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Rirkrit Tiravanija

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NEW YORK

No FOMO

Rirkrit Tiravanija
"A LOT OF PEOPLE"
MoMA PS1
12 Oct 23 – 4 Mar 24

I was born in neither the right place nor the right time to eat pad thai in a New York gallery. "A LOT OF PEOPLE," Rirkrit Tiravanija's first major institutional retrospective, reminds me that this only makes things more interesting. Bringing together four decades of work, from his early "spirit house" sculptures to his more recent text-based works, the exhibition complicates any simple rendering of Tiravanija as a "relational" artist, maintaining a critical tension between ambivalence and anachronism.

Prefaced by a white flag reading "FEAR EATS THE SOUL" in the courtyard, the majority of the exhibition takes shape within a sequence of galleries that present significant evolutions in Tiravanija's career. The exhibition then splits off into several separate rooms, each dedicated to one of his filmic or durational projects, before culminating in a large, open space where five alternating "situations," including Tiravanija's paradoxically "iconic" cooking pieces, are presented across the duration of the show.



Rirkrit Tiravanija, *untitled 2017*
(*fear eats the soul*) (*abite flag*), 2017

The curatorial logic is neither chronological nor exhaustive, but intensive: Viewing the exhibition feels like remixing time. I went from the feature-length film *Karl's Perfect Day* (2017) to a remake of a 1994 Tiravanija/Warhol exhibition at Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, to a room of poetically failed monuments to mythical downtown pad thai. Whether from examining dirty bowls displayed behind plexiglas or watching footage of people chatting at Tiravanija's opening at neugerriemschneider,

Rirkrit Tiravanija, *untitled 2015* (*bangkok boogie woogie, no. 2*), 2015–16



Berlin, in 1998, what animates the selection of works is the playful tension implicit in the artist's displacement of cultural memory, his works often shifting form, from utility to symbol and back again. The most eloquent example of this are Rolling Rock beer bottles that appear throughout the exhibition, first as readymades (*untitled 1991* (*bottles from the opening of untitled 1990* (*blind*)), 1991), then cast in resin (*untitled 1996* (*4 trays & 96 bottles*), 1996), later becoming a monolithic chrome column (*untitled 2013* (*endless rolling rock*), 2013).

This emphasis on Tiravanija's ambiguous relationship to the "object" – fluctuating between artifact and commodity, trash and fetish – is fascinating. Tiravanija, who once threatened in a text-based student work to "blow up" a museum in Chicago if it didn't return the Thai artifacts in its collection, has seemingly always sought to disrupt – albeit by less extreme means – Western culture's morbid relationship with objects. This is particularly evident in the artist's choice to use the first brand of "oriental" woks ever mass-marketed to white, middle-class America in his cooking pieces, objects which he went on to replicate in plaster and resin (*untitled 1995* (*for m.b.*), 1995). Their patently "Pop" presence in the show seems like a dark joke on "eating the Other," a sense of humor echoed in the excellent *untitled 1992* (*red, green, yellow curry*) (1992), a photo of Tiravanija's family collaged onto cans of Thai curry paste, his personal archive turned into cultural export. Displayed alongside the detritus of his better-known participatory pieces and works that continually reference Warhol, it becomes clear that, from the beginning of his career, Tiravanija not only consciously produced and reproduced commodities, but also documented the process of his "becoming commodity," his difference "eaten" by a post-1989, globalized art world

All images courtesy: MoMA PS1, New York. Photos: Kyle Kroedel

NEW YORK

View of "A LOT OF PEOPLE"

and its various markets.

Yet, Tiravanija never really makes a point of this, rather maintaining ambivalent relationships to identity and commodification. One could even say the "visual identity" of his more recent text-based works reinforce this dynamic, his chosen slogans available in many languages and on many different "products" (a flag, a t-shirt, or a mirror-polished stainless steel panel). Where this could seem cynical, or, worse, the uninteresting underside of his better-known "utopian" projects, "A LOT OF PEOPLE," like Tiravanija, refuses to make a



simplistic separation between "art" and "use," instead allowing a contradictory poetics of displacement to emerge.

This displacement is as formal as it is conceptual: If there is anything actually "utopic" about Tiravanija's work, it is the implication that nothing in this retrospective is really "art"; for art, like utopia, only (n)ever happens elsewhere, and certainly outside of the institutions that seek to frame it. In this way, "A LOT OF PEOPLE" is joyously melancholic: Each "object" leads somewhere else, the viewer left to imagine *all the people* who aren't there, who can't be there. In *untitled 2007 (demonstration drawings)* (2007), this absence becomes poignant: Tiravanija commissioning unnamed Thai artists, often his former students, to reproduce images of protests col-

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

Rirkrit Tiravanija, *untitled 1990 (pad thai)*, 1990



lected from *The International Herald Tribune*. Displayed en masse, the face-value kitschiness of the pencil drawings subsides to a sense of emancipatory absence: Contextualized as a redistribution of resources to other artists, these drawings are mere stand-ins for an undercommons of art, of life that definitionally defies representation.

In the current context, where the very "materials" that Tiravanija became known for using – social relations – have themselves become engines of commodification (one need only think of social networks), this "elsewhere" that Tiravanija continually summons seems as vital as ever for thinking about the political "utility" of art – out of time, but not necessarily out of reach.

Aodhan Madden

ArtReview

Power 100

Most influential people in 2023 in the contemporary artworld

Rirkrit Tiravanija

Artist - Making relational aesthetics as relevant as ever, at local and international level

3 in 2023



Those with itinerant childhoods tend to be good at making friends; that's a bit of cod psychology that might explain the Buenos Aires-born, Ethiopia- and Canada-raised Thai artist's belief that with art 'it is not what you see that is important, but what takes place between people'. If relational aesthetics is some 25 years old now, Tiravanija's staging of social events feels as relevant as ever: his installations involving communal cooking, ping pong and t-shirt printing took over Haus der Kunst in Munich in spring, concurrent with a Bavarian State Opera production of Toshio Hosokawa's *Hanjo* (2004) for which he created a see-through set design, and then his MoMA PS1 survey in New York in the autumn. His shows this year include a solo at STPI in Singapore, which dwelt on animal extinction; a collaborative survey between his galleries at Shinsegae Gallery, Seoul; a solo at 1301PE in Los Angeles; and a show at Montreal's PHI Foundation. All this while cocurating the Thailand Biennale in March with Gridthiya Gaweewong, and somehow Tiravanija managed to find a balance between the momentary and the monumental, the local and the international.

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Lost in a forest,
all alone
since 1949

ArtReview



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Rirkrit Tiravanija

Jessica Lanay
Blow Up the Museum. Rirkrit Tiravanija at MOMA PS1
ArtReview, Volume 75, N°7, October, 2023, p.50-57.

Blow Up the Museum

Rirkrit Tiravanija at MOMA PS1

by Jessica Lanay



Photo: Mark Blower



Rirkrit Tiravanija is a creator of purposeful playfulness and critical thinking whose work explores how use creates meaning. During the 1990s the Argentina-born Thai artist constructed an oeuvre that was best known for its extempore participatory aspect: inviting the public to eat pad thai he cooks, as seen in various iterations of *untitled 1990 (pad thai)*; inviting it to rest, as seen in *untitled 1993 (sleep/winter)*, for which he provided straw mats and foam mattresses in art spaces so that visitors might sleep; or even *untitled 1996 (tomorrow is another day)*, for which he faithfully reconstructed his East Village apartment and offered the public 24-hour access to take advantage of the working fridge, cooking range and bed. These works furnished much-needed services, even if limited by resources and time, to a public experiencing the economic fallout of the 90s during which time unemployment almost doubled in New York City and Cologne, where *untitled 1996 (tomorrow is another day)* opened. They were, in short, a response to their immediate time and a way to track how a preponderance of meaning emerges from human engagement.

MOMA PS1's synopsis of the 100-plus-work exhibition, titled *A LOT OF PEOPLE*, promises what it calls "demonstrations" of key participatory works; the exhibition announcement also refers to 'restagings'. Without much more context, it is yet to be seen if the effectivity of extemporaneous response will continue. Tiravanija is known for his constant travel, his declarative choice to 'never work' and his ability to think fluidly from an interdisciplinary standpoint. From screenprinting, to cooking, to sculpting, to film – there is not a creative distance that impedes Tiravanija asking the questions he desires to ask. Change, spontaneous response and gathering people into a participatory space are necessary to activating his works. He mutually transforms art spaces and his artworks with his voracious curiosity for how audience interaction will change the situations he initiates.

Tiravanija's gatherings are site-specific in that every new place in which they are exhibited, and every new audience that participates,

changes the gathering to be unique to the setting. This is not always smooth, or even positive: in the catalogue for Tiravanija's MOMA PS1 survey, for example, curator Ruba Katrib writes about an audience member unexpectedly responding to Tiravanija's *untitled 1992 (who comes first)* by throwing eggs and 'acting out' in a way that 'frightened' artist Elizabeth Peyton, who witnessed the event.

Circulating between the values of previous art movements such as Fluxus and Dada and the relational aesthetics mode with which he was associated during the 1990s, Tiravanija's body of gatherings invites audiences to challenge the boundary between everyday reality and institutional reality, to undermine unquestioned patterns of living and relating – such as how societies consume, often without questioning the how and why of what is available. His method of creativity is rooted to Wittgenstein's idea that 'meaning is use', and across his interdisciplinary body of work Tiravanija seeks to incite audiences to consider the use of objects he recreates and displaces, to think critically about the systems that create or abate access to resources. This method stress-tests the very capacity of the museum to capture the life of the object it displays through categorisation and deracination. Tiravanija's offerings suggest a path towards institutional obsolescence – or at least the obsolescence of the encyclopaedic museum that PS1's parent institution, the Museum of Modern Art, represents. For the artist, such institutions should be community-mandated, -owned and -directed, and able to hold quotidian life.

Who owns what? And when? And how? And where did they get it from? Tiravanija disassembles those questions to pose yet another: *how* does the concept of ownership function? What are its consequences? It was while studying at the Art Institute of Chicago and witnessing its display of historic Thai art objects that Tiravanija began to question how beautifully rendered everyday items for storing oil or rice,

for cooking or for worshipping lost their living essence by becoming static, unused and separated from their places of origin by violent

Tomorrow is the Question, 2019 (installation view, Remai Modern, Saskatoon, 2019). Photo: Blaine Campbell. Courtesy Remai Modern, Saskatoon



untitled 1990 (pad thai), 1990 (performance view, Paula Allen Gallery,
New York, 1990). Courtesy Rirkrit Tiravanija Archive



untitled 1996 (tomorrow is another day), 1996
(installation view, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, 1996). Courtesy the artist



global processes like colonisation. For Tiravanija, the loss of use is the loss of meaning. There is perhaps not a better summation of Tiravanija's attitudes towards institutions that emerged from colonial archival practices than a quote from Israeli academic and curator Ariella Aisha Azoulay, writing, in *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (2019), about the museum as archive: 'The archive is first and foremost a regime that facilitates uprooting, deportation, coercion, and enslavement, as well as the looting of wealth, resources, and labor.'

