

I am not
interested
in leaving
things
behind, but
ideas

He has become famous as a »cooking artist« – a misunderstanding that has almost concealed the real questions raised by his work for the past twenty years. Via email, *Raimar Stange* spoke with **RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA** about this subject and the always-surprising way that the artist has read Western culture against the cultural attitudes of his homeland, Thailand.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

»Ich will keine Dinge, sondern Ideen hinterlassen«



Photo: Annette Aurell
Courtesy neugerriemachneider, Berlin

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Er ist als »Koch-Künstler« berühmt geworden – ein Missverständnis, das die wirklichen Fragestellungen seiner Arbeit seit gut 20 Jahren nahezu verdeckt. Darüber, und über seine immer wieder überraschende Weise, die westliche Kultur mit der Geisteshaltung seiner Heimat Thailand kritisch gegenzulesen, hat *Raimar Stange* sich mit **RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJ**A via E-Mail unterhalten.

»Far Eastern thought is not concerned with substance, but with relationships,« remarks Byung-Chul Han in his book *Hyperkulturalität* (2005). Free from any prescribed dichotomy of subject and object, Rirkrit Tiravanija explores this relational connection in his work by using a variety of formulations. The different media used by the artist, which are often negotiated in cooperation with exhibition visitors or colleagues, range from installation and sculpture to performance and graphics, posters and sound installations to videos and books. So, it is no surprise that Tiravanija played a major role in Nicolas Bourriaud's theatre of »relational aesthetics«. Though at first sight convincing, this positioning is questionable; for, as critic Helmut Draxler rightly noted, Bourriaud's cult book of the nineties focuses specifically on »good relations, which art can allegedly use to oppose capitalism's logic of alienation«. This concentration on harmonious relations swiftly shifted some art from the nineties into the proximity of a compliant event culture.

Among other things, I asked Tiravanija about the possibilities and boundaries of this kind of affirmative relational work within a politically precarious context.

RAIMAR STANGE: *When did you get the idea for your »cooking-situations?«*

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA: One day I was walking along West Broadway on my way to visit a gallery where I was supposed to participate in a group exhibition (curated by Robert Longo). I was thinking about the situation – that this would be the first time my work would be exhibited in New York. It seemed like a lot of pressure to succeed, so I decided to take the opposite attitude, which was to relax. Then and there, I decided to make something that was very close to me and that was part of my everyday experience. When I made the first cooking piece, it was not about cooking at all (I suppose it has never been about cooking!), but was rather a (kind of) museological critique – about cultural fragmentation (the removal or displacement of cultural artefacts from one (original) context to another, i.e. from the East to the West (from my perspective)). It was about reanimating certain structures in order to address the shifting of context, to bring back the everyday to objects which had been catalogued into a certain sphere of cultural value, such as the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum or – more closely related to my background – the Buddha statues and ceramic pottery in all sorts of museum in the West.

STANGE: *Sometimes you cook, and other people eat; sometimes you let people cook, for example in your exhibition in Ludwigsburg in 1997. Why do you switch roles? Do you want to reflect aspects of production as well as of consumption in your cooking-performances?*

»Das fernöstliche Denken orientiert sich nicht an der Substanz, sondern am Verhältnis«, stellt Byung-Chul Han in seinem Buch »Hyperkulturalität« 2005 fest. Dieses relationale Verhältnis jenseits einer vorgeschriebenen Dichotomie von Subjekt und Objekt lotet Rirkrit Tiravanija in seiner künstlerischen Arbeit mit unterschiedlichen Formulierungen aus. Das Spektrum der dabei ins Spiel gebrachten Medien, die oftmals in Kooperation mit Ausstellungsbesuchern oder Kollegen erarbeitet werden, reicht von Installation und Skulptur, über Performance und Zeichnung, Plakat und Hörstück, bis hin zu Video und Buch. Kein Wunder also, dass Tiravanija auf Nicolas Bourriauds Bühne der »relationalen Ästhetik« eine Hauptrolle spielte. Doch diese auf den ersten Blick überzeugende Positionierung ist durchaus fragwürdig, denn Bourriauds Kultbuch der 90er Jahre hat seinen Fokus vor allem, so stellte schon der Kritiker Helmut Draxler treffend fest, auf »gute[n] Beziehungen, welche die Kunst angeblich der kapitalistischen Entfremdungslogik entgegensetzen können«. Genau diese Fokussierung auf harmonische Relationen hat Teile der Kunst der 90er Jahre schnell in die Nähe einer wohlfeilen Eventkultur gerückt.

Über die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen solcher eben auch affirmativen Beziehungsarbeit in einen politisch prekären Kontext habe ich Tiravanija unter anderem befragt.

RAIMAR STANGE: *Wann hattest du die Idee zu deinen »Koch-Situationen«?*

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA: Ich ging den West Broadway entlang, auf dem Weg in eine Galerie, wo ich zu einer Gruppenausstellung eingeladen war (kuratiert von Robert Longo). Ich dachte über die ganze Situation nach, dass meine Arbeit in New York das erste Mal ausgestellt wird. Der Erfolgsdruck schien mir enorm, und so entschied ich mich für das Gegenteil, nämlich es entspannt anzugehen. Ich wollte etwas machen, das mir sehr vertraut und Teil meines Alltags war. Bei meiner ersten Koch-Arbeit ging es anfangs gar nicht ums Kochen (es geht eigentlich nie ums Kochen!), sondern eher um eine (Art) museologische Kritik. Es ging um kulturelle Fragmentierung (das Entfernen oder die Verschiebung kultureller Artefakte von einem (dem ursprünglichen) Kontext in einen anderen, zum Beispiel vom Osten in den Westen (aus meiner Perspektive)). Es ging um die Neubelebung bestimmter Strukturen, darum, die Verschiebung des Kontexts anzusprechen und Objekten ihre Alltäglichkeit zurückzugeben, die in eine bestimmte Sphäre kultureller Werte aufgenommen wurden, wie zum Beispiel die Elgin Marbles im British Museum oder – näher an meiner Herkunft – die Buddha Statuen und Keramiken in allen möglichen Museen des Westens.

**ES IST EIN MOMENT, IN DEM
MAN SELBST ETWAS PRODUZIERT
UND ZUGLEICH KONSUMIERT**



Exhibition views / Ausstellungsansichten »A Retrospective (tomorrow is another fine day)«
Serpentine Gallery, London 2005
Courtesy neugerriemschneider, Berlin



Exhibition view / Ausstellungsansicht
»Just Smile and Don't Talk«,
Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 2010
Courtesy neugerriemschneider, Berlin
Photo: Philipp Ottendörfer



untitled 2011 (the way things go), 2011
Brick pit, aluminum box, steel plate, shovels,
broom, wood, stones, earth / Ziegelgrube,
Aluminiumbox, Stahlplatten, Schaufeln,
Besen, Holz, Steine, Erde
Dimensions variable / Dimensionen variabel
Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise

64

*untitled 2011 (558 broome st,
the future is chrome)*, 2011
Plywood, tempered glass,
aluminum window frames,
glazed ceramic with palladium
luster / Sperrholz, Hartglas,
Aluminium-Fensterrahmen,
glasierte Keramik mit
Palladiumglanz
359 x 391 x 333 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Gavin Brown's enterprise



SPIKE 31 - 2011 *Portrait - Rirkrit Tiravanija*

Exhibition view / Ausstellungsansicht »Fear Eats the Soul«
Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York 2011
Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise



untitled 2011 (558 broome st, the future is chrome), 2011
Plywood, tempered glass, aluminum window frames, glazed ceramic with palladium luster / Sperrholz, Hartglas,
Aluminium-Fensterrahmen, glasierte Keramik mit Palladiumglanz
859 x 391 x 333 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise

TIRAVANIJA: I was trying to reanimate objects (from readymades to pre-readymades) by reintroducing their function. A pot is a pot, a stove is a stove, and a chair is a chair. Initially, I didn't completely understand the Western dichotomy of »subject-object«. In Thai culture we don't have the same perspective; we have neither subject nor object – in a funny, Buddhist (philosophical, semiotic) way. When I started to cook and serve food (without planning to, purely by coincidence), I quickly realised that viewers (readers, critics) were interpreting the work as performance in a Beuysian sense, as a staged situation, which meant that viewers had a certain distance to it. I felt that this distance represented the gap in Western thought between »subject« and »object,« which I needed to attack and dismantle – the »doubt« about the author, or the »doubt« about the subject's position or positioning. So, in order to confuse the positions, I implicated the viewer. I suppose that raised questions regarding production and consumption. In talking about the works, I often bring up the idea that people sometimes walk on a floor sculpture by Carl Andre, only to find out midway (or all the way) through that they have been walking on a sculpture. Suddenly people are afraid that they did something they were not supposed to do (allowed to do). The curtain drops; it is a moment in which one produces and consumes at the same time.

