfits are one-piece, step-through costumes, as easily put on as discarded. *Invisible City: Sea Level* shows Tsui wandering through Amsterdam in an outfit that leaks water through hundreds of small fountain sprays, as if the human body (largely comprised of water) has sprung a leak. This humorous act performed with deadpan delivery also refers to an age-old Dutch fear that the sea will reclaim the land.

YU Cheng-Ta
b. 1983 Taiwan
Lives in Taipei, Taiwan



'Ventriloquists – Introduction' series, 2008

DV transferred to DVD, 16:9, colour, sound, 16:36 mins
Produced in Taiwan in Mandarin with Mandarin & English subtitles / Key cast Yu Cheng-Ta, Richard Cilli, Phindi Peter, Kumiko Takahashi, Tanner Brecheen, Natalie Allen, Kin Jin-Hee, Loretta Necir & Kel Kelleher

"'Ventriloquists – Introduction'" is a series of works shot in the streets of Taipei. I hid behind the foreigners living in Taipei and directed them to look at the camera and repeat what I had said ... It was actually an imitation of tones, and these tones were put together as a forged self-introduction in Chinese. Because my foreigners are not familiar with Chinese, they were trying to imitate, just like an instrument. The instruments play out a language that is not really a language, and thus create laughing points. I (the man in black behind them) am like the drifting power, which comes in and out of their body, resulting in the state of virtual identity and drifting subjectivity' (Artist statement, <<http://yuchengta.blogspot.com/search/label/2008%20work>>, accessed 16/2/09.)

Dr Gene Sherman

Dr Gene Sherman is Chair and Executive Director of Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation. She has a specialised knowledge of art, literary theory and French and English literature and spent seventeen years teaching, researching and lecturing at secondary and tertiary levels. As Director of Sherman Galleries (1986–2007) she initiated, negotiated and organised twelve to seventeen exhibitions annually, as well as regional and national touring exhibitions within Australia, and international touring exhibitions through the Asia-Pacific region. Dr Sherman is on the Board of the National Gallery of Australia Foundation, the Venice Biennale Commissioner's Council, the *Art & Australia* Advisory Board, and the Australia-Israel Cultural Exchange. In 2003, the French Government honoured Dr Sherman with the award of *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* for her contribution to culture. In 2008 she received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from The University of Sydney.

Kathryn Weir

Kathryn Weir is the Head of International Art and the Australian Cinémathèque at the Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane. Curatorial projects include 'Modern Ruin' (2008), 'The Leisure Class' (2007, with Rachel O'Reilly), 'Breathless: French New Wave Turns 50' (2007), 'Hong Kong: Shanghai: Cinema Cities' (2007), the 5th Asia-Pacific Triennial (2006–07, member of the curatorium), 'Kiss of the Beast: Gorillas, Wild Beasts and Monsters in Art and Film' (2005–06, with Dr Ted Gott), 'Press Pause: Recent Australian Video Installations' (2005, with Julie Ewington), 'The Nature Machine: Contemporary Art, Nature and Technology' (2004–05), 'Video Hits: Art and Music Video' (2004, with Nicholas Chambers) and 'Read My Lips: Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman' (1998).

Mark Nash

Mark Nash is a well-known specialist in contemporary fine art moving image practices, avant-garde and world cinema. He was co-curator of Documenta 11 (2002), and film curator of the Berlin Biennial (2004). He has most recently curated the film component of the Sharjah Biennial (2006), 'Experiments with Truth', Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (2004–05) and a conference on 'Film and Ecology' for the Royal Society of Arts. He is currently Professor and Head, Department of Curating Contemporary Art, Royal College of Art, London. Previously Director of Fine Art Research at Central St Martins, he has also been a Senior Lecturer in Film History and Theory at the University of East London, and visiting lecturer on the Whitney Museum Independent Study Programme. He holds a PhD from Middlesex University.

Naomi Evans

Naomi Evans is Assistant Curator of International Art at the Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art. Recent projects to which she has contributed at the Gallery of Modern Art include 'Modern Ruin' and 'Picasso & His Collection' (both in 2008). Previously Curatorial Assistant at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, she contributed to projects including 'Yinka Shonibare MBE' (2008–09), 'Simryn Gill: Gathering' (2008–09), 'Southern Exposure: Works from the Collection of the San Diego MCA' (2008) and 'Tim Hawkinson: Mapping the Marvellous' (2007–08). Naomi Evans was the first Australian curator to participate in OPEN 2007: International Installation and Sculpture Festival, Venice Lido, working with artist Lindy Lee, and was curator of Anne Zahalka's exhibition 'Welcome to Wonderland', FotoFreo Festival, Fremantle, Western Australia in 2006.