Azoulay suggests that modernity arises from the displacement of people and resources; those displacements generate vulnerabilities that are exploited on massive scales, fuelling a form of economy that requires such exploitation to survive. In 1987 the conceptual creator or provocateur or activist or artist (or whatever audiences might want to call Tiravanija) created *untitled 1987 (permanently removed for display)* for his thesis project. *untitled 1987 (permanently removed for display)* was arranged in a small room underneath the museum's Asian galleries, the walls lined with empty panels that in their lower-right-hand corners stated 'works permanently removed for display at the Art Institute of Chicago'. After this thesis show (and winning an unexpected award from Gordon Matta-Clark's estate), Tiravanija staged a related piece called *untitled 1987 (text in red and black)*. In a dimly lit empty room he displayed on the wall a barely legible text: 'WE DEMAND THE RETURN OF OUR CULTURAL ARTIFACTS IN THE MUSEUM OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, OTHERWISE WE WILL BLOW IT UP.' During the course of that exhibition, hundreds of Thai and Thai-American demonstrators staged a protest at the Art Institute to demand the return of a lintel to a restored temple in Thailand. The timeliness of the unexpected meeting of the protests and Tiravanija's

Tiravanija's gatherings are hubs for audiences actively to engage our enmeshed dependency on nature and the vulnerability of our consciousness

gestures are a testament to the artist's understanding of the zeitgeist. Both *untitled 1987 (text in red and black)* and *untitled 1987 (permanently removed for display)* highlight the ways that larger systems normalise seemingly harmless standards for our everyday perceptions of labour and display, while suggesting Tiravanija's later trajectory of continued institutional and societal critique. *untitled 1990 (pad thai)* and *untitled 1993 (sleep/winter)* demonstrate how this practice is furthered by Tiravanija using institutional spaces to address social inequities when it comes to sustenance, rest and even platonic intimacy (like sharing a meal). His commentary on labour is often subtextual, implied in the subjects he undertakes, such as how the labour exploitation implicit in colonial projects is how museums gain sometimes illicit access to

the items it displays. Yet over 30 years Tiravanija has also made more pithy and direct commentary, in actions such as having audiences screenprint their own souvenirs with phrases like 'NEVER WORK', 'THE DAYS OF THIS SOCIETY IS NUMBERED' and 'RICH BASTARDS BEWARE'. The same phrases have appeared in collage works where Tiravanija superimposes them over Thai newspapers, as in *untitled 2009 (the days of this society is numbered, september 21, 2009)*, and ping pong tables, as in *untitled 2019 (tomorrow is the question)*; and stencils them into steel, as in *untitled 2013 (rich bastards beware) (stencil)*.

Tiravanija's gatherings are hubs for audiences actively to engage our enmeshed dependency on nature and the vulnerability of our consciousness. More than that, Tiravanija asks if our everyday lives and systems function in the ways most critical to sustaining human interconnectedness; such questioning also encompasses a perspective on environmentalism. In artworks like

untitled 1990 (endless column), the artist takes

untitled 2020 (we are not your pet), 2023, solar dust screenprint and archival digital print on paper; thermochromic screenprint and archival digital print on paper (diptych), presented in a copper clamshell frame, 71x59x4 cm. Courtesy the artist and STP1, Singapore



untitled 2014 (the days of this society is numbered / December 7, 2012),
2014, oil and newspaper on linen, 221 x 215 cm.
Photo: Thomas Griesel. © the artist.
Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York



untitled 2006 (palm pavilion), 2006
(installation view, 27th Bienal de São Paulo, 2006).
Courtesy the artist



detritus from his gatherings (food waste, beer bottles, cups, etc) and stacks them in plastic bins as a sculptural commentary on excess. In an interview with STPI gallery accompanying this summer's exhibition *We Don't Recognise What We Don't See*, he states, 'extinction has already started'. The show centred the effects of human conquest, both of ourselves as a species and other animal life, via appearing and disappearing images of animals in juxtaposition to reprints of five Old Master paintings. In the video that accompanies the interview, there are details of art by seventeenth-century-painter Jan Brueghel the Elder in which Tiravanija erases the depictions of animals, making them only visible under UV light. The intersection of the history of the reprinted master paintings with Tiravanija's artistic commentary, specifically in Brueghel's *The Temptation in the Garden of Eden* (c. 1600), speaks to a pattern throughout history of human ideology justifying the exploitation of nature as well as colonial processes. *We Don't Recognise What We Don't See* echoes the causality between colonisation, globalisation and the erosion of stable environmental systems in *untitled 2006 (palm pavilion)*, which Tiravanija arranged for the 2006 Bienal de São Paulo. In this installation he and his collaborators reconstructed housing designed for French colonies in Africa, in order to retrace the corporate colonisation of sites for growing palm oil and the industry's connection to environmental and human devastation. In many ways the mundane and platitudinous ideas we commit ourselves to and *how* we commit (with vague statements like 'save the animals') are a collective decision about how we are comfortable with dying. Tiravanija's oeuvre is among the few that actually foregrounds that collective comfort by using situational and interactive settings to test his audience's acumen for practising the attributes most likely to make a change in how we relate to our environments.

In my encounters with Tiravanija's work, and speaking to him, I was profoundly activated by the artist's ability, as a maker of situations and places, to demand that we (humans) acknowledge the fear that

disables empathetic interactions and gentle recognition of our interdependence with each other and nature. In a riff on the 1974 film *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, the title phrase – 'Fear eats the soul' – crops up throughout Tiravanija's body of gatherings and exhibitions. Taking place in Germany, months after the Munich massacre, the film follows a love story between Ali, who is a Moroccan guestworker, and a German widower as they face social and familial judgement and alienation as a result of their relationship. Their access to one another, their human intimacy, is barred by the racism, xenophobia and misogyny in their society. The plot rigorously embodies the fear among our species of becoming the other; of living like how we perceive the other to live; or of being confused for the other in contexts where the othered individual has become symbolic of something negative. Throughout Tiravanija's career his commentary on othering is connected to the ways he has reprised *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, even to the extent of filming a remake, titled *untitled 2017 (skip the bruising of the eskimos to the exquisite words vs. if I give you a penny you can give me a pair of scissors)*.

When I look at certain gatherings organised by Tiravanija, they in a sense provide access to the horrifically lacking basic dignities of living: eating well, resting well, being well together and learning. Despite his cool self-representation with regard to the impacts of his gatherings, Tiravanija simmers in his focused curiosity for human habits, and our conflictual desire to be together but also exploit one another. His artworks are equally sites for inquiry, joy and practising trust. Yet Tiravanija's demand remains the same since 1987, even if it requires an edit: give us equal access to resting well, eating well and being well together – otherwise we will blow up the museum. ar

Rirkrit Tiravanija: A LOT OF PEOPLE is on show at MOMA PS1, New York, from 12 October to 4 March

untitled 2017 (fear eats the soul) (white flag), 2017, flag, 183 x 320 cm. Photo: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy the artist and Creative Time, New York

Jessica Lanay is a writer and poet from Key West and author of the poetry collection am•phib•ian (2020)

FRIEZE

Profile: On the occasion of Rirkrit Tiravanija's major survey at MoMA PS1, New York, *Marko Gluhaich* considers the transgressiveness of the artist who brought cooking inside of galleries

Rirkrit Tiravanija



Marko Gluhaich
Rirkrit Tiravanija
Frieze, N°238, October, 2023, p.128-135.

The story goes, he was running late. As Rirkrit Tiravanija tells it, he was going to cook the pad thai, transfer it into sealed containers and allow the visitors to his exhibition at Paula Allen Gallery in New York to help themselves. But gathering the groceries around Chinatown took so long that he had no choice but to cook throughout the entire opening. Friends, seeing him stressed, helped, while others, confused, thought he was the caterer. Tiravanija and friends then served the food to a lot of people. Thus was *untitled (pad thai)* (1990).

So, I appreciate the irony when, in July, I drive two-and-a-half hours to Hancock, New York, to meet Tiravanija at his and gallerist Gavin Brown's restaurant-cum-gallery Unclebrother, and he is running late. It's a balmy afternoon: artist Precious Okoyomon is in the kitchen with a few helpers preparing a spicy whole roast lamb with peaches and roses, while Tiravanija will be outside overseeing two curries (green and massaman) and cooking two kinds of paella (one vegetarian, the other seafood and sausage). Mr. Fingers's 'Mystery of Love' (1985) bumps inside the eatery, a former car dealership ('DaBrescia Motors Inc' still adorns the seafoam facade). Two signs from the neighbouring shop face Unclebrother: 'Fuck Biden and fuck you for voting for him' and 'Trump 2024: Fuck Your Feelings'.

While waiting for Tiravanija, I offer myself as a line cook and I am tasked with peeling shrimp. When we speak later, Tiravanija is insistent that Unclebrother is not a restaurant but a kitchen – an apt term to define the space in-between the propriety of a restaurant and the very DIY nature of his cooking pieces. Okoyomon's lamb sits in two smoking buckets outside; beside it are two paella pans resting atop propane-fuelled burners. When Tiravanija arrives one hour before opening, he immediately gets to work preparing the curries, before moving to his paella station where he'll be for the rest of the evening. His salt-and-pepper hair is up in a bun; he's wearing sweats, chefs' clogs and a shirt he got at a Berlin golf tournament organized by friend and fellow artist Olafur Eliasson.

When I ask him about his decision to set up a more permanent kitchen, compared to his itinerant cooking pieces, he reminds me of Passerby, the bar opened by Brown in 1999 that attached to his then-gallery, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, on West 15th Street. The disco-styled venue played watering hole to both the arts and fashion crowds, as well as to the neighbourhood's blue-collar community, until its closure eight years later. Just before the bar opened, Tiravanija staged *untitled 1999 (tomorrow can shut up and go away)* (1999) in the gallery. Originally presented at Kölnischer Kunstverein as *untitled 1996 (tomorrow is another day)* (1996), this recreation comprised a condensed plywood replica of Tiravanija's apartment in New York's East Village, complete with running water and a working gas stove. Unlike in Cologne – where labour restrictions meant the gallery could only operate six days a week – Gavin Brown's Enterprise remained open 24 hours per day for the duration of the three-and-a-half-month run. As in Cologne, Tiravanija left town shortly after the opening: the idea being that he didn't need to be present for the work to be activated – a sentiment he also relays to me about his cooking pieces.

For me, to be aware of yourself is to be aware that you can be in the chaos and can still sustain yourself.

Rirkrit Tiravanija

In its first iteration, the apartment was relatively tame: visitors would cook, nap, celebrate birthdays; the second, however, found visitors fucking and fighting. Still, nothing truly bad happened, as Brown explained to *The New Yorker* in 2004. 'The art world is very polite.'

Born in 1961 in Buenos Aires – where his father, a diplomat, was working at the Thai embassy – Tiravanija moved around a lot as a child: Bangkok when he was three, Addis Ababa at seven and back to Bangkok by 1970. He attended university in Ottawa, where he enrolled to study photojournalism but soon switched to fine art after encountering the work of Marcel Duchamp and Kazimir Malevich on an art history course. He moved to New York shortly thereafter to attend the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program.

Tiravanija now lives between New York, Berlin and Chiang Mai, with itinerancy a key, albeit often-overlooked, aspect of his practice. The early work *untitled 1994 (from barajas to paracuellos de jarama to torrejon de ardoz to san fernando or coslada to reina sofia)* (1994), made for the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, featured the bicycle that Tiravanija walked 17 kilometres from Madrid airport to the museum, the supplies that sustained him during the trip, as well as a video documenting the experience. 'It's always been about the position of the self in the place,' he says. 'And that's because I'm always displaced. I'm never not at home because everywhere is home.'

A common criticism of Tiravanija's practice is that it promotes a woo-woo utopian vision of the world without much of a coherent politics to back it. Nearly 20 years ago in this magazine, Dan Fox wrote: '[U]ndoubtedly there's something New Age about Tiravanija's neo-hippie positivity'. There's been a focus by critics from Claire Bishop to Nicolas Bourriaud on the dubious claims to a democratic interactivity these works seem to promote. But, as Brown tells me jocundly, Tiravanija is 'a little bit of a sadist'. In addition to running Unclebrother with Tiravanija, Brown is the artist's close friend, collaborator and gallerist of nearly 30 years. 'It's not only about bringing people together: it's also about making people feel a bit itchy in their skin.'