**SOMETIMES I MEET EXPECTATIONS,
THOUGH UPON CLOSER EXAMINATION
THERE SHOULD BE SOME SURPRISES**

STANGE: *At Skulptur Projekte Münster in 1997, you surprised everyone by exhibiting a piece of puppet theatre. How did that come about?*

TIRAVANIJA: I like that – »surprised!« I would like to go from one surprise to another, or rather I would like to not satisfy too many expectations. Sometimes I meet expectations, though upon closer examination there should be some surprises. I was thinking about the people living in Münster and how they might have a love-hate relationship with the exhibition, with the fact that every ten years their park (nature) gets turned into a culture park (sculpture). I started to do some research – looking into the place's dark past – and found out that the zoo in Münster was a site of some contention; the man who founded the zoo was a priest who was interested in biology, which conflicted with Christianity's creation myth, and he was therefore excommunicated. But this Christian town has a society that works to raise money for the zoo. The society puts on theatre performances (a drunken theatre) where men dress up, play female roles (and vice versa) and get drunk on stage – in other words it is debauched and out of control. One play performed at the theatre told the story of a family of farmers, in which the old

STANGE: *Mal kochst du selbst und andere essen, mal lässt du andere kochen, wie etwa bei der Ausstellung im Kunstverein Ludwigsburg 1997. Warum dieser Rollenwechsel? Geht es dir bei deinen Koch-Performances darum, sowohl Aspekte der Produktion wie solche des Konsums zu reflektieren?*

TIRAVANIJA: Ich versuchte, Objekte neu zu beleben (von Readymades zu Prä-Readymades), indem ich ihre ursprüngliche Funktion wiederherstellte. Ein Kochtopf ist ein Kochtopf, ein Ofen ist ein Ofen, und ein Stuhl ist ein Stuhl. Ich verstand die westliche Dichotomie von »Subjekt-Objekt« anfangs nicht ganz. In der Thai-Kultur gibt es diese Perspektive nicht. Wir haben weder Subjekt noch Objekt – auf eine lustige buddhistische (philosophische, semiotische) Art. Als ich mit dem Kochen begann (was nicht geplant war, sondern rein zufällig passierte), erkannte ich schnell, dass die Betrachter (Leser, Kritiker) die Arbeit in einem Beuys'schen Sinn als Performance interpretierten, als eine Inszenierung ... Was eine bestimmte Distanz schuf. Ich spürte, dass ich diese Distanz die im westlichen Denken vorhandene Kluft zwischen »Subjekt« und »Objekt« darstellt, angreifen und abbauen musste – »Zweifel« am Autor oder an einer Subjektposition und Subjektpositionierung. Um die Positionen dazubringen, bezog ich also den Besucher mit ein. Ich denke, das warf Fragen zu Produktion und Konsumation auf. Wenn ich über diese Arbeiten spreche, erwähne ich oft, dass Leute manchmal über eine Bodenskulptur von Carl Andre spazieren und erst am halben Weg (oder am Ende) bemerken, dass sie über eine Skulptur gegangen sind. Es gibt einen Moment des Erschreckens, etwas Verbotenes getan zu haben, der Vorhang fällt, und man begreift etwas. Es ist ein Moment, in dem man selbst etwas produziert und zugleich konsumiert.

STANGE: *Bei »Skulptur.Projekte 1997« in Münster hast du überraschend ein Marionettentheater präsentiert. Wie kam es dazu, was war die Idee?*

TIRAVANIJA: Das gefällt mir! Überraschend! Ich hätte gerne eine Überraschung nach der anderen und will nicht zu viele Erwartungen erfüllen. Manchmal erfülle ich sie, aber wenn man genauer hinsieht, gibt es Überraschungen. Ich dachte über die Menschen nach, die in Münster leben und dass sie wahrscheinlich eine Hass-Liebe zu dieser Ausstellung haben, weil alle zehn Jahre ihr Park (Natur) in einen Kulturpark (Skulptur) verwandelt wird. Ich begann zu recherchieren, auch die dunklen Seiten des Ortes, und fand heraus, dass es um den Zoo in Münster viele Auseinandersetzungen gab. Der Gründer des Zoos war ein Priester, der sich für Biologie interessierte, was im Widerspruch zum christlichen Schöpfungsmythos stand, und weshalb er exkommuniziert wurde. Aber in dieser christlichen Stadt gab es einen Verein, der Geld für den Zoo aufstellte. Der Verein veranstaltete Theateraufführungen, bei denen sich Männer verkleiden und Frauenrollen spielen und umgekehrt und sich alle auf der Bühne be-

untitled 2011 (t-shirt, no t-shirt), 2011
Silkscreen t-shirt factory / T-Shirt-Siebdruck-Produktionsstätte
859 x 391 x 333 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise



untitled 2011 (558 broome st, the future is chrome), 2011
Plywood, tempered glass, aluminum window frames,
glazed ceramic with palladium luster / Sperrholz, Hartglas,
Aluminium-Fensterrahmen, glasierte Keramik mit Palladiumglanz
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parents wanted their son (their only son) to take over the family farm, but the son refused because he wanted to be an artist. He left the farm for Münster. The farm was then passed on to his sister and her husband, but in time the farm ran into trouble and fell into debt. At a desperate moment before the family was going to lose the farm, word arrived to their son in town. By then, he had become an established artist. He returned home to save the family farm using the fortune that he had made as a successful artist. Yes, the artist saves the day! I'm sure it was a surprise in those days!

I also wanted my work to involve the local people in order to close the gap between the community and the outsiders. I wanted to work with a school that was located near the original site of the zoo. (It has long since been relocated.) I came up with the idea of puppet theatre because I was looking for a form that was sculptural as well as one with a built-in handicap for the players. The thought was that this might create chaos and emulate drunkenness!

**I AM INTERESTED IN THE POSSIBILITIES
THAT CAN BE ARRIVED AT WHEN PEOPLE
PUT THEIR IDEAS TOGETHER**

STANGE: *In your exhibition Social Capital at Migros Museum in Zurich in 1998, you installed a supermarket. Also included in the show was an auto repair shop produced in collaboration with Franz Ackermann as well as works by other artists, for example Douglas Gordon and Dan Flavin. How important is collaboration in your work?*

TIRAVANIJA: It is important to the same extent that an audience should be involved in the work. I am not interested in authorship; I am interested in the possibilities that can be arrived at when people put their ideas together. There are ideas that have been released into the world of culture that I find important to quote, re-present or re-address. And I think that there are always ideas that we should reconsider. After all, time is a structure constantly moving forward. I am not interested in leaving (any) things behind; I am interested in leaving ideas behind. Like a good recipe, everyone knows what it is, what it tastes like and even how to make it again – perhaps even differently, following their own interpretation; or perhaps it would be a base for something completely different, a possibility.