The authors, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation and the Queensland Art Gallery gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the artists and filmmakers whose works are included in 'The view from elsewhere' screening programme, the associated 'Small acts' exhibition and this publication. Numerous individuals, galleries, distributors and organisations have also contributed to 'The view from elsewhere' and we are very grateful for their assistance:

Lida Abdul
Bani Abidi
Ayisha Abraham
Vyacheslav Akhunov
Sharbek Amankul
Sasithorn Ariyavicha
Dr. Barbara Barsch,
Leiterin ifa-Galerie
Berlin, Institut für
Auslandsbeziehungen e. V.
(Institute for Foreign
Cultural Relations)
Sandrine Beer, AGAV Films
Akjoltoy Bekbolotov
Federica Beltrame,
Galleria Continua
Guy Ben-Ner
Maxime Boyer
Tammy Cheung
Rebecca Cleman,
Electronic Arts Intermix
Judith Cooke,
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tamaki
Keren Cytter
Da Huang Pictures
Jose da Silva

Jane Davidson-Ladd,
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tamaki
Jacqui Davies,
Animate Projects Ltd
Will Davies, White Cube
Anne Demy-Geroe,
Executive Director,
Brisbane International
Film Festival
Fabio Dondero,
Galerie Davide Gallo
Maroan el Sani
Julie Ewington
Leyla Fakhr, Green Cardamom
Simon Field & Keith Griffiths,
Illuminations Films
Filmtales Production
Nina Fischer
John Francia
Galerie Chantal Crousel
Galerie EIGEN+ART
Ghazel
Ranu Ghosh
Amos Gitaï
Steve Gooding
Ana Grgic
Joana Hadjithomas
Nadine Haldemann,
Elisabeth Kaufmann Zürich
Mona Hatoum
Don Heron
Homma Takashi,
SAPPORO Short Fest
Hu Jie
Idéale Audience &
About Productions
Takahiko Iimura
Isabel Ingold
Inoue Tsuki
Rose Issa
Jia Zhangke
Lv Jingjing, Beijing Commune
Khalil Joreige
Hiwa K

Gülsün Karamustafa
Elisabeth Kaufmann,
Elisabeth Kaufmann Zürich
Amal Kenawy
Hassan Khan
Kick the Machine
Jenning King, Eslite Gallery
Marion Klotz,
Memento Films International
Rosie Hays
Kendal Henry,
Public Art & Urban Design
Saadia Karim, MK2
Desislava Kavlakova,
Xerxes Fine Arts
Khavn, Filmless Films
Elias Khoury
Nathalie Khoury,
Galerie Sfeir-Semler
Abbas Kiarostami
Kimsooja
Taiyo Kimura
Ferdinand Lapuz,
Ignatius Films
Lee Wen
Li Wei
Victoria Lynn
Lisa Mazza, Manifesta7
Brillante Mendoza
Almagul Menlibayeva
Viktor Misiano
Pascaline Monier, White Cube
Rabih Mroué
Amir Muhammad
Urano Mutsumi, Arataniurano
Oki Hiroyuki
Yoko Ono
Michael O'Sullivan
The Estate of Nam June Paik
Isabelle Park,
Jeonju International
Film Festival
Kristina Lee Podesva
Qiu Zhijie
Suhanya Raffel

Manasa Rao, Format Studio
Allie Rex, Kimsooja Studio
Jocelyne Saab
Mary Sabbatino, Galerie Lelong
Umut Sakallioğlu
Seifollah Samadian
Magdalena Sawon,
Postmasters Gallery
Karen Schoellkopf
Emile Sherman
Yashas Shetty
Sixpackfilms
Amanda Slack-Smith
Song Dong
Hito Steyerl
Russell Storer
Kiran Subbaiah
Sutthirart Supaparinaya
Tanaka Koki
Gulbara Tolomushova
Tsui Kuang-Yu
Wang Jianwei
Apichatpong Weerasethakul
Gigi Wong, Visible Record Ltd.
Yin Xiuzhen
Yoo Soon-Mi
Yu Cheng-Ta
Robyn Ziebell