Previous page
Rirkrit Tiravanija,
undated. Courtesy:
STPI – Creative
Workshop & Gallery,
Singapore; photo-
graph: Toni Cuhadi

Opposite page
Photographs:
Marko Gluhaich

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untitled 1990 (pad thai), 1990. Unless otherwise stated, all images courtesy: Rirkrit Tiravanija Archive, Berlin

he tells me about those early relational works. Brown was working at 303 Gallery in New York when Tiravanija staged *untitled (free)* (1992), in which he moved the contents of the gallery's office – desks, filing cabinets, works by other artists – into the exhibition space and cooked Thai curry in the back. "There was a palpable tension. People saying, "What has he done to our gallery?" Brown reflects. "Rirkrit was describing his own discomfort, his own otherness to all of these, essentially white, middle-class art makers, art lovers, art goers."

Tiravanija was a graduate student at the Art Institute of Chicago when he visited the museum's Asian wing – specifically, the artefacts from Thailand. They were 'Asian objects', he tells me, 'like Buddhas and bowls'. There was a dissonance, though, between the aesthetic value for which the museum presented these objects and the use value that Tiravanija had attributed to them. 'For us, they're important because we use them. A Buddha is a used object, not a sculpture; it's not an idle thing,' he says. 'It's there to remind you of the philosophy you have.'

In 1996, after his participation in the 1993 Venice Biennale and the 1995 Whitney Biennial, Tiravanija returned to Thailand an international star. 'You know,' he tells me, 'Tiger Woods is half-Thai, so everyone always claims him as Thai. But, even though I'm really Thai, they all thought that I was this kind of fake Thai, from the West.' During a conference organized by Toshiba Thailand, artist Chalermchai Kositpipat asked Tiravanija: 'If my wife cooks pad thai at home, does that make it art?' To this, Tiravanija responded facetiously: 'Well, if I were invited to that dinner.' It's an anecdote that demonstrates a common misinterpretation of Tiravanija's work: that it requires the artist's presence.

A few weeks later, we're walking with his dog, Blue, through Tompkins Square Park in the East Village. It's early morning, and Tiravanija is in town to prepare for his survey exhibition, 'A Lot of People', which opens this month at MoMA PS1. A problem has arisen: one of the electric woks Tiravanija used for *pad thai* isn't working and the curators had been planning on recreating the piece with the original appliances. 'I told them to just get a new one,' he tells me. 'That same wok doesn't mean anything. It's actually the people who came that meant more.' The show at PS1 – in addition to presenting works across sculpture, film and painting from the late 1980s to the present – will feature five 'plays' of Tiravanija's relational pieces, including *pad thai* and *free/still*, performed by actors from a 'score' written by the artist. While visitors will be able to eat 'pre-cooked' pad thai or curry, dance with the actors (*untitled 1993/2008 (shall we dance)*, 1993/2008) and make a graphic t-shirt (*untitled 2011 (t-shirt, no t-shirt)*, 2011), Tiravanija insists: 'You're not looking at the original; there is no original. It's being reframed into an institutional structure as education.' He's smiling when he tells me that his show 'JOUEZ/PLAY' at PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art in Montreal, to open concurrently with the PS1 survey, will feature two works that will simultaneously be on display in New York. 'It's not like a sunflower in a vase that sits in one place,' he explains. 'The work could be the same in really different places and be doing completely different things.' There's always been this inherent tension between Tiravanija's practice and the institutional expectations for artworks.



untitled 1999 (royal thai pavilion), 1999



**I'm never not at home because
everywhere is home.**

Rirkrit Tiravanija

untitled 1992 (Free), 1992.
Courtesy: 303 Gallery,
New York

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This page
untitled 1999
(tomorrow can shut up
and go away), 1999

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When we speak, he emphasizes the increasing limits to how a person can experience art in a museum.

In 2004–05, Tiravanija's 'A Retrospective (tomorrow is another fine day)' toured from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam to the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris/ARC. Notably, the only objects on display were empty plywood structures resembling the works' initial locales; his practice was described in voiceovers written by Tiravanija and fellow artist Philippe Parreno as well as in a story by sci-fi author Bruce Sterling, recited by the voice of a 'ghost'. Impermanence is built into Tiravanija's practice. When a cooking piece is completed, he always packs up the waste, telling me: 'I don't want to leave anything behind.'

Brown tells me that he thinks 'the work is obsessed with death'. When Tiravanija came to North America, he *had* to be the charming, smiling guy, the one who is now projected to be behind these 'utopian' works, Brown emphasizes. But he was stateless in many ways, being the son of a diplomat, and there is something unfriendly in all the friendliness. In 'We Don't Recognise What We Don't See', held earlier this year at STPI in Singapore and curated by another long-time collaborator Hans Ulrich Obrist, the artist presented *untitled 2020 nature morte* (2023), a series of 20 aluminium plates dedicated to extinct species. On the occasion of the show, Obrist recalled in a conversation with the artist that, when playing a game in which he had to choose to be an animal, Tiravanija opted to be a fruit fly. During our meeting, I asked him to explain this choice and, without skipping a beat, he responded 'short lifespan'.

When Unclebrother opens, a queue quickly forms of local Hancock residents and art-world types visiting from the city. People mill about, sipping on wine or spicy palomas, waiting for their ticket to be called by the kitchen. Tiravanija is standing at his paella station with a helper now, handing off orders as they come in. The food is delicious; the curry nasal-drip spicy. As the night goes on, most locals filter out, the out-of-towners straggle behind. Someone brings out Jell-O shots, another is serving pre-rolled joints at the bar. A few people cross the border into Pennsylvania and bring back cheap fireworks. The crowd congregates down by the Delaware River below Unclebrother. 'People think I have to be at the centre of things,' Tiravanija explains while we sit over glasses of wine, scraping crispy rice off the bottom of the paella pan. 'But I've tried not to be.' Out here, you sense that. You walk into Unclebrother questioning who has a stake in what; by the time you leave, everyone seems to be a part of it.

Hancock is an overwhelmingly republican, Donald Trump-voting, economically depressed part of the state: it doesn't have a readymade audience for a contemporary art gallery and pop-up kitchen. Yet, the picnic benches are crowded and locals are waiting in line for Thai curry. 'I don't understand how, at this point in the existence of humanity, we don't understand each other better,' Tiravanija tells me. 'People are afraid that, if they encounter difference, it'll change them. It's all because they don't understand themselves. For me, to be aware of yourself is to be aware that you can be in the chaos and can still sustain yourself.' ●

Marko Gluhaich is associate editor of *frieze* magazine.

frieze No. 238



**It's about making
people feel a bit itchy
in their skin.**

Gavin Brown

Above
*untitled 1996 (tomorrow is
another day)*, 1996

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October 2023

Interview

Rirkrit Tiravanija Introduces Precious Okoyomon To His Chaos Menu



This past summer, at a former car dealership in Hancock, New York, the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija spent the weekend cooking up curry for crowds of hungry art-goers and country neighbors. It's all part of the upstate art gallery and canteen called Unclebrother, which the artist founded with the gallerist [Gavin Brown](#) a decade ago. But it's also in keeping with the spirit of the Thai artist's radical, interaction-focused, and food-centric artistic universe, which Tiravanija has explored and expanded ever since he served pad thai and curry to audiences in the early 1990s. It's a blatant rejection of the market-driven art world system of filling a gallery with sellable work. Tiravanija's art has always been about creating connections—whether in eating and drinking, or in his text works printed across posters, maps, t-shirts, or ping-pong tables. This fall, New York's [MoMA PS1](#) will host the first retrospective of the artist's career, with plenty of curry to go around. But Tiravanija is hardly an artist who dwells in the past. For this interview, he spoke with his friend and fellow foodie, artist [Precious Okoyomon](#), as they prepared and ate dinner at his house in Narrowsburg. It was a chaos menu.

Precious Okoyomon
Rirkrit Tiravanija Introduces Precious Okoyomon To His Chaos Menu
Interview, October 13, 2023.
<https://cutt.ly/hwQ3fJLr>

WEDNESDAY 6:38 PM AUG. 30 , 2023 NARROWSBURG , NY

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA: It was a great weekend at Unclebrother, wasn't it?

PRECIOUS OKOYOMON: I had a lot of fun. I haven't worked in a restaurant in a long time.

TIRAVANIJA: When were you working in a restaurant?

OKOYOMON: My mom owned the only Nigerian restaurant in Cincinnati. I grew up in a kitchen. Then throughout college in Chicago, I worked at a very fancy restaurant and a gastronomy kitchen.

TIRAVANIJA: Have you watched *The Bear*? It started out as a sandwich shop, but now, in the second season, it's becoming more upscale. But they're keeping their sandwich window to serve their old customers.

OKOYOMON: Oh, that's cute. When did you start Unclebrother?

TIRAVANIJA: Nine or ten years ago. I was living just a bit up from Hancock, in the woods by the lake. And then Gavin is in Lordville, so Hancock was the middle point. Gavin drove by this garage one day and saw that it was up for sale. So first we bought the garage, and then the greenhouse. We knew we were going to use the space, but we didn't know if there would be any people. I'm always surprised to see that there are all these people coming. For me it was always a community space, whether the community accepted it or not. That's why we serve free curry. Everyone can eat, and it doesn't cost a lot of money to make. A lot of people with money have moved up there since the pandemic, and young people, too. It's a real mix.



OKOYOMON: I feel like people are really into it in a very earnest way.

TIRAVANIJA: I like how they appreciate it. It takes a lot of energy, even if we just do two nights, because I'm worn out. We're not really a restaurant. We're just a kitchen. Okay, I have to make the starter and the salad now.

OKOYOMON: What are you making?

TIRAVANIJA: I have a burrata that has been sitting in the dashi, which is an experiment. Actually, it's because I was in Singapore, and my friend Jeffrey took me to this tiny local place run by a Japanese man. He basically marinates his mozzarella in miso, which I'm planning to do.

OKOYOMON: Wow. That's sexy.

TIRAVANIJA: It's a fermentation thing. You ferment things in a tasty bean paste. So we can have burrata with a smoked duck which is from my local German butcher, over in Pennsylvania.

OKOYOMON: Ooh.



TIRAVANIJA: I didn't realize that they did that. I was there to buy some steaks, and I saw the smoked duck, so I wanted to try it out. And then we have a mustard green from our local farmer friend, Eugene.

OKOYOMON: Shout-out to Eugene.

TIRAVANIJA: He never charges more than 20 bucks.

OKOYOMON: He has good edible flowers.

TIRAVANIJA: I'm going to make a salad with mustard greens, arugula, and some sprouts with a very simple vinaigrette. Then we're going to have shiso rice with seaweed, and we have this pork shoulder that has been brined in a kind of apple cider vinegar and Korean plum sauce. It's been smoking since 11 a.m., and I also put powdered dashi on it. I have no idea what it's going to taste like, but that's the test.

OKOYOMON: Who taught you how to cook?

TIRAVANIJA: It's self-taught, like art. I grew up in my grandmother's kitchen. She had a restaurant in Thailand, and I would sit around and watch the chefs. So, it's not so much that I learned how to cook, but I was watching it. Then there's a traditional Thai toy set that people would sell on the street. It's a set of miniature clay pots and a little stove that you put charcoal in. I used to cook in those for the kids in the street.



OKOYOMON: You were just giving out free food to the kids?

TIRAVANIJA: I'd cook curry in the pots, with chives and eggs, and give it to the kids. It was like playing kitchen. Then we went to Canada. This was before I even knew anything about art. My grandmother came with us for a break and she would make croissants, which you can't just throw together. You have to know what you're doing, how to layer the butter. That was the first time I actually cooked, and the only time I ever cooked with my grandmother.

OKOYOMON: Did your mom cook a lot?

TIRAVANIJA: My mother, who is a dental surgeon, rarely cooks. But whenever she does it's perfect. But my grandmother was really the cook. The restaurant she had was Thai and intercontinental food. We used to live in that compound with her. Our housekeeper would come to me after school and go, "What do you want to eat today?" And I'd be like, "I want beef tongue." And then they would bring it from the restaurant. It was like having room service in the house. At one point, I ate beef tongue every day for a year.