STANGE: *In the 90s your work was discussed in the context of relational aesthetics. How comfortable are you with your work being framed in this way?*

TIRAVANIJA: I am comfortable with frames, and I'm comfortable not to be framed by it. One works as a living, breathing subject. One shifts and changes (I hope) with experience. I think it has become clear by

**ICH DENKE, ES IST MITTLERWEILE KLAR, DASS
ALLES RELATIONAL IST, SOGAR COMPUTERPIXEL**

trinken – mit anderen Worten, es ist wild und unkontrolliert. Ein Stück handelte von der Geschichte einer Bauernfamilie. Die Eltern wünschten sich, dass ihr Sohn (der einzige Sohn) den Hof übernimmt, aber er weigerte sich, weil er Künstler werden wollte. Er verließ den Hof und ging nach Münster. Der Hof wurde an seine Schwester und ihren Ehemann übergeben, aber nach einiger Zeit gerieten sie in Schwierigkeiten und verschuldeten sich. In dieser ausweglosen Situation, in der die Familie Gefahr lief, den Hof zu verlieren, erfuhr der Sohn in der Stadt davon. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt war er bereits ein erfolgreicher Künstler. Er kehrte nach Hause zurück und rettete mit dem Reichtum, den er inzwischen angehäuft hatte, den Hof seiner Familie. Ja, der Künstler war die Rettung! Das war damals eine Überraschung, da bin ich mir sicher!

Ich wollte auch, dass meine Arbeit die Menschen vor Ort einbindet, um die Distanz zwischen der Stadt und den Besuchern zu verringern. Also hatte ich die Idee, mit einer Schule zusammenzuarbeiten, die sich in der Nähe des Alten Zoos befand (der schon vor langer Zeit verlegt wurde). Ich entschied mich für ein Marionettentheater, weil ich nach einer Form suchte, die zugleich skulptural war und den Spielern die Darstellung erschwerte. Ich dachte, es könnte Chaos erzeugen und den Eindruck von Betrunkenheit, vielleicht!

STANGE: *In deiner Ausstellung »Das soziale Kapital« 1998 im Züricher migros museum hast du einen Supermarkt installiert. Unter anderem war da in Zusammenarbeit mit Franz Ackermann eine Autowerkstatt aufgebaut. Auch Werke anderer Künstler, etwa von Douglas Gordon oder Dan Flavin, waren zu sehen. Wie wichtig ist die Kooperation mit anderen Künstlern für deine Arbeit?*

TIRAVANIJA: Genauso wichtig wie das Publikum in die Arbeit miteinzubeziehen. Ich bin nicht an Autorschaft interessiert. Mich interessieren die Möglichkeiten, die entstehen, wenn Menschen ihre Ideen zusammenbringen. Es gibt Ideen in der Kulturwelt, die ich für so bedeutend und wichtig halte, sie zu zitieren und/oder wieder zu zeigen und neu zu bearbeiten. Und ich denke auch, dass es immer Ideen gibt, über die man neu nachdenken sollte. Schließlich ist die Zeit eine Struktur, die immer fortschreitet. Ich bin nicht daran interessiert, Dinge (irgendetwas) zurückzulassen. Mich interessiert es, Ideen zu hinterlassen. Wie ein gutes Rezept, jeder kennt es, weiß, wie es schmeckt und wie man es nachkocht – vielleicht sogar ein bisschen abgewandelt. Oder vielleicht ist es die Grundlage für etwas ganz anderes, eine Möglichkeit.

STANGE: *In den 90er Jahren wurde deine Kunst im Rahmen der »Relational Aesthetics« diskutiert. Fühlst du dich wohl in diesem Kontext?*

TIRAVANIJA: Ich kann mit Rahmen ganz gut leben, aber

The land foundation, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Courtesy neugerriemschneider, Berlin
Photo: Liz Linden



now that everything is relational, even computer pixels. However, I have always had a problem with aestheticizing. To me, that seems to be just another gap, and a gap that I have tried to dismantle. Aesthetics is a Western concept; it separates subject from object. And as I mentioned earlier, for me, no such distinction exists.

STANGE: *Together with Kamin Lerdchapraserit you founded "The Land, a project in the northern part of Thailand, where you experiment with alternative ecological and economic models. Can you tell me a bit more about the project and what you are doing there?*

TIRAVANIJA: Not doing much, but a lot. *The Land* has now existed for over ten years. It combines different desires: on the one hand, a desire for a safe house – a place of rest, but also a place to think and to have exchanges outside or aside from the normal spheres, a desire for a retreat outside of the grid; and, on the other hand, a desire to experiment with living structures – towards holistic ideas, without idealism, without property, without ownership, and essentially without expectations. It is really a rice field when in season as well as a place for contemplation. It is a landscape upon which to act, a surface on which to build models and a table around which to meet. But it is only those things when there is a need and a will for such interaction. It lays fallow when there is no water, it becomes lush when the rain falls, and it becomes impossible when water floods the plains. It is the desire of many, but most of the time it is only a possibility. It is what many imagine it to be – beyond what it actually is. Still, it is there, and it has reached much of its potential, although it has failed in other ways. It was built, and it has fallen. And others will arrive to build on both the failures and the successes.

STANGE: *Has your teaching influenced or changed your art practice?*

TIRAVANIJA: Yes, I have been influenced by it. But, no, I would not say that it has changed my practice. Rather, I see it as part and parcel of the practice. I am interested in the exchanges and the possibilities to think and work with others. Teaching is a part of that relationship. It has its speed and its duration, and I want to spend that kind of time thinking and talking.

STANGE: *Over the past few years, your work has become increasingly political. I am thinking here, for example, of the Demonstration Drawings (2001–ongoing) as well as the mural and the buttons where you ask: Where is Ai Weiwei (2011). How do you explain this development in your work?*

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IDEOLOGICAL
IN MY APPROACH TO ART MAKING AND
THE POTENTIAL OF ART MAKING

auch damit, nicht in einen Rahmen gesteckt zu werden. Man arbeitet als ein lebendes, atmendes Subjekt. Man bewegt und ändert sich durch Erfahrung (hoffentlich). Ich denke, es ist mittlerweile klar, dass alles relational ist, sogar Computerpixel. Allerdings hatte ich immer ein Problem mit Ästhetisierungen. Für mich ist auch das eine Kluft, die ich versucht habe abzubauen. Ästhetik ist ein westliches Konzept. Es trennt das Subjekt vom Objekt, und wie ich schon sagte, gibt es für mich diese Unterscheidung nicht.

STANGE: *Du bist mit Kamin Lerdchapraserit Begründer des Projektes »The Land«. Ihr testet im Norden Thailands, in der Nähe von Chiang Mai, andere Formen von Ökologie und Ökonomie aus. Was genau passiert dort?*

TIRAVANIJA: Nicht viel, aber doch sehr viel. »The Land« existiert nun schon seit über zehn Jahren. Es erfüllt verschiedene Sehnsüchte: einerseits nach einem sicheren Zuhause – einem Ort, um sich auszuruhen, aber auch einen Ort des Denkens und des Austauschs außerhalb der gewohnten Sphären, der Wunsch nach einem Rückzugsort außerhalb des Rasters. Und auf der anderen Seite, die Sehnsucht, mit dem Lebendigen zu experimentieren – mit holistischen Ideen, ohne Idealismus, ohne Besitz, ohne Eigentum und vor allem ohne Erwartung. Es ist je nach Jahreszeit tatsächlich ein Reisfeld aber auch ein Ort der Kontemplation. Es ist eine Landschaft, auf der man agieren kann, eine Oberfläche, auf der man Modelle bauen kann und ein Tisch, an dem man sich trifft. Aber all das ist es nur, wenn es das Bedürfnis und den Willen für solche Interaktionen gibt. Es liegt brach, wenn es kein Wasser gibt, es wächst üppig, wenn der Regen fällt, und es ist unmöglich zu bewirtschaften, wenn die Ebene überflutet ist. Es verkörpert die Sehnsucht vieler, aber vor allem ist es eine Möglichkeit. Es ist, was viele sich darunter vorstellen, jenseits seiner Realität. Dennoch, es ist da und hat viele seiner Potenziale ausgeschöpft und andere verfehlt. Es wurde gebaut, und es ist zusammengebrochen, aber es werden wieder Leute kommen und an beidem arbeiten, den Fehlern und den Erfolgen.