OKOYOMON: I love beef tongue. I had a food obsession similar to that as a kid. There's this Nigerian dish that's called ponmo, and it's cow skin. I was addicted to boiled cow skin. You boil it, it gets really rubbery, and then you fry it with a tomato paste stew and spicy gelatin. It's so good.

TIRAVANIJA: Does it feel the same as pork rinds?

OKOYOMON: No, it's soft.

TIRAVANIJA: But you would have to take all the hair off.

OKOYOMON: You do. That's the worst part about ponmo, washing the cow skin. I hated doing it, but that was always my job. If I wanted ponmo, I had to wash the cow skin with a knife in the sink.

TIRAVANIJA: Cooking for me is an instinct, not a learned thing. That's how I approach making art. There are no set rules.

OKOYOMON: That's the fun thing about making work. You're always coming at it from an instinctual place. It always seems so grounded in this memory-love practice, like feeding people. It's a literal act of love, and there's a real love in all the work you make. Do you feel that?



TIRAVANIJA: I'm close to the thing that I do. Early on I realized that I should do what is really close to me, which weirdly, was cooking for other people. Because when I went through college, I was making food at home because I was trying to save money. I'd make a pot of curry or whatever, but then you can't make one portion of curry. You make like 10 portions. So, I'd just call all my friends to come over to eat it. That became a very normal thing. Then at one moment, when I really made the first cooking piece [in 1989], I was walking down West Broadway to go look at this space where this group show was going to be, and I said, "I just have to do what is really close to me." And then I said, "Oh. Then I'm just going to make curry." That was the beginning of where things went, one after another.

OKOYOMON: Do you feel like you were making art from a different place before you realized that?

TIRAVANIJA: I was already questioning making art in a kind of "making art" way. But all along I've been saying things like, "Oh, I'm making road signs." And the road sign doesn't mean that it's showing you the right way to go. It could be showing you the totally wrong direction. From the beginning, I was always interested in where I was because I didn't know where I was. I felt like I didn't have a place, or I didn't know where to go. So, my art was always about figuring out where I am and where I'm going. Everything is a kind of roadside, a direction, or a way of finding your way.

OKOYOMON: So what are you going to make foodwise at PS1?

GALERIE
CHANTAL CROUSEL

TIRAVANIJA: Well, it's more about the work, because it's almost impossible to cook live anymore. So I said, "Okay. Then let's do it as a play." It's going to be like a theater play of the cooking.

OKOYOMON: On a set?

TIRAVANIJA: Yep. But things will be cooked on the stage, and there will be people who will be performing as characters. The PS1 show is technically a retrospective but I don't think about it that way. Let's say it's another intersection in the road and people have to stop and wait, look at the lights, and figure out which way to go. So I'm trying to deal with the work in this situation, which will also make it a new experience. Because the conditions of the past are never the same.



OKOYOMON: It's always changing.

TIRAVANIJA: It's always changing, so you might as well acknowledge that and build it into the frame, adding a step rather than just standing there as if everything is normal. Also, regulations have changed. Obviously in terms of fire, we have to think of the well-being of the guests, so they don't get burned. I think it's better to admit that this is a very different experience from what it was in 1990, rather than pretending it's the exact same. There are more rules.

OKOYOMON: We don't always have space to play.

TIRAVANIJA: Sometimes it can be important to have some chaos, but I think that's how most of us are living and working and dealing with life and making art. It's not all clean and organized and safe.

OKOYOMON: I don't think it should be.



TIRAVANIJA: Yeah. It's about understanding that art isn't a thing. It may be everything. Or nothing. It's just that we tend to think of art as a thing.

OKOYOMON: It's literally all the stuff that's out there and in here, and also not. It's the cosmic chaos. Not just the white cube, but memory. I feel like you carry that poetic insight of everything, and it leaks into everything you do. It's infectious. It's also the way you interact with people. Do you feel like that's been seeded in you from the way that you are in the world?

TIRAVANIJA: Yeah, I think parts of my grandmother seeped into me. She was always super open and generous, and she went bankrupt because of that. I have always said I would just die in the gutter if it came to doing what I want. It's fine. I tell my students: If you can say that, then you don't have to worry about anything because in the end, it will all be fine.

OKOYOMON: To know yourself is a power.

TIRAVANIJA: What do you think about this wine?

OKOYOMON: It's pretty good. Do you believe in destiny?

TIRAVANIJA: In a weird kind of back-assed way, yes. We're not all here out of coincidence.

OKOYOMON: I feel the same.

TIRAVANIJA: It's a kind of Buddhist thing. Which is to say, everything has a reason and the reason is always going to happen. And for me, maybe it's about degrees of use, or usefulness. I walked down the street in the East Village and people would smile at me, people I don't know. I always think it's so beautiful for people to acknowledge you without ever knowing why.



OKOYOMON: Maybe there's a cosmic energy. People just want to smile at you.

TIRAVANIJA: I hope. I remember people I saw for two minutes on the street and I see them again three hours later on the subway.

OKOYOMON: You're really good at witnessing people. It's a gift you have.

TIRAVANIJA: That's my next show, me just smiling, walking around.

OKOYOMON: Tell me what you love.

TIRAVANIJA: Let's just say this, I loved COVID.

OKOYOMON: Because you got to stay at home?

TIRAVANIJA: Because everybody had to stop. It made the whole world stand still, and you had to scale your life to things that were close. I'm not against progress, but I'm in favor of slowing down. Progress should have been about free time, and not about no time. And now the whole social media structure is about no time, because you're basically always on it. I love not having to do anything.

OKOYOMON: My vibe. I want that for you.

TIRAVANIJA: But not having to do anything doesn't mean that you don't do anything. Alright, I'm going to make the second course now.



NAM PLA ICE CREAM

by Rirkrit Tiravanija

- 1.5 l thick cream
- 0.5 l milk
- 300 g sugar
- 300 g egg yolks
- Fish sauce to taste

Combine eggs and sugar, stir in cream and milk. Heat the mixture gently until 82 Celsius, can be done in bain-marie. Then pour in a bowl on ice to cool down. When cold add fish sauce to taste. Churn in an ice cream machine.



EXPOSITIONS REVIEWS

PARIS

Luc Delahaye

Galerie Nathalie Obadia / 4 septembre - 31 octobre 2020

Presqu'épique, un agriculteur travaillant la terre d'une rizière se découpe sur ciel bleu-gris, le visage mystérieusement dans l'ombre, le corps ciselé par l'effort. *Le Champ* est un des tableaux photographiques de l'exposition de Luc Delahaye à la galerie Obadia, ensemble d'œuvres réalisées au Sénégal dans un village que l'artiste décrit comme on ne peut plus banal. Il y est parti avec l'envie, citant Bernard-Marie Koltès, « de raconter bien, [...] avec les mots les plus simples, [...] n'importe quoi qui soit un bout de notre monde et qui appartienne à tous ». Pour évoquer ce village, il dit avoir eu besoin de retrouver l'« immédiateté sensible » de la poésie documentaire, en contrepoint des grands formats, ici particulièrement composés, pour lesquels il est connu. En noir et blanc, de petits paysages, séquences et variations (portes précaires, postures de récolte) forment ainsi une chronique de la région dont émanent « fragilité de la vie » et « sentiment de tristesse ». Ailleurs, teintant les existences, ce sont les croyances qui deviennent latentes. Dans *le Filet*, la densité du tableau d'un pêcheur arrangeant ses mailles évoque des « djinns », esprits redoutés qui, dans le filet et le feuillage retravaillés, semblent habiter l'image. Ayant marqué Delahaye, les gestes de cet homme de la caste des Soubalés, pêcheurs et médiateurs entre les hommes et le monde « autre » du fleuve, s'enchaînent dans ce qui ressemble à une grande planche-contact des vues précédant le tableau. Autant de sensations qui, après les images de Palestine du photographe (voir son interview dans *artpress* n°455), érigent ce village au rang de la grande histoire.

Aurélien Cavanna



Paul Ardenne
«Rirkrit Tiravanija»
Art Press, 10 Octobre 2020

PARIS

Rirkrit Tiravanija

Galerie Chantal Crousel / 5 septembre - 10 octobre 2020



Rirkrit Tiravanija (Argentine, 1961) s'est fait connaître dans les années 1990 par sa remise en cause de l'exposition de type white cube. Il développe alors le modèle de l'exposition vivante en conviant les spectateurs à participer. Ce qui se voit s'expérimente en commun, l'exposition prend des airs de performance élargie.

Intitulée *untitled 2020 (once upon a time) (after jasper johns)*, cette nouvelle exposition de Rirkrit Tiravanija (la sixième à la galerie Crousel) adopte la forme plus conventionnelle d'une installation. Proposant œuvres textiles et sculptures de marbre, elle se distribue entre des tapisseries d'Aubusson de tailles diverses, au sol ou au mur, et un semis de blocs minéraux géométriques, le tout ponctué de slogans en lettres massives : *Shadows in Progress, The Continuum of Insidiousness, The Ambrosias of Evil...* Le fond de chacune de ces pièces reprend la trame des *Flags* et des *Maps* de Jasper Johns, une série de peintures du drapeau ou du territoire américains (à partir de 1954) tendant à faire de ceux-ci, devenus un simple prétexte pictural, des icônes publicitaires ou décoratives. Quelques plantes vertes achèvent de donner à l'ensemble des airs de hall ou de lounge d'aéroport.

« Il était une fois 2020 » : titre et contenu de l'œuvre expriment une relation fragilisée au présent, en écho à l'actuelle pandémie de Covid-19 et ses effets dévastateurs. Le mal court, ce qui paraît bien ordonné, en vérité, ne l'est plus.

Paul Ardenne

Rirkrit Tiravanija (1961, Argentina) made a name for himself in the 1990s by his questioning of the white cube-type exhibition. He then

Ci-dessus/above:
Rirkrit Tiravanija. « *Untitled 2020 (once upon a time) (after Jasper Johns)* ». Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

À gauche/on the left:
Luc Delahaye. « *Le village* ». Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris. (Ph. Luc Delahaye; Court. l'artiste). Vues d'exposition / exhibition views

developed the model of the living exhibition by inviting spectators to participate. What can be seen is experienced in common, the exhibition takes on the air of an expanded performance. Entitled *untitled 2020 (once upon a time) (after jasper johns)*, this new exhibition by Rirkrit Tiravanija (the sixth at Galerie Crousel) adopts the more conventional form of an installation. Featuring textile works and marble sculptures, it is distributed between Aubusson tapestries of various sizes, on the floor and on the wall, and a crop of geometric mineral blocks, all punctuated by slogans in massive letters: *Shadows in Progress, The Continuum of Insidiousness, The Ambrosias of Evil...* The background of each of his pieces is based on Jasper Johns' *Flags* and *Maps*, a series of paintings of the American flag and country (from 1954 onwards), with the aim of turning them, which had become a simple pictorial pretext, into advertising or decorative icons. A few green plants complete the look of an airport lounge.

"Once upon a time, 2020": the title and content of the work express a fragile relationship to the present, echoing the current Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating effects. Evil is on the loose. What seems well ordered, truth be told, is no longer.

ARTFORUM

PARIS

Rirkrit Tiravanija

GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL

By the time Rirkrit Tiravanija moved to New York in 1982, Jasper Johns had been making his flag paintings for almost thirty years. For his new tapestries and marble works, Tiravanija has copied the elder artist's maps and flags. Tiravanija produced his tapestries on the historic



Rirkrit Tiravanija, *untitled 2020 (the odious smell of truth)* (three flags, 1958), 2020, marble, 30 3/4 x 45 1/2 x 2 1/2".

French looms of Pinton, manufacturers of works by such twentieth-century heavyweights as Calder and Picasso; his marble comes from the same veins of Carrara that supplied Michelangelo.

While Tiravanija gained visibility in the 1990s for modest installations that privileged socializing and shared meals—essential rituals of human life—the atmosphere of the artist's exhibition in Paris this fall was sepulchral. A collection of polished and plush monuments, the timely show addressed the current social, political and medical moment. Visitors, following mandated guidelines for social distancing, moved alone through the exhibition; after the opening, there were no events or plans for any kind of gathering. As if in commemoration of Marcel Broodthaers's *Un jardin d'hiver* (A Winter Garden), 1974, a decorative Kentia palm in a plastic pot sat next to nearly every work. "It could be more interesting if [these sculptures] were actually put out in a graveyard and used," the artist has remarked, "for basically the marble slabs are tombstones."

The exhibition was called "untitled 2020 (once upon a time) (after Jasper Johns)," and each sculpture or tapestry, made in direct citation of one of Johns's works, bore the same main title as the show along with, in most cases, a pair of parenthetical subtitles—the first being a short phrase Tiravanija had pulled from literature or the press, the second indicating the title and date of the Johns work cited: for instance, *untitled 2020 (the continuum of insidiousness) (map, 1963)* (all works 2020). The words, in all-caps sans serif lettering, were carved into marble or woven into the tapestries, which were displayed as wall hangings and on the floor. Phrases such as THE ODIIOUS SMELL OF TRUTH and A HURRICANE IN A DROP OF CUM (the latter a line from a poem-painting by John Giorno) entered the exhibition space with the aggressive ambiguity of oversize billboards. Strung together, phrases from different works offered an ominous poetry, a dark nostalgia for a country that on today's world stage is both omnipresent and unknowable: ONCE UPON A TIME . . . THE AMBROSIAS OF EVIL . . . SHADOWS IN PROGRESS.

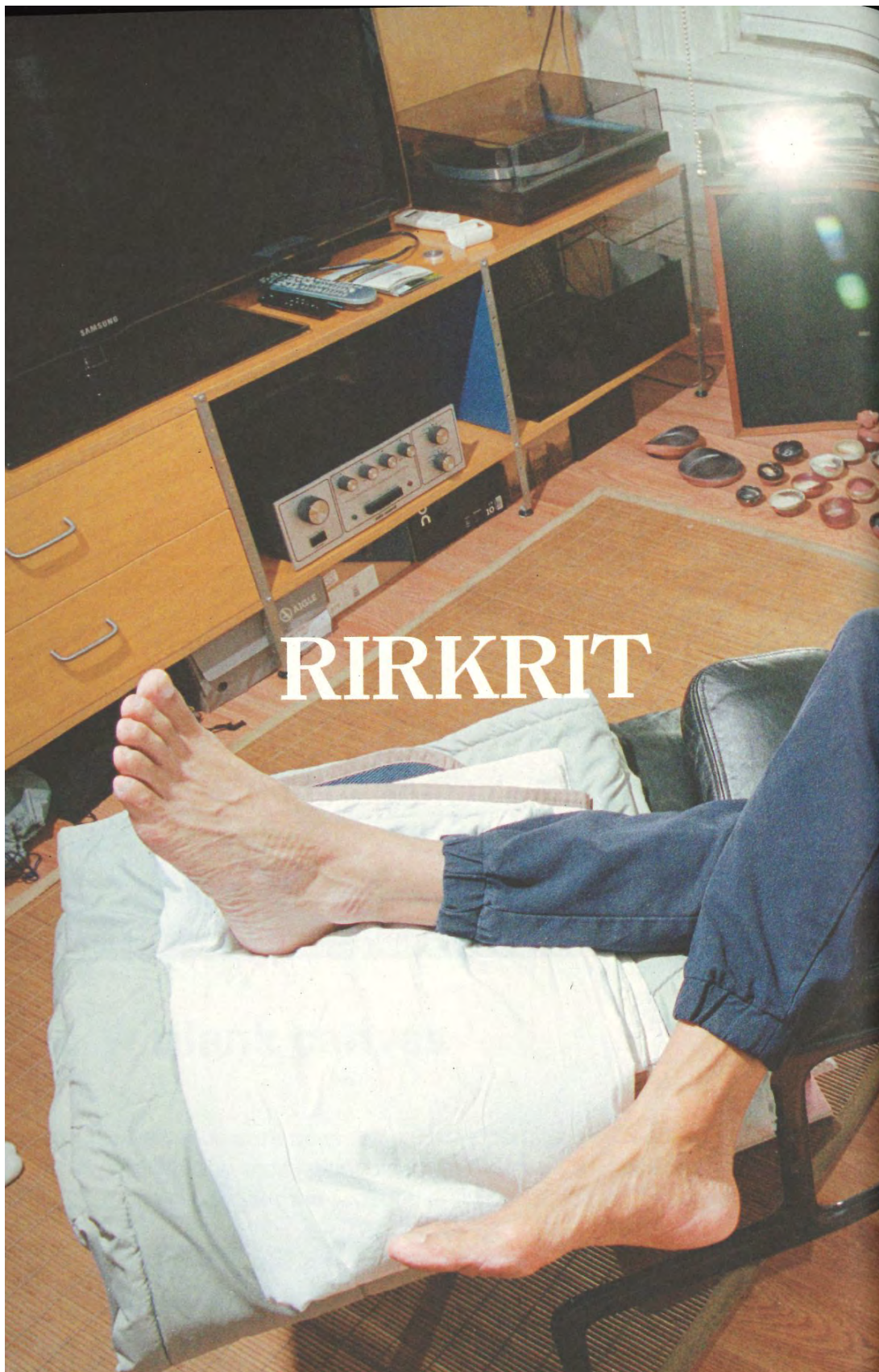
Like an afterimage of the American dream, Tiravanija's neo-Dada flags and American maps are melancholic. But despite a latent pessimism, something hopeful remains. With his citations of Johns, Broodthaers, and Giorno and use of materials associated with Michelangelo and Picasso, Tiravanija operates far from the sinister metal flags pinned to the lapels of Brioni suits that have been drained of meaning by the actions and language of their most visible wearer. Working on a grand scale, Tiravanija traces a thread from Johns's eight-figure auction records to the Stars and Stripes hung proudly on the front doors of homes ravaged by predatory mortgages, opioid addiction, and Covid-19's economic fallout. Tiravanija's works evoke a history of the production of power and of dreams. In the quiet, one can hear nostalgic whispers of grandeur and intention. Tiravanija mines the roots of a symbol, testing its materiality, its force, and its resistance.

—Lillian Davies

Lillian Davies

Rirkrit Tiravanija - Galerie Chantal Crousel

Artforum, Vol. 59, No. 3, December, 2020, p.187, 188



Lola Kramer
« Rirkrit Tiravanija »
Apartamento #2, Spring/Summer 2020, p.64-83



My first conversation with Rirkrit Tiravanija was at a Thai restaurant with a group in the East Village. Rirkrit and his friend Antto Melasniemi, the Helsinki-based chef, were discussing their idea for a cookbook that would compile the 'bastardised' recipes they had conceived throughout their friendship. I mentioned that I had recently visited the artist Daniel Spoerri, who in 1968 opened Restaurant Spoerri in Düsseldorf, and then the Eat Art Gallery upstairs. I saw this as a precursor to Rirkrit's restaurant, Unclebrother, and my curiosity about these relationships and the intersection of food and the arts ran us through dessert. Many have come to know Rirkrit as the artist who cooks in lieu of presenting physical artworks, but what is often overlooked is that this gesture is a vehicle for more expansive ideas and only one aspect of his work. As my friend, the writer Allese Thomson, puts it, 'He erects the skeletons of structures—like kitchens and apartments and living rooms and boats and farms and bands and clubs and houses and restaurants, amidst other environments, all more or less temporary—to provide a place for a moment and its people to come together'.

Rirkrit has been described as 'astoundingly nomadic'. Throughout the year, he travels between his homes in Chiang Mai, Berlin, and New York, where he's lived in the same fourth-floor walk-up on East Seventh Street since 1982. In 1996, he realised the first full-scale reproduction of this apartment in Cologne. Since then, reincarnations have appeared in other locations, including Gavin Brown's gallery on West 15th Street, behind the legendary Passerby bar in 1999; at the Liverpool Biennial in 2002; and as part of his retrospective at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in 2004. I realised the full extent to which domestic architecture informs what he makes after living and working in the home he built in Chiang Mai over the winter of 2019. Like most of his work, Tiravanija's home is a platform for an unfolding of time: one that encourages entropy and renounces ideals of control. Conversations with Rirkrit over the course of my stay tended to happen amid the friends, assistants, and family members who were constantly coming and going. We talked while he worked, shaping clay on the pottery wheel next to his 90-year-old mother, or while he cooked, recreating a version of a recipe from his grandmother's cookbook. During our interviews, his ceramic apron, covered in slip, was also serving a double function in the kitchen. The interview you're about to read was edited from a series of ongoing conversations in Chiang Mai and later in New York, in Apartment 21.

apartamento - Rirkrit Tiravanija

Lola Kramer

« *Rirkrit Tiravanija* »

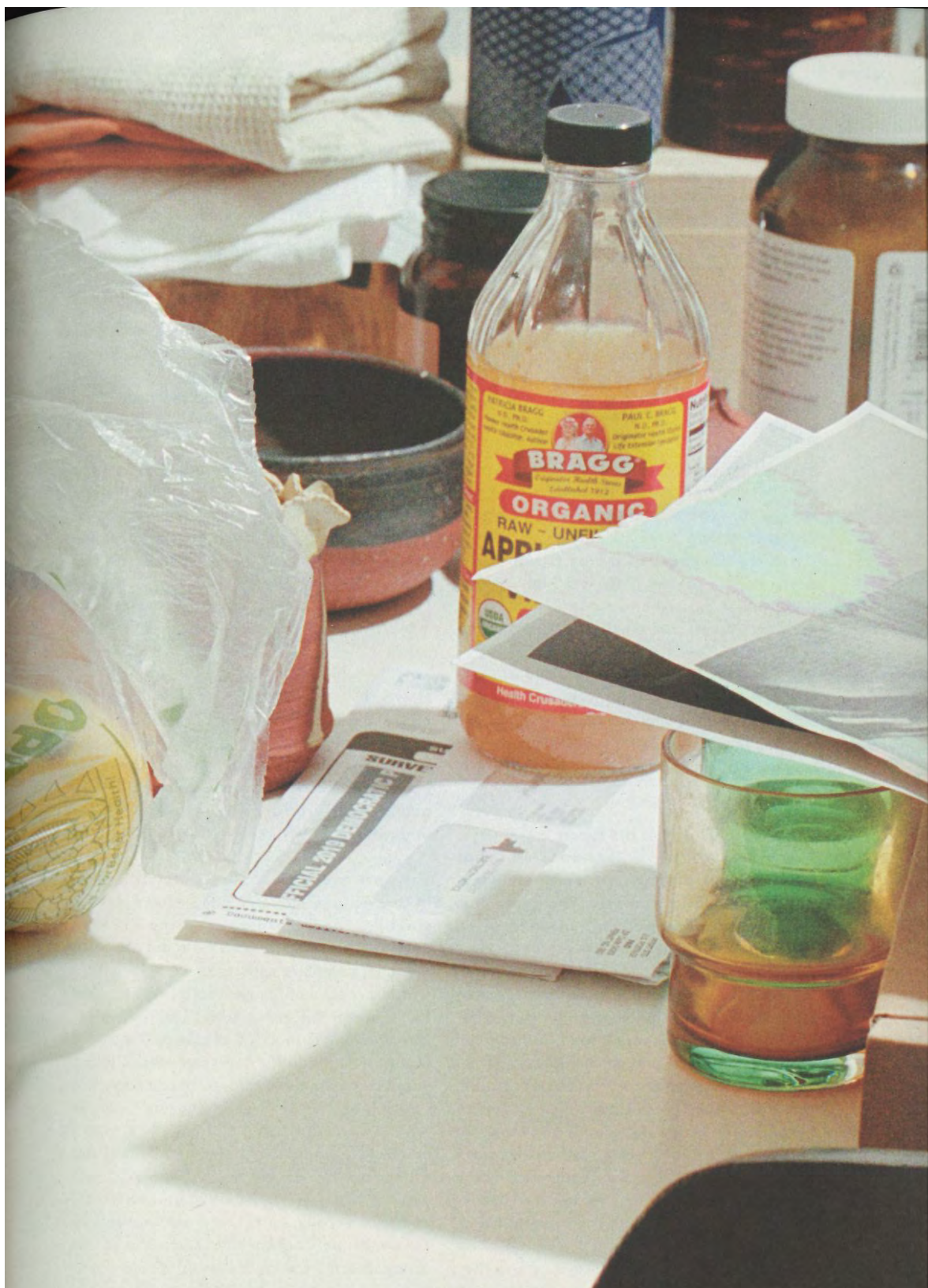
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Lola Kramer
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There's quite a bit of cultural mythology around ghosts in Thailand.