STANGE: *Beeinflusst oder verändert das Unterrichten deine künstlerische Praxis?*

TIRAVANIJA: Es beeinflusst mich, aber ich würde nicht sagen, dass es meine Praxis verändert. Eher sehe ich es als wesentlichen Teil von ihr. Ich interessiere mich für den Austausch und die Möglichkeiten mit anderen zu denken und zu arbeiten. Zu Unterrichten ist Teil dieser Beziehung. Es hat seine Geschwindigkeit und seine Dauer, und ich möchte diese Art von Zeit verbringen, mit Denken und Sprechen.

STANGE: *Über die letzten paar Jahre wurde deine Arbeit zunehmend politisch. Ich denke hier zum Beispiel an die »Demonstration Drawings« (2001–07) ebenso wie an das Transparent*

The land foundation, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Courtesy neugerriemschneider, Berlin
Photo: Lir Linden



TIRAVANIJA: I have always been ideological in my approach to art making and the potential of art making, and I have always been sceptical about institutional structures or institutional boundaries. This doesn't mean that I have worked or lived outside the bounds of such structures, but certainly, instinctively, I have always been doubtful. Already since Ronald Reagan's presidency and continuing until now, the political divide present in Thailand has influenced this attitude. Of course, China and Thailand are different in many ways, but parallels can be drawn between the corruption of power and the abuse of information (disinformation) found in each. The rhetorics and the manipulation of the media, although blatant, are highly divisive. The battle is now being fought for stakes in the future of the country, and the question of a new (republic) state has everyone on their toes. Opinions, innuendoes and rumours are everywhere, and the need to rewrite the constitution looms large. But isn't that the case in many parts of the globe? Everywhere, we feel the shift of power under our feet; how can we not address it, even with our tongues in our cheeks!

STANGE: *One final question: What are you reading at the moment?*

TIRAVANIJA: Roberto Bolaño, *The Insufferable Gaucho*; Jülius Koller: *Universal Futurological Operation* (a catalogue put together by Roman Ondák); Simon Garfield, *Just My Type. A book about fonts*; Roberto Bolaño, *Between Parentheses: Essays, Articles and Speeches 1998–2003*; Tom Mueller, *Extra Virginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil*; and *Golf Digest*, the February issue with the »Hot List« evaluating the latest golf equipment. —

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA, born 1961 in Buenos Aires. Lives between New York and Chiang Mai, Thailand. Recent solo shows among others: *Fear Eats the Soul*, Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York (2011); *Pilar Corrias*, London (2010); *Chew the Fat*, Neugerriemschneider, Berlin (2009); *Less Oil More Courage*, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel (2009). Recent exhibition participations include *The Last Newspaper*, *The New Museum*, New York (2010); *Compass In Hand*, *Museum of Modern Art*, New York (2009); *Re-Imagining Asia*, *Haus der Kulturen der Welt*, Berlin (2008); *theanspacewhatever*, *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*, New York (2008).

Represented by Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York; Pilar Corrias, London; Neugerriemschneider, Berlin; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; 1301PE Gallery, Los Angeles; kurimanzutto, Mexico City; Gallery Side 2, Tokyo

RAIMAR STANGE is a critic and curator. He lives in Berlin./ist Kritiker und Kurator. Er lebt in Berlin.

und die Buttons, wo du fragst: »Where is Ai Weiwei« (2011). Wie erklärst du diese Entwicklung in deiner Arbeit?

TIRAVANIJA: Mein Zugang zum Kunst-Machen (und seinem Potenzial) war immer ideologisch, und ich war auch sicherlich immer skeptisch gegenüber institutionellen Strukturen oder Grenzen. Das bedeutet nicht, dass ich jenseits der Strukturen arbeite oder lebe, aber ich tue das sicher instinktiv mit Zweifel. Die politische Spaltung in Thailand beeinflusste diese Einstellung. Natürlich sind China und Thailand in vielerlei Hinsicht unterschiedlich, aber der Machtmissbrauch und der Missbrauch von Information (Disinformation) in beiden Ländern ähneln einander bis zu einem gewissen Grad. Die Rhetorik und die Manipulation der Medien, obwohl offensichtlich, sind höchst polarisierend. Der Kampf um die Zukunft des Landes findet jetzt gerade statt, und die Frage nach einer neuen Republik beschäftigt jeden. Meinungen, versteckte Andeutungen und Gerüchte kursieren überall, und das Bedürfnis nach einer neuen Verfassung ist ein großes Thema. Aber ist das nicht in vielen Teilen der Welt der Fall? Überall spüren wir, wie sich die Machtverhältnisse verschieben. Wie könnten wir das nicht ansprechen, sogar mit Ironie!

STANGE: *Eine letzte Frage: Was liest du gerade?*

TIRAVANIJA: Roberto Bolaño, »The Insufferable Gaucho«; Jülius Koller (ein von Roman Ondák zusammengestellter Katalog); Simon Garfield »Just My Type. A book about fonts«; Roberto Bolaño »Between Parentheses: Essays, Articles and Speeches 1998–2003«; Tom Mueller »Extra Virginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil«; »Golf Digest«, die Februar Ausgabe mit der »Hot List« zum neuesten Golf-Equipment. —

Aus dem Englischen von Stefan Tusch

ON AIR

PROPOS RECUEILLIS
PAR MAURICIO
ESTRADA-MUNOZ,
COMMISSAIRE
DE LA PROGRAMMATION
« ON AIR »,
DIRECTION
DÈS PUBLICS

À partir du 23 juin et durant tout l'été, le Studio 13/16 accueille « On Air », une proposition autour de l'œuvre *untitled 1998 (rehearsal studio no. 6, silent version)* de l'artiste thaïlandais Rirkrit Tiravanija. Ce véritable studio de répétition et d'enregistrement, isolé phoniquement dans un écrin de verre, prend place pour quelques

« On Air » résonne particulièrement avec la culture adolescente et les mouvements de contre-culture dont elle se nourrit, des pratiques urbaines aux musiques expérimentales, en passant par une recherche identitaire, parfois transgressive. Au mur, une intervention graphique de Le Tone, une fresque que les adolescents sont invités à compléter pour écrire une histoire décalée des interactions entre les arts sonores et visuels, une frise sur laquelle le public partage ses cultures musicales et artistiques. Et pour ponctuer cette programmation, des concerts par des adolescents avec Rock en Seine... Une expérience inédite !
Entretien avec l'artiste.

L'ARTISTE INVITE LES ADOS À « JOUER » DE PLUSIEURS TERRITOIRES DE CRÉATION : LA MUSIQUE, LE LIVE, LA PERFORMANCE...

DU 23 JUIN
AU 2 SEPT. 2012

STUDIO 13/16
FORUM - 1

AVEC LE SOUTIEN DE

FORUM DES
Lagardère



DEEZER

FORUM
D'ART ET
D'ARTS

YAMAHA

boesner
INSTRUMENTS POUR ARTISTES

mois dans l'espace dédié aux adolescents de 13 à 16 ans, au cœur du Centre Pompidou. L'artiste les invite à « jouer » de plusieurs territoires de création : la musique, le live, la performance... dans le contexte d'une œuvre caractérisée par une esthétique relationnelle, une œuvre qui ne vit que lorsqu'elle interagit ou se laisse traverser par le public.

Muette dans sa transparence, cette « boîte à musique » dans laquelle groupes et interprètes sont invités à se produire et à s'enregistrer, ne laisse pas passer le son. Dans ce silence apparent, elle crée une étonnante dissonance entre ce que le visiteur voit – les instruments, les gestes des musiciens, etc. – et l'absence de musique. Le contraste ainsi provoqué entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur, entre l'in audible et le visible, crée une situation où de nouvelles médiations émergent de la relation entre le visiteur et l'œuvre d'art. C'est dans cet écart que l'artiste aime à provoquer des sociabilités alternatives, des situations d'expérimentation partagées, immédiates, sans l'intervention d'une présence extérieure.