Yes. A friend of mine in Chiang Mai wrote a whole thesis about ghosts, but as a form of control—using ghosts or the ghost experience as a form of regulation, as rules and sub-rules. The idea of ghosts builds up and creates taboos, which are rules. He was questioning: why do we believe this? It's kind of like that, but it's formed as an experience or deity.



There are old stories and new stories that occupy different points in time and space. But ghost stories change based on who's sharing them. People who tell them are usually an authority figure, like a monk. Monks would be the authority in the small village in the middle of the mountains. They're the ones who are educated and have the language. When a monk says, 'Don't go and touch that tree', then obviously people follow that.

You mentioned that you're developing a project that uses a ghost as the subject. Can you tell me about your fascination with the figure of the phantom?

I'm using the ghost as a way to address a particular space. The space is a 'high' institutional space, and when we say 'institution' in Thailand it really means the monarchy or the upper class. There are things you really can't talk about there, and I'm interested in what it would mean to use a ghost to address that space. It's a reverse of the taboo thing. To use a ghost as a metaphor about higher things, without addressing it directly and being put in prison if you did.

To address things that are taboo.

That's why one has to write and address things in certain kinds of languages. I'm questioning, but they might not know that the question is being posed. They wouldn't understand the language or think it's addressing them.

How it's delivered is nuanced and there's often a subtext beneath what it presents itself to be.

The Thai language is very formal. The 'middle' language is formal and un-metaphoric. When you speak in metaphors or in a double entendre, they don't really get it. Unless their minds are trained to understand, because somehow, for Thai speakers, that requires a certain trick of the mind to turn it upside down. Some might read it and see the beautiful language but don't always understand what you're trying to say to them.

In Thai culture, are ghosts evil or are they good, or both? Is the spirit locked in this midpoint, like Casper the Friendly Ghost, in some kind of limbo?

You mentioned that when you first moved to Canada from Thailand, you experienced a sort of culture shock and began watching a lot of television as a means of processing. You mentioned that you were watching ghost stories. What else would you watch?

I was watching shows like *Monty Python* and *M*A*S*H*, which I think highly informed my practice.

How so?

*M*A*S*H* is all about getting around authority. How to find a way to trick or undermine the authority, their rules. *Monty Python* does it for absurdity, poetry in a way. I also find it very poetic how they go around the rules, how they find ways to subvert the institutional structure.

The work you made for the National Gallery in Ottawa, untitled 1998 (no. 21 deerfield dr.), was based on this experience of moving from East to West. You recreated the room you were living in, complete with an active television.

It was a replica of the bedroom I was staying in, in part of this townhouse. It was a project about people living, and of course, it was the first place I landed. I don't see myself as an immigrant; maybe I see myself as an alien, but I never see myself as an immigrant because I've never wanted to stay here. By Trump's standard, I would probably be an immigrant anyway. It was based on my memory, so it wasn't precise. It was a little room with a closet and, basically, I just had a pull-out couch. I liked this pull-out couch because it was this funny idea of a bed—a Western bed that's also a couch. It was horrible to sleep on, but back then I wanted a pull-out couch as my bed. Anyway, I would just stay there watching

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TV, day and night, kind of in culture shock for two or three months. We landed maybe in July or August before school started. My idea of North America was what I got from Hollywood or Disney films. In those weird two months of sitting in this state, I was really disillusioned by my own desire.

Then, when I went to art school, I started to become quite critical of that stance—of my old stance—and I started to question what I would do when I went home, and what it would mean for people back home. I was already asking, 'Who's going to be looking at or listening to whatever I've made?' Today, you would say it's similar to identity politics or whatever. For me it was just, 'How do I find myself?' It wasn't only that I was completely dislocated, having come to Canada; I was already dislocated back home. I was already dislocated from my own culture in the sense that growing up in the '70s in Thailand, you were already highly influenced by Western culture. Everyone wanted to be modern and everyone wanted to wear blue jeans.

We've been talking about ideologies, particularly around this book *Commonism* that you shared with me. It's a response to the way neoliberal politics led to the closure of the commons through privatisation, and cites communist ideas as a point of departure, but presents something different. Basically, it proposes the idea that social relationships can replace monetary relationships.

Yeah.

I recognise aspects of this in your work, but there's always this ephemeral quality to it. Speaking of ideologies, your relationship to Buddhism and communism is something that's come up. How do these ways of thinking or these philosophies converge for you?

I often look at things like a Buddhist. I'm not looking at it through a Marxist-Leninist perspective at all. I'm looking at a Buddhist idea of what I see as philosophically important to me. I would say, in a Buddhist sense, the idea of wealth is not the same. For example, I'm not interested in the accumulation of wealth. I don't think that what's important in life has to do with having things. I'd say I agree with the distribution of wealth, that everyone should have everything they need. Everyone should have the same quality of life. In that sense, I'm ideological in a communistic sense. I'm not interested

in profit or making more than what I need for whatever I have to take care of. That's closer in a way to how I want to proceed—not to be stuck in old terms, an old definition, which is already etched in people's minds.

For example, democracy.

Yeah. Democracy anyway is misrepresented, misused. It's not true the democracy that they are fighting for or advocating for.

It's a neoliberal democracy.

Right. People in positions of power are there to manipulate the conditions of that power, to keep that wealth. But as a Buddhist, you'll never take any of it with you, ever, so what is it that one needs to keep?

I think of your project, the Land Foundation, as a fairly good example of 'commonist' intentions for many reasons, but primarily because it's a space for working with the natural environment rather than attempting to dominate it; and it recognises imagination and creativity as the basis for development rather than any monetary exchange. The Land is a space to envision the difference between a neoliberal idea of success and what might be closer to actual freedom. It's not perfect, but it's moving towards and imagining a different way of being—or participating.

I would say it's a model, and I could discuss it as a model because it's not always working. I don't mean that it's not working because there's nobody there; it's not always working because the model always has to be improved or changed. It has to deteriorate or be deconstructed. It's never a fixed thing.

It's also the first time I've experienced a utopian vision in such a holistic way. It's not just a philosophical proposal, but an actual living thing that has all the qualities of a time-based experiment. Especially because it takes entropy into account.

That's one of the important things about the Land. Most other systems want to keep the system fixed. There was this woman who came from documenta, a curator. My partner, the co-founder Kamin Lertchaiprasert, brought her to the foundation, and she was like, 'There's nothing happening here. Shouldn't this be like this, or shouldn't that be like that?' She'd be saying this to me, sitting in the car on the way back. Questioning

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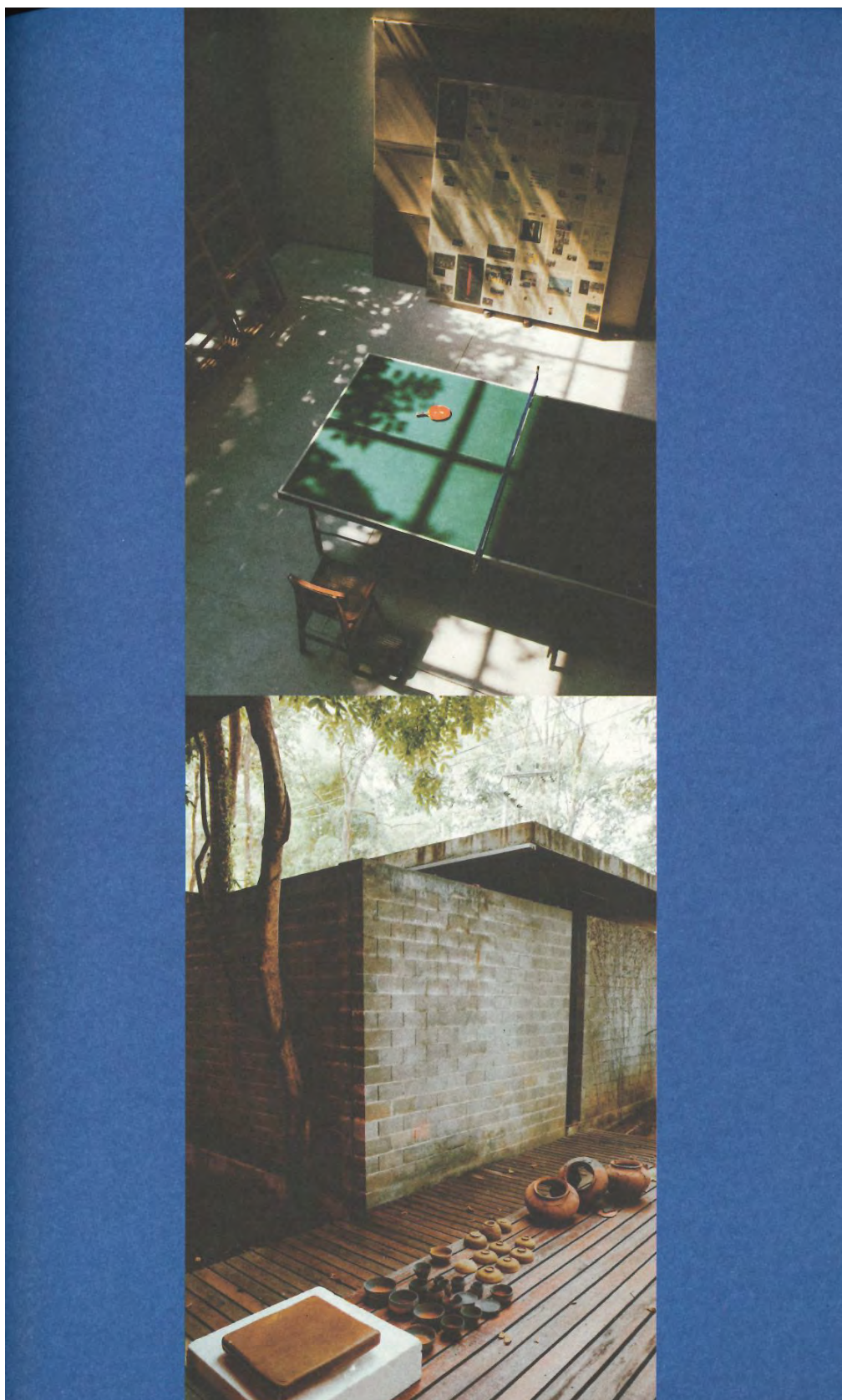
Above: At Rirkrit Tiravanija's home in Chiang Mai, Thailand, a concrete catwalk raised on pylons connects a series of rooms around the central courtyard filled with a tangle of vines and trees.

Opposite page (above): Dappled afternoon light passes through this jungle-filled courtyard, into his double-height studio. Ping-pong matches are known to run well into the early morning.

Opposite page (below): Tiravanija's pottery, laid out to dry on the patio.

Photography by Jirawat Tunprasert and Nattaphat Phaethong.

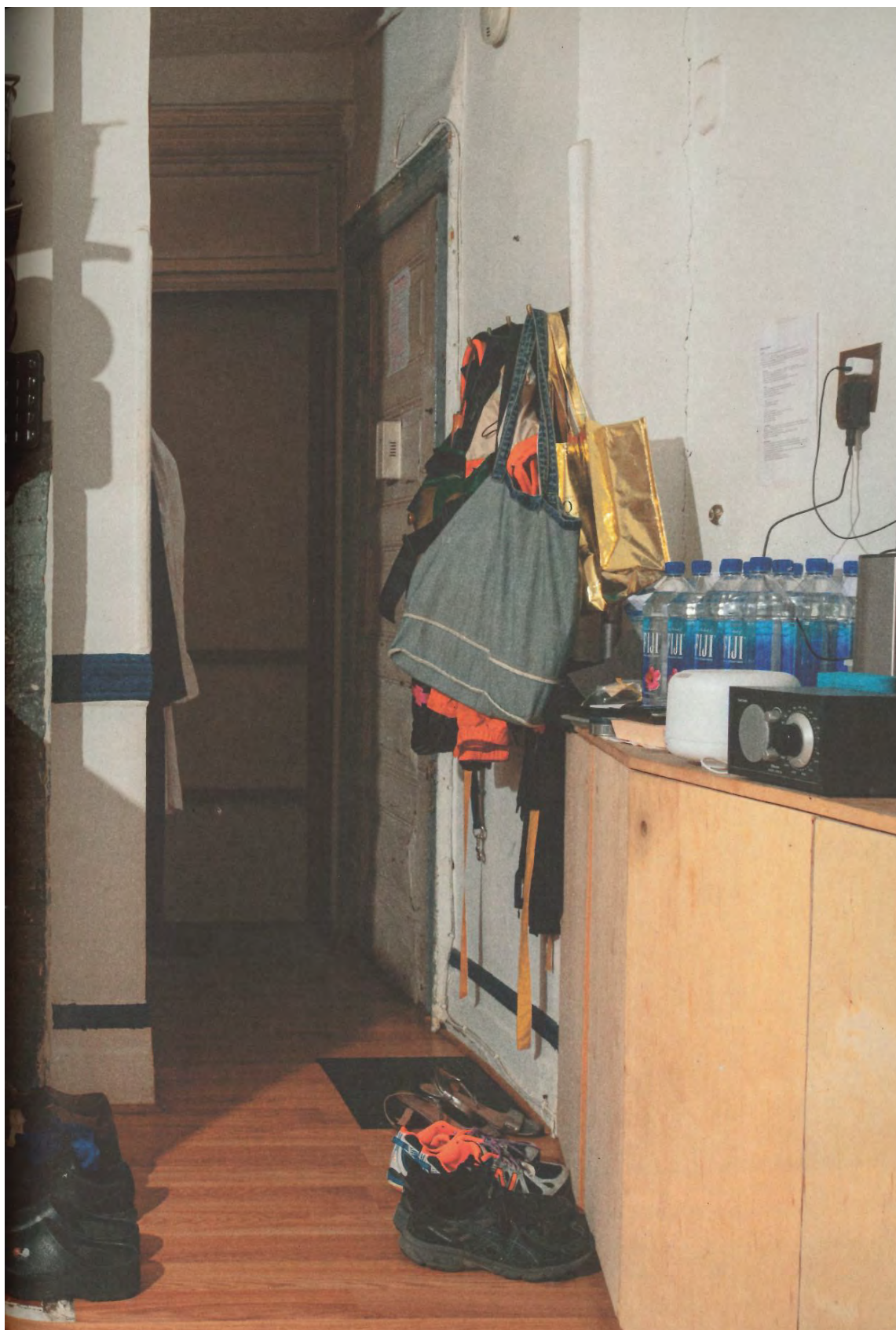
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the inactivity of the situation and whatever she'd seen that was not what she thought it would be. Kamin told her that she could take her colonialist attitude and go home with it because we're not interested in that. We'll never do documenta after this, but I agreed with him. That's what he needed to tell her. But that's mental—coming to this place and having expectations.

I see your house in Chiang Mai as existing in that space where opposing ideas can exist simultaneously, which allows you to reach a certain level of understanding.

I would say it's more like an understanding of

tal encapsulation of existing inside. But this house is about flow: the air flows from south to north and everything is open so it can flow through. At some point, if there's no electricity, this house still functions.

Did you ever read Heidegger's text 'Building Dwelling Thinking'?

No, will you send it to me?

I think you'd appreciate it. He proposes a different way of thinking about building that has less to do with construction or method and is more about a sense of belonging in the world. For example, he writes that 'a truck driver can



how to let things go. The house is built with a combination of different ideas but rooted in local housing techniques. There's an old knowledge around building in Thailand, and at the Land we try to recultivate this old knowledge that is forgotten but very much still functions. One of the things people forget is that there's a lot of water, and they tend to build right on the ground, like a Western house. And then they get flooded. This house leaks here and there, but it's totally fine. Corbusier said, 'It's not a home unless it leaks'. This house was built like a machine, but it also doesn't exist exactly like a machine. A lot of buildings are built totally air-conditioned and sealed in glass and concrete; it's the to-

be at home on the highway'. He also describes how residential homes in the West are supposedly built to accommodate all of your needs, but they don't necessarily provide space for dwelling, which is more about a frame of mind and about coexisting.

I think dwelling is more natural as a human position. That's why I'm interested in modernist structures. It tries to be a machine for dwelling, but modernism never understood the dweller in the sense of its nature, which is to say that nature cannot stay in the box. That's also why the Eastern way of dwelling is different. When you look at feng shui, the ideal space is never square, it's always more of a response.

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Was your home in Chiang Mai constructed in relation to the principle of feng shui?

It's feng shui in the sense that the plan is totally dictated by nature and by not cutting any trees down, which means that things can only be so big and so small. It's completely different than having to plant the tree and make it look natural.



Most traditional Thai homes keep a spirit house near the entrance of the home, right?

Yeah, well, not at the front door. What I have is actually a shrine, which is more Chinese or feng shui. Normally, in Thailand, you put the spirit house in the corner of the land. Our property is built on former temple grounds, so the land itself was already highly spirited. Northern Thai people also have a completely different reading of spirits. When they were building the house and would stop for lunch, each person put some rice or part of their food somewhere for the spirits. If you watch my film *Lung Neaw Visits His Neighbours*, this man sits down and he's going to eat lunch. But before he eats, he takes the rice and puts it around. He's older, so he's totally immersed in it. It's natural and automatic.

Most of the spirit homes I've seen nearby have these offerings on them. I actually saw a juice box with a straw stuck in it on one. They're usually made of wood, colourfully decorated, and built on a post, kind of like a birdhouse. You have a miniature temple near the front door which is very different.

That little temple is based on the first sculpture I ever made in art school. I was in the experimental art department. The first works I made were the first alphabet of the Thai language using corrugated cardboard, the spirit house, and this temple. The spirit house is currently upstairs. So I said we could use my little temple as a shrine here. My early works were a lot of architectural models.

Later, in New York.

Can you tell me about the first time you reproduced this apartment?

I made a replica of this apartment in Cologne, in 1996: *untitled 1996 (tomorrow is another*

day). I went for a residency and they gave me this place to stay in while I was there, and I had to buy all the stuff for the house. I thought, 'Well, if I'm going to do this then maybe I should make work in relation to my house'. I didn't want to waste the stuff after I left. I decided to make this apartment and had all of these basic essentials free for anyone to use during the show.

Was it to scale?

Well, they're always to scale. It was just the walls, and we built a fully functioning kitchen and bathroom, and then I left all my furniture, my TV, from those six months.

You recreated it again in *untitled 1999 (tomorrow can shut up and go away)*, at Gavin Brown's Enterprise.

We built what we could in Gavin's space, which was on West 15th Street at the time. We could only fit part of the apartment: the kitchen, the bedroom, and the bathroom were included. We sent it for the Liverpool Biennial, where it was reconstructed. The whole side of the house was open, because it was built within a bigger space. It was like a weird Gordon Matta-Clark thing. Because it was left half-open, I asked them to have music and DJs and a stage.

Like a party you'd want to throw if you had a bigger apartment.

I did that with Arto Lindsay. I built his New York apartment in Mexico, and I had one side of the apartment open. You could stand there to look into the house, and you could see his living room and his bedroom. It was the room where he plays and makes music. He had a concert and poetry readings.

But the first time you created it on 15th Street is when the legends of debauchery began.

Cologne was also legendary. People were staying there all day and all night, and it was up for three months. They graffitied the wall. You could come in and out of the museum at any time, except for Sundays. People came and started leaving messages. There's a book from that show with a lot of pictures. We left an instant camera in the house, so all the photos from the show are in the archive.

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What kind of artwork have you had here over the years? I read that Elizabeth Peyton painted a portrait of you in the bathtub and you had it in the bathroom for a while.

I moved that a while ago. I've never really had artwork at home otherwise. I used to have a painting on that wall. I did a mural there. It has to do with the fact that I used to be a house decorator, a painting decorator. It's one of the many jobs I had to do to survive. I did it with this English painter I met at Banff Centre. We did the Rothschild's house uptown, gilded gold; we painted some marble here and there. The mural was this very minimal painting. It was very Caspar David Friedrich.

Have you seen that incredible painting of icebergs that he made?

No, it was actually this painting I saw in *Artforum*. It might have been an article about Thomas McEvilley, about landscape, but more about minimalism. Anyway, it was very minimal with a huge yellow sky with a very big brown landscape at the bottom. I painted that on the wall, and then I made little paintings of it that I gave to people. The landlord painted over it because they came to renovate the house. The last time they tried to kick me out of the house, I counter-sued them. They were trying to kick me out because I asked my guy to come to fix the tiles in the bathroom, because the wall was crumbling. As he was trying to fix it, he broke a pipe and it flooded downstairs. They were trying to sue me for destroying the pipe.

They probably want to raise the rent.

Yeah, they want this apartment.

You've been here for about 38 years now. I read in Kirsty Bell's essay that you paid \$290 per month, split between your two other roommates. Are you the longest-residing tenant?

Well, Mama Trina would be longer than me. She was here before me and she used to be the super. She used to clean the building.

Can you tell me about your ceramic collection? You have some in Chiang Mai, in New York, and in Berlin.

At the house in Chiang Mai, everything you saw on the higher shelf, they're all very old. In Berlin, the ceramics that I have are mostly Japanese. They're not old, but I buy them because I want to study them—the glaze. Some of

the ceramics in my apartment here are actually from Vietnam, from when I went to visit my father, who was stationed there as a diplomat. But there's one with a silver rim, it has an 'H' scratched into it. I thought it could be Ho Chi Minh's rice bowl.

You have a pretty significant collection here. You have to see Berlin.

What other collections do you keep here?

My record collection. We're listening to some Yiddish folk songs right now.

Weren't you also collecting your nail clippings at some point? I read that you collected oatmeal scraped from the bottom of the pan in a vitrine.

I did. But I have a few of these now from the last couple of times I cut my hair.

That's your ponytail in the Ziploc?

That's my hair. I have a few, actually.

Are they all the same length?

Seems about.

You kind of get to a point, and that's it.

Yeah, I guess I kind of get to a point. The last couple of times I cut it myself.

Is that your dog Harry in the USPS box? Will you make an urn for him?

Yeah, or I was going to float him down the river in Delaware, where Unclebrother is, because he played in it. I also want to take part of it back to Chiang Mai.

Oh, Harry.

Harry, the spirit guide.

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TEXTE ZUR KUNST

**CURRYING F[L]AVOR: HAVE MENU, WILL TRAVEL
JULIA BERNARD ON RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA AT THE HIRSHHORN
MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN, WASHINGTON, DC**



“Rirkrit Tiravanija: (who’s afraid of red, yellow, and green)”, 2019,
installation view

Ever since the emergence of Relational Aesthetics in the 1990s, museums and other collecting institutions have had to think differently about how they commission or acquire works that depend on audiences; where audiences are part of the work itself. No one’s practice embodies this challenge more than that of Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose early cooking performances were at pains to turn the elitist space of the gallery into a welcoming event that nourished those in attendance with food and not just nice things to look at. Recently, a new Tiravanija work was acquired by the major Washington, DC institution for contemporary art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Art historian and critic Julia Bernard offers her take on the unusual stakes for food in the spaces of high art.