Dans votre travail, le public joue le premier rôle. Comment concevez-vous sa participation lorsque vous imaginez une œuvre ?

RIRKRIT TIRAVANAJA – Le public du Centre Pompidou n'est pas le même que celui de la maison Graceland d'Elvis Presley, à Memphis. Les attentes sont différentes d'un endroit à l'autre et les interactions sont aussi différentes d'un spectateur à un autre. Je voudrais que le spectateur joue un rôle actif dans l'activation de la situation (le montage de l'œuvre). Pour moi l'œuvre est toujours dans la construction. Sans interaction ou activation, elle n'existe pas. L'objectivation d'une image ne m'intéresse pas. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est l'expérience subjective. C'est ce que j'espère provoquer ici avec les adolescents.

Pourquoi recréer un studio de répétition ?

PREMIER ESPACE DÉDIÉ
AUX ADOLESCENTS,
LE STUDIO 13/16
EST OUVERT
LES MERCREDIS,
SAMEDIS
ET DIMANCHES,
DE 14H À 18H
ET PENDANT
LES VACANCES
SCOLAIRES,
TOUS LES JOURS
SAUF LE MARDI.
VOIR P 119

**C'EST LA POSSIBILITÉ DE VOIR LES LANGAGES
SE RENCONTRER SUR LE MÊME TERRAIN,
CELUI DE LA MUSIQUE, DU SON,
DU BRUIT OU DU SILENCE.**

DU 23 JUIN
AU 2 SEPT. 2012

FERRIT TRAVANLA
© ANETTE AURELL

RT - Je répétais avec quelques amis artistes, sans idée précise, quand j'ai commencé à spéculer sur l'action du son, son mouvement ; jouer un son peut se traduire en une activation, une action de communication, une interaction. J'étais intéressé par la façon dont l'acte de jouer (l'activation) pouvait résonner et s'infiltrer dans une structure institutionnelle plus globale, en l'occurrence le Centre Pompidou, par la façon dont l'énergie générée est transmise au public, au visiteur. Ce sont aussi les possibilités de l'amateurisme qui me séduisent. Par amateurisme, j'entends la manière dont quelqu'un peut agir ou interagir sans être doué d'un talent précis ou notable, comme l'entend l'adage Punk « joue une note, puis une autre, et une autre, et fait une chanson ».

Comment imaginez-vous l'interaction avec les adolescents ?

RT - Adolescents ou plus âgés, nous avons tous une relation intense avec la musique, à un niveau ou à un autre, de façon positive ou négative. Souvent cet éveil se fait à l'adolescence, c'est l'âge auquel s'affirment certains choix musicaux en même temps que se structure la personnalité, que s'expriment les goûts.

Pensez-vous qu'une œuvre comme untitled 1996 (rehearsal studio no. 6, silent version) puisse inciter les jeunes à se tourner vers la création contemporaine ?

RT - L'engagement du public m'intéresse à tout âge : je voudrais voir un punk de soixante ans jouer dans le studio avec un ado rappeur, un guitariste adolescent, éduqué à la musique de façon classique, avec un batteur « métalleux », une grand-mère chantant avec un groupe électro-pop d'adolescents. Je pense que ce qui m'a le plus séduit dans cette salle de répétition, c'est la possibilité de voir les langages se rencontrer sur le même terrain, celui de la musique, du son, du bruit ou du silence.

Quelle place accordez-vous à la musique dans votre processus de création ?

RT - Elle a son importance comme tout le reste, comme une bouffée d'air, une bouchée de thon en sashimi, l'odeur de l'air salé de l'Atlantique. Elle est traitée, digérée et transformée en sensibilités, en humeurs, en métaphores et en réalité.

Qu'est-ce qui vous intéresse dans le phénomène « live » ?

RT - L'énergie, la collectivité.

Et en ce moment quel est votre coup de cœur musical ?

RT - Je n'en ai pas en ce moment. J'accumule et je n'en oublie aucun, je les garde tous, que ce soit Gastano Veloso, JZ, Animal Collective, Jaffar Hussain Khan, Johnny Cash, Maria Callas, Dusty Springfield, Pretenders, Prist, Glenn Gould, Blumfeld, Modern Dog, John Coltrane, Deep Purple, Joy Division, Ismael Rivera, Cornelius, Arto Lindsay, etc., etc.

Adolescent, vous êtes plutôt ...

RT - Le même. X



Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Soup/No Soup*



Galerie
Chantal Crousel

18 tasses de bouillon de légumes (environ 2500 ml), 5 tiges de citronnelle, 5 feuilles entières de kaffir lime (ou combava), 1000 grammes de tofu mou, coupé en carrés... 15 000 bols soit 5 000 litres de soupe auront repu 8 000 à 10 000 personnes au Grand Palais le 7 avril dernier.

Un silence quasi religieux régnait alors, vers 22h, quand nous sommes arrivés. Deux rangées de tables assez sommaires traversaient la nef de part en part ; il restait encore de la place pour accueillir de nouveaux convives. Le petit bol de carton en main, il fallut décider où nous asseoir : la tablée art contemporain, aux côtés des curateurs de la Triennale et des artistes présents, ou, comme dans un restaurant ou une aire de pique-nique, parmi la foule des inconnus. La solution fut de manger un premier bol d'un côté et un second de l'autre. La première option fit que notre dîner ne différa guère d'un autre buffet de vernissage, le chauffage en moins ! La seconde, recréant une certaine intimité au cœur de la tablée, sembla nous permettre d'apprécier plus aisément la situation. Nous installer à l'écart des personnes que nous connaissions nous laissa une plus grande liberté d'observation. Le calme était sans doute l'élément le plus frappant de cette soirée, renforçant la sensation d'un moment privilégié dans un tel bâtiment. Débarassé des artifices par lesquels nous l'appréhendons habituellement – stands de foires ou autres dispositifs d'expositions qui font que, presque jamais, nous ne venons au Grand Palais pour voir le Grand Palais, excepté peut-être lors de Monumenta mais c'est là encore l'occasion de le parcourir au travers du filtre des œuvres qui y prennent place – le lieu nous apparut dans toute son immensité qui le rendait paradoxalement moins tentaculaire : rarement nous avons pu le contempler d'un seul coup d'œil. Chacun semblait y avoir trouvé sa place. Tandis que certains se sustentaient joyeusement, des enfants improvisaient une course d'avions en papier, un homme exerçait sa voiture téléguidée... On a même entendu dire que, plus tôt dans la journée, un petit concert de guitare avait été improvisé.



Galerie
Chantal Crousel

La différence d'avec tous les autres « événements culinaires » organisés par Rirkrit Tiravanija ? Principalement les dimensions du projet comme du site qui l'accueille. Un traiteur et son équipe avaient pris la place de l'artiste en cuisine et des bénévoles d'Emmaüs étaient venus prêter main forte pour le service. Quelques-uns auraient même ensuite été embauchés par le traiteur, prouvant sans préméditation la validité de « l'utopie sociale » parfois reprochée aux dispositifs de l'artiste. L'on pouvait être sceptique quant à la reproduction à l'échelle « institutionnelle » d'un concept qui a plus de vingt ans d'existence ; consécration ou redite, il était permis de douter. Pourtant, ce fut un moment fascinant que de voir le Grand Palais mué en coquille vide prête à accueillir toutes les interprétations possibles. Beaucoup d'amateurs d'art le peuplaient en effet mais il est tout à fait plausible de penser que la foule était plus bigarrée que cela, les médias ayant fortement relayé l'invitation à cette grande soupe populaire et gratuite servie au cœur d'un des joyaux de la République.

Faisant pour ainsi dire office de cartel, la recette était affichée sur un petit panneau, entre les tables et le buffet. Opérant presque comme une mise en abyme de l'œuvre, elle s'offrait sans mystère, aussi simplement que le bol de soupe qui nous était tendu derrière. [...] porter à ébullition et laisser bouillir 5 minutes pour parfumer [...] jusqu'à ce que les champignons soient tendres [...] réduire à feu doux et ajouter le lait de coco [...]. L'art de Tiravanija ne se laisse toujours pas cerner par les définitions, il se déguste avec gourmandise.

Media Farzin. "FEAR EATS THE SOUL,"
artagenda.com, April 2011.

The most striking thing about Rirkrit Tiravanija's recent New York show is also its most organic aspect: the windows and doors of the main exhibition space have been removed, exposing the interior to the street. From the outside, the space looks empty except for the soaring black letters spray-painted on the walls. Once inside, visitors can piece together the show's bleak title from the letters: FEAR EATS THE SOUL. The exhibition is built on many references, some obvious (the 1974 Rainer Werner Fassbinder film, Andy Warhol's Pop appropriations), others more personal and revealed only through conversation with the artist (the recent shooting in Arizona, Gordon Matta-Clark's Window Blowout of 1976).

Activities within the space, however, are well in keeping with Tiravanija's aesthetic of cheerful interaction, which can be as engaging as it is unremarkable. There is a plywood structure that houses a t-shirt factory/shop, where political slogans collected by the artist can be "hand-screened while you wait" by Nick Paparone, a student of Tiravanija, at \$20 each (with online orders conveniently available). Interactions with visitors are genuinely warm, albeit straightforwardly commercial and slightly awkward. Compared to a "real" shop, the conversation and curiosity are somewhat more forced, since the metonymic "framing" of commerce as art unavoidably conditions the exchange, as does the inevitable cynicism of the commodity of dissent ("Does Rirkrit ever stop by? Can I really buy a t-shirt? Can I change what it says?").

Next door to the factory is a reconstruction of Tiravanija's first show with Gavin Brown in 1994. For that show, Tiravanija's artworks, or rather his working objects, were paired with Warhol artworks borrowed or re-made for the occasion: a wok placed next to a Brillo box, for example (the latter a replica by artist Mike Bidlo). The entire 1994 show is redone here as chrome replicas, bland and shiny "art objects" that form a contrasting pair to the livelier "factory" next door. There is even a tiny office in the back with exhibition catalogues, a newspaper, and James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture*. "I had hoped Gavin would be working there most of the time," Tiravanija mused. "I guess that shows how things have changed."

While some things, like the size and success of Brown's gallery, have changed, others have remained the same. Tiravanija's installations of the past twenty years have consistently focused on everyday activity. In the main space, window frames have been leaned against the entrance walls, next to shovels, crowbars, and brooms left behind by workers who had dug the small hole in the ground. The hole was then covered with a metal sheet, an indistinguishable makeshift manhole cover except for its slogan: "THE WAY THINGS GO." (Back to the earth, perhaps?) The pit was used to prepare the meal that the artist served to guests at his opening, an ancient Mayan dish of marinated pork that is slow-roasted by being buried a hole in the ground along with heated stones.

Cooking has defined Tiravanija's two-decade career of hospitable art-making. Several cookbooks, multiple cook-offs, and endless meals later, the basic recipe has changed little. In the recent show, the "soup kitchen" next door to the main gallery featured a weekly rotating menu drawn from various exotic and local cuisines (all recipes available online at soupnosoup.com). The artist put in several appearances, but much of the work was done by assistants and hired helpers who amiably introduce visitors to the food and the work. But it would be a mistake to judge the work by the quality of the conviviality it generates or even the connotations of its recipes, despite their deliberate references to the artist's ethnicity and his interest in difference.

Media Farzin. "FEAR EATS THE SOUL,"
artagenda.com, April 2011.

The exhibition's title is more explicit about Tiravanija's larger concerns, which might grandly be called the human condition. *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* was the English translation of Fassbinder's *Angst essen Seele auf*. The film first appeared in Tiravanija's *Untitled 1994 (Fear Eats the Soul)*, a bar he constructed at Esther Schipper's storefront gallery in Cologne that only served beer and cola. Fassbinder's two lead characters, a German cleaner and a Moroccan mechanic, meet in the film's opening scene over the aforesaid drinks, and commence an unlikely relationship that brings out their own deepest fears as much as the xenophobia and racism of their surroundings.

"Fear eat soul," Fassbinder's Moroccan hero says in his stilted German. The same kind of "foreign" slip appears in the Tiravanija billboard that links the show's main gallery and soup kitchen: "THE DAYS OF THIS SOCIETY IS NUMBERED," reads the t-shirt on the clothesline. Soup and t-shirts, food and clothing: Tiravanija employs these basic, thoroughly commercialized elements to mobilize bodies and their everyday needs and desires towards something slightly less commercial, slightly less stratified, and even slightly less fearful and isolated. This is all done gently, with a disarming smile and the "native" hospitality of an outsider, a position that Tiravanija has not hesitated to use to his advantage. But the visitors also become outsiders as they navigate a space that mixes hospitality with commerce, public with personal, and genuine with theatrical. Decades of "relational aesthetics" later, there is still a productive awkwardness about Tiravanija's spaces, which may be why he continues to stage and restage them.

"The way things go is that they take time," Tiravanija once wrote about the artists Fischli and Weiss. The phrase comes back on the manhole cover at the entrance to the gallery. Like Fischli and Weiss's videos, the Mayan roasted pork, and pretty much everyday life itself, these installations are stages for slow unfoldings. They combine lofty humanism with mundane blandness, but are saved from the fate of either by being grounded in real time and space. What matters are the small moments of negotiation brought out by the ambiguous identity of the spaces, which are never quite seamlessly one thing or another, whether galleries, replicas, kitchens or workshops. His ambitions might be grand, his means unremarkable, but Tiravanija's artwork, as this show proves, can still be affecting in its unsettling ordinariness.

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1 View of Rirkrit Tiravanija's «FEAR EATS THE SOUL» Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, 2011.

Media Farzin. "FEAR EATS THE SOUL,"
artagenda.com, April 2011.



2 View of Rirkrit Tiravanija's «FEAR EATS THE SOUL» Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, 2011.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel



3 View of Rirkrit Tiravanija's "FEAR EATS THE SOUL" Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, 2011.



4 View of Rirkrit Tiravanija's "FEAR EATS THE SOUL" Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, 2011.



5 Rirkrit Tiravanija, untitled 2011 (t-shirt, no t-shirt),
2011.



6 Rirkrit Tiravanija, untitled 2011 (558 broome st, the future is chrome), 2011.

Media Farzin. "FEAR EATS THE SOUL,"
artagenda.com, April 2011.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel



7 Rirkrit Tiravanija, untitled 2011 (558 broome st, the future is chrome), 2011.



8 Rirkrit Tiravanija, untitled 2011 (t-shirt, no t-shirt), 2011.

1969 *Identical Lunch*, which was, incidentally, restaged this year at New York's Museum of Modern Art), she isn't in the business of transubstantiation. If her various reframings ask that we look at all kinds of things and activities again, these things and activities are not—to my mind at least—wholly recast, but retain an aspect of their provenance in the world outside of aesthetic or ideational rehabilitation. Unlike Duchamp (or, rather, the pervasive understanding of Duchamp), Knowles isn't only "pointing" at things to render them "concepts"; instead, her procedures allow her found objects to retain something of their grit, and, though one risks romanticizing her practice by saying so, each feels like it has a history—both before Knowles, and owing to her interest in it. And though these objects have accrued a kind of symbolic value simply by appearing in Knowles's frame, they remain clearly bear-up and ragged—*worn*, by any other standard.