Julia Bernard

« *Currying f(l)avor: have menu, will travel* Julia Bernard on Rirkrit Tiravanija at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC »

TEXTE ZUR KUNST, September 18, 2019.

While at this point in his career a relatively well-known quantity, with his most recent installation at the Hirshhorn in Washington, DC – “Rirkrit Tiravanija: (who’s afraid of red, yellow and green)” – many of this artist’s familiar presuppositions and procedures must be called into question. [1] This observation is not necessarily negative per se (and I might give Tiravanija the benefit of some of my doubts), but it is made on the basis of critically experiencing this work in its *here* and *now*. For considering the Hirshhorn’s prominence on the National Mall, and in light of the United States’ present political turmoil (serial constitutional crises, continuous partisan rancor, and an almost surrealistic upcoming election), such reservations seem to especially warrant serious reflection. Does this intervention convincingly engage with those larger contexts surrounding it, or is it over-shadowed by historical events, maybe even referencing politics as a programmatic gambit?

Tiravanija’s (*who’s afraid of red, yellow, and green*) (2019) is being shown here as it has been acquired by the museum, one question thereby raised being whether the artist’s having adapted his signature paradigms to this setting makes it essentially a commission. (As part of its conceit is culinary, this would give the sense of buying into a “franchise.”) Presented as “interactive,” calling to mind “virtual reality” works like those of the Meow Wolf group, this installation is composed of three interrelated elements: a meal, wall-drawings in the process of being traced by local artists (from projected protest imagery) morphing into a mural, and three sociological documentary shorts. With these first two components, what “binds” them are the colors of the piece’s title: the Thai curries being served are red, yellow, and green; so too is Thailand’s flag, and we are told its struggling political factions also once wore T-shirts in those colors. Tiravanija explained this schema onstage in conversation with the Hirshhorn’s former curator of media and performance art, Mark Beasley, stressing that he has always tended to ditch “aesthetics” in favor of the social-relational. [2]

Nevertheless, his title frames the whole by placing it in artistic relation to Barnett Newman’s series of four Color Field paintings, *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue* (1966–70). Speaking of “relational aesthetics,” another reason these works may have ironically been selected as a point of reference is that two were attacked by spectators-with-a-vengeance – one slashed in Berlin as a “perversion of the German flag” (1982) and another by a realist painter in Amsterdam as detested modernist abstraction (1986). With specific respect to Tiravanija’s context-acknowledgement, relating to the Hirshhorn in its US capital setting, images of historical (and more recent) American protests (including 7000 shoes on the Capitol lawn

Julia Bernard

« *Currying f(l)avor: have menu, will travel Julia Bernard on Rirkrit Tiravanija at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC* »

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in 2018 memorializing children killed by gunfire) are juxtaposed with those of Thai political atrocities and riots. Further, an increasingly gentrified DC's ever-expanding dining-out scene also seems obliquely "present," since rather than the artist himself cooking for visitors – as in his most well-known work, *Untitled (Free)* (1992), where Tiravanija emptied out New York's 303 Gallery and cooked *pad thai* for attendees – this "communal" food is instead catered by a restaurant actually called Beau Thai. Here, then, we are not being "invited over," but rather "out to eat." [3]

But can the artist have known that, rather than earnestly interacting as prescribed, we as participants who do not know each other – in a city where it has become anathema to talk politics with anyone you do not – potentially experience this complexly contrived situation as uncomfortable, rather than idealistically "shared" (or perhaps even because it is so)? Or that eating in a museum exhibition space is as anxiety-producing as touching the artworks, since it feels unnatural as it is usually forbidden; or that doing so, even in some choreographed fashion, in proximity to representations of political dysfunction and dissent, can produce more anxiety than "interactional" freedom? Or that some recent interfaces between restaurants and partisan ideological stances in this metropolitan area have led to previously unimagined behavior on the part of diners, staff, and intruding protesters? Is it possible Tiravanija is aware of and using all this, but one is uncertain (or unsure).



"Rirkrit Tiravanija: (who's afraid of red, yellow, and green)", 2019,
installation view

Julia Bernard

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“Rirkrit Tiravanija: (who’s afraid of red, yellow, and green)”, 2019,
installation view

“I think we just need to make a space where people can listen to each other,” the artist said at the show’s press preview. “We need to say what we think, and we are going to say and think differently. We need to understand that that can exist together. It doesn’t have to be a divide.” #A4 Would that it were so; it appears the relic of a modernist utopia lives on here, in the guise of a “relational aesthetics” theorized in the 1990s. It seemed telling that the “mural” making up part of Tiravanija’s installation would be continually worked on with charcoal by their outsourced artist team, until its political motifs run together at the exhibition’s end – making the walls entirely black – so that they will ultimately become illegible.

The curry I chose was a hot one, and the tank of water thoughtfully provided to drink to soothe its aftereffects was empty. Crunching down the Mall’s gravel path as dusk fell, the Capitol in full view at one end – with its paired architectural wings housing the US Congress’ legislative bodies, for years at loggerheads with one another and/or the executive branch, blocking virtually all functioning as once constitutionally conceived – hovered like a democratic illusion.

After the present show concludes, the Hirshhorn will not need storage space for its new installation: for it is constituted by neither objects nor a conceptual diagram, but rather an ideal.

Julia Bernard

« *Currying f(l)avor: have menu, will travel Julia Bernard on Rirkrit Tiravanija at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC* »

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"Rirkrit Tiravanija: (who's afraid of red, yellow, and green)," Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, May 17–July 24, 2019.

Julia Bernard is an independent art historian, critic, and translator based in Washington, DC.

foto credits: Shannon Finney, Courtesy: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (1,2), 100 Tonson Gallery, Bangkok

NOTES

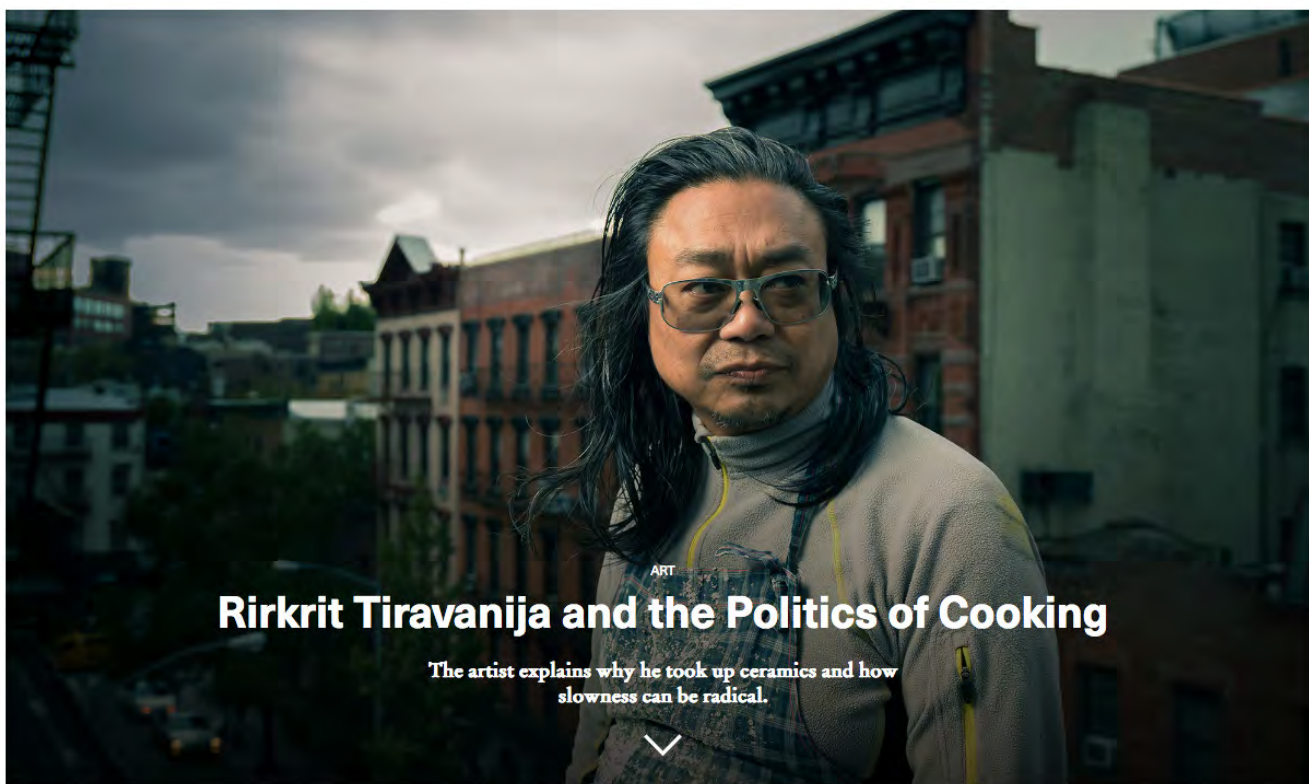
- [1] For the analysis of a work's contextual alteration employed here, I am beholden to the kind of critical perspective on some of these issues adopted by Stefan Germer in his "Unter Geiern. Kontext-Kunst im Kontext," in: *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 19, 1995, pp. 83–95, recently reprinted in Barbara Engelbach et al., *Familienbande. Anmerkung zur Schenkung Schröder*, Cologne: Museum Ludwig, 2019, pp. 164–76, in English 351–58.
- [2] The term "relational aesthetics" (as employed by the Hirshhorn and used here) refers to a theoretical framework within which Tiravanija's work has been understood, first formulated by Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1996 catalogue for his exhibition "Traffic" at CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux. (Cf. Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle*, Lyon: Presses du réel, 1998.)
- [3] Obviously such an installation could not take up a well-known artist's time for so long by requiring them to cook for the entire duration of a museum-run show, nor would it offer him the facilities for doing so – the point remaining that this shift alters the employed paradigm's symbolic meaning.
- [4] As quoted by Maura Judkis in "An art exhibition you can eat in. Actually, your eating is part of the art," https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/an-art-exhibit-you-can-eat-in-actually-you-eating-is-part-of-the-art/2019/05/22/64e681c6-7aa2-11e9-a5b3-34f3edf1351e_story.html.

Julia Bernard

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TEXTE ZUR KUNST, September 18, 2019.

SURFACE



Galerie
Chantal Crousel

INTERVIEW BY WILLIAM HANLEY
PORTRAITS AND VIDEO BY MO DAUD
December 19, 2017

This article is part of our month-long exploration of art and food.

Rirkrit Tiravanija bends over his potter's wheel with the concentration of an ambitious amateur. As he carefully forms a spinning wad of clay into a bowl, he seems oblivious to the visitors who have just arrived at Greenwich House Pottery in New York City, where he finished a two-month residency in November. His French bulldog, Harry, eyes the guests briefly before going back to snoozing on the floor next to the wheel. When he's finished, Tiravanija holds up his latest ceramic creation, one of a few hundred bowls he's crafted since he began working with clay, earlier this year. Taking a break to talk about the work, he has an assured nonchalance, like someone with a generally strong sense of purpose and direction but no particular place to be right now. "It's kind of like a meditative activity," he says of making pottery, though he's not one to clear his head. "It gives you time to think about everything else you have to do, or could be doing, or dealing with. It's like cooking that way."

SURFACE



Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Tiravanija knows a thing or two about cooking. He rose to prominence as one of a group of artists working within a strain of participatory art now often gathered under the broad umbrella of social practice. At its core, Tiravanija's work tees up situations that invite participants to interact with one another. This has taken the shape of everything from a 2002 re-creation of his New York apartment