In her recent show at James Fuentes LLC, "Clear Skies All Week," Knowles presented fourteen works, all of which were produced during this decade but whose materials, it seems, were collected by the artist over the course of some forty years. A number of pieces comprised objects placed on framed raw cotton and/or raw flax. These works often incorporated shoes, or parts of shoes (another trope Knowles has long pursued), and also included a work glove, a plastic glove, an egg-beater, an exhausted tube of glue, twine, and instances of less definable organic matter (what looked to be bones, rocks, twigs). Placed together, approximating rebuses but refusing to cohere into readable meanings, the compositions were often attended by stamped words (usually also the title and usually also colloquial or aphoristic), as in one work from 2011, *A Rolling Stone Gathers No Moss*.

In other pieces, such as the strangely elegant *Cave Wall*, 2003—in which lentils are embedded within a sheet of oat flax—Knowles allows materials to remain more abstract. And in several "Event Threads" from 2006, vertical lengths of thread hang like wispy talismans carrying various items found by Knowles in her peregrinations. If, as a teacher of mine once told me, every object is a slow event, Knowles's "threads" embody this concept, delivering quiet narratives via the barest of means.

—Johanna Burton

Rirkrit Tiravanija

GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE

Rirkrit Tiravanija has always understood, intuitively and intellectually, that a gallery is a social frame, at once quasi-private and quasi-public, wherein a diverse range of encounters and frictions connected to rituals of making, displaying, and consuming art are staged. I vividly recall his exhibition "Untitled, 1992 (Free)" at 303 Gallery, for which structural elements and appurtenances from the space's back office were displayed in the front of the gallery, and the office was converted into a rudimentary cooking and eating area, with free curries offered daily. I saw this as a deftly materialized symbolic intervention, playfully utopic and post-utopic, but probably not an attempt to subvert or reinvent the fundamental economics of the commercial art system. Early on, Tiravanija recognized the inherent contradictions and the intrinsic limits of his art—that any actuality or notion of "free" is embedded within a complex matrix. By staging quotidian social processes—cooking, eating, and cleaning up—within the gallery space, he exchanged a post-commodity ethos of generosity and humility for the normative small entrepreneurial codes of a commercial gallery, while acknowledging that such activities, occurring within the frame, are codified as an expanded art condition.

In "Fear Eats the Soul," Tiravanija glanced back at—and reconfigured—his own history. The artist created an operational soup kitchen



(which he called Soup No Soup) that prepared and distributed soup on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays throughout the duration of the show; located right next to the gallery space proper, it maintained a delicate autonomy. Tiravanija's gesture was characteristically unassuming, humble, and, finally, symbolic—i.e., it was either a place just for soup, just for art, for both, or something beyond—and, as with his earlier ad hoc kitchens, he seemed to be asking whether the sociocultural ritual of eating, framed by the gallery as art, is substantially different than any other experience that one might have in the dense urban environment.

In this spirit, Tiravanija sought to make Brown's space as coextensive with the street as possible. The show's title was prominently spray-painted across various gallery walls in huge, oversize black letters, and one could see it from outside, since the gallery's windows, doorframes, and related utilitarian hardware had been removed; moreover, the space itself was open to the public twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (though with a security guard on-site). Transformed into a space more or less "transparent" to the outside world, the gallery invited in those who might not ordinarily trespass into the white cube. The theme of transparency continued inside, where one encountered a pile of brown earth next to a large industrial steel plate (with two machined holes, two small viewing portals into the excavated part of the gallery below); nearby, leaning against the wall, were tools—shovels, brooms, wooden planks, etc.—apparently utilized in this site-displacement. This gesture suggested a way for Tiravanija to make visible or unpack his own process.

Reflecting further on the tropes of his own artistic production, Tiravanija constructed a pair of plywood rooms that replicated the dimensions of Gavin Brown's original diminutive gallery space at 558 Broome Street in 1994–97, and one contained replicas of artifacts first displayed within the context of a 1994 exhibition that Tiravanija produced and curated there. In this quasi-retrospective look back at his own history, Tiravanija rendered the gallery a platform upon which to reenact recognizable tropes, and to propose new moves. A second plywood room housed a functional T-shirt factory and shop, open the same days and hours as the soup kitchen, where one could purchase T-shirts at twenty dollars a pop. Turning out shirts printed with such playfully activist slogans as *THE DAYS OF THIS SOCIETY IS NUMBERED*, *ASIANS MUST EAT RICE*, *FREE CHINA FROM TIBET*, *RICH BASTARDS BEWARE*, and *FEAR EATS THE SOUL*, the factory served as an archive of Tiravanija's previous T-shirt projects, which have always suggested, perhaps ironically, the conflation of everyday fashion, politics, and identity. In the end, though, this show might be understood as a testimony to the gallery as a platform for cultural production—but also to its enduring limits as a frame.

—Joshua Decter

View of "Rirkrit Tiravanija." Wall text: untitled 2011. Plywood structure: untitled 2011.

USA

Rirkrit Tiravanija Gavin Brown's enterprise *New York*

After two decades of supplying gallery visitors with pad thai and curries, Rirkrit Tiravanija knows that a free meal and cheap clothing are an easy way to win over a New York audience. In his exhibition 'FEAR EATS THE SOUL', what surrounded these two offerings seemed almost beside the point. On a brisk Saturday afternoon, the cavernous spaces of Gavin Brown's enterprise were empty, and emptied out. The usual front door was locked, but the gallery's front walls were completely removed, with the door frames leaned up inside, and floor-to-ceiling spray-paint lettering spelling out the exhibition's title. Despite the space being accessible 24 hours a day, no acts of vandalism could be seen; shovels, tools and piles of dirt were lined up perfectly, undisturbed. While the gallery itself took on a superficial sense of transparency, its staff was made even more inaccessible than usual: the entryways into the offices and reception area were completely bricked up. An assumption was made that the information conventionally offered via press release or checklist was unnecessary, that the exhibition and its production were self-explanatory.

Not surprisingly, most visitors could be found in the shelter of the soup kitchen. Customers lined up to be served or perched on stools, and the red walls were covered with witty paintings by gallery artist Spencer Sweeney, highbrow versions of bad café art. (The back room, in which the soup kitchen was located, hosts *The Museum of Spencer Sweeney*, an ongoing installation.) People could also be found clustered in the T-shirt shop where, for 20 dollars, you could purchase a freshly silk-screened T-shirt with a choice of slogans ranging from the generally banal to the specifically political, many taken from past works by Tiravanija: 'I HAVE DONUTS AT HOME'; 'IRAN, IRAQ, IKEA, I'M BUSY'; 'BRING ME THE HEAD OF THAKSIN SHINAWATRA'. Perhaps most pointed within

the context of work-obsessed New York, though, was the May '68 Situationist motto 'NE TRAVAILLEZ JAMAIS'. There was something for everyone, but each statement also collectively contributed to the constructed identity of the artist himself. In these two spaces of exchange and distribution, people were talking, interacting and generally inhabiting the roles that Tiravanija has encouraged visitors to take on throughout his work.

Yet there was one conspicuously locked door in the exhibition, behind which was a plywood replica of Gavin Brown's original SoHo space, containing a restaging of Tiravanija's first exhibition there in 1994. Almost comically dwarfed inside Brown's current gallery, the recreation served as a literal comparison of how far both artist and dealer had come. Originally, Tiravanija had paired his everyday objects with works by Andy Warhol; a wok next to a Brillo box, stacks of glass beer bottles beneath a Mao silkscreen. The updated version, however, cast each piece in chrome, monumentalizing the coming-together of art-world megastars. These sequestered, precious sculptures acted as shrine to a mythic past, but also to the idea of the luxury art object. Functioning as the only works of visible commercial value in the entire exhibition, these objects were preserved as fossils, whereas the liberated experience of the open gallery, the free soup and the affordable T-shirt belonged to the present moment. While visitors took advantage of the unconventional accessibility to the gallery, the artist, and the work (so much so that during the exhibition's run, Brown's car had been taken for a joyride by two visitors when it was parked inside the gallery, keys in the ignition), it still felt like business as usual, an exaggerated display of democratic art processes to the usual contemporary art audience. The title's reference to Rainer Werner Fassbinder's celebrated 1974 film *All: Fear Eats the Soul*, in which a couple prevails against discrimination, suggested only the vaguest association with the humanist idealism of works like the soup kitchen, but felt ambiguously powerful when rendered in three-metre-high lettering. Undoubtedly, the title also looked great on a souvenir T-shirt.

Lumi Tan

Rirkrit Tiravanija
'FEAR EATS THE SOUL'
2011
Installation view



Paissan, Constanza. « Art and Food are never as we Imagine. Rirkrit Tiravanija ». Cura Magazine, 2010.

“Art and Food are Never as we Imagine”

Rirkrit Tiravanija

by costanza paissan



Rirkrit Tiravanija, Courtesy: Kunsthalle Bielefeld Photo: Antoinette Aurell - opposite page: Rirkrit Tiravanija, Untitled (young man, if my wife makes it...), 1999, wooden chopsticks, plastic and metal bowl Courtesy: Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York

A column on the relationship between art and cuisine cannot avoid speaking about the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, the Argentinian artist of Thai origin who uses the medium of cuisine, endowed with strong social and political values, as a principal (but not sole) mode of expression and communication. In his work Tiravanija explores the potential of food as a medium for contact and interaction with the “other”. The act of cultural negotiation and exchange runs throughout – and even traverses – the sharing of the meal, a secular rite characterized by the principle of dialogue, and of communion, in which the senses are put into play alongside the intellect, and feelings alongside memories, passions and instincts. A creative itinerary, such as that of Tiravanija, in which food assumes a depth and multiplicity of facets, that rises above the mere possible momentary and performative character of the meal, to open up to conceptual, cultural, poetic and social relapses, renders the works of the artist among the most interesting, influential, and dynamic of recent decades. We will now follow this line of inquiry, lingering on some of the fundamental thematic knots, in which the reflection of the artist in relation to food are condensed.

Food is memory. Marcel Proust expresses this essential characteristic in his masterpiece *À la recherche du temps perdu*. A drop of tea and a bite of *madeleine* become for him the stimulus for personal reflection based on aesthetic sensation. Food can be a vehicle for an intimate and profound exploration of the internal world of memory, for a renewed and conscious trip into the past, into the experiences of one's own life or into a more general history of the world. “I grew up around the kitchen of my grandmother, who was a well known teacher of both Thai and Continental cuisine; besides teaching, she had her own restaurant and her own television show. This became a significant factor in my development as an artist. I learned the art of sharing and giving. This sharing and giving came in the form my grandmother knew best: the preparation of food and the sharing of meals. In my work over the last ten years, I have become known as the ‘cook’ of the art world. I have, more or less, used the kitchen and cooking as the base from which to conduct an assault on the cultural aesthetics of Western attitudes toward life and living. I have found food to be a common medium for creating conditions and experiences for communication that do not always en-

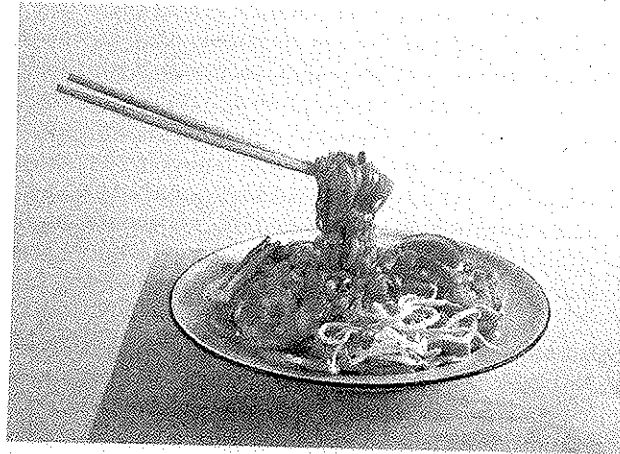
tail language, but which have a spiritual dimension. In the communal act of cooking and eating together, I hope that it is possible to cross physical and imaginary boundaries." The artist's work for the *Open* section of the 1993 Venice Biennale, *Untitled (Twelve Seventy-One)* explored the social and historical foundations of food. The title recalls the year in which Marco Polo left Venice to explore the Asiatic World, from which he brought back the knowledge of, among many other things, oriental food. Tiravanija displayed on that occasion a canoe, a series of kettles, tables, and crockery from which to serve a continuous supply of noodles to the public.

As far back as 1992, at the 303 Gallery in New York, the exhibition space had already been turned into a social place in which to enjoy art in a completely new way, in comparison to established canons: at regular intervals, during the execution of the work *Untitled 1992 (Free)* (presented again more recently at the David Zwirner Gallery in a context of further mediation of memory), the artist served oriental meals to the public for free.

The previous year, within the environment of the group show *Wealth of Nations* in Warsaw, the work of Tiravanija openly demonstrated the artist's political values, and his depth of reflection on the broad dynamics of the contemporary world: the work *Untitled (Artificial Flavoring)* consisted of two huge suitcases filled with American branded bacon and yoghurt flavored potato chips. While these chips were destined to be quickly devoured by the public, attracted by the novelty of "western" flavouring, the empty suitcases remained as a residual sculptural form. The food symbol of American consumerism was thereby offered in a completely novel context, transformed as Poland was by the fall of the Berlin Wall: the artist reflected upon the distance between opposing politico-economic models and on the value of food, nourishment and consumption in the recent history of the world.

Food is home. Its taste and smell characterizes in a unique way each person's abode, so becoming part of the specific identity of the individual. In the work of Tiravanija food is a vehicle, a machine for the senses, enabling the artist to journey on roads to the places of his origins, of his family, to the many places in which he grew up (from Argentina, where he was born in 1961, to Thailand, to Canada, to Ethiopia, up to the United States and to Germany, where he lives and works today). In 1996 for the show *Untitled 1996 (Tomorrow is Another Day)* the artist recreated his own New York apartment inside the Kölmscher Kunstverein; kitchen (functional and working), bedroom, bath and living room remained open twenty-four hours a day - a house for the public, a theatre production of daily life, a reactualization of the domestic environment, of its rites, including dining (as well as sex, sleep and personal hygiene). "The situation is not about looking at art. It is about being in the space, participating in an activity. The nature of the visit has shifted to emphasize the gallery as a space for social interaction. The transfer of activities such as

cooking, eating or sleeping into the realm of the exhibition space puts visitors into very intimate if unexpected contact. The displacement creates an acute awareness of the notion of public and private, the installations function like scientific experiments: this displacement becomes a tool and exposes the way scientific thought processes are constructed. The visitor becomes a participant in that experiment." Tiravanija has created many houses: from the *Tea House*, an oblique cube-house created for the Villa Manin in 2006, to *The House the Cat Built* (2008-2009), a curatorial project presented at the Galería Salvador Diaz in Madrid consisting of a model of the Thai house of Tiravanija, in which he invited other artists (Liam Gillick, Pierre Huyghe, Martha Rosler...) to present their own works, as part of a collective platform.



Food is a journey. Travel experiences are often remembered in terms of the tastes of the new and diverse foods that characterize each new place. In the work of Tiravanija this aspect is often exalted; nomadism and walking, interculturality and meeting are elements central to his life and his artistic approach. For the show *Cocido y Crudo*, held in Madrid in 1994, Tiravanija arrived at the airport with a bicycle turned into a mobile kitchen. "I embarked on an absurd walking tour, from the airport to the center and then around the city, in the hope of cooking a lunch or a supper with the people that I met. There was nobody around! In reality I knew some people and others came to meet me, but it was very difficult to do. The work was active as long as it remained outside, once it entered the museum it turned into the usual sculpture placed on the floor."

Along similar lines, one might also look to the work *Untitled (Bon Voyage Monsieur Ackermann)* (1995), "a nomadic work of food and the road", an itinerary between Berlin and Lyon in which the artist, together with Franz Ackermann, an Opel car, a stove and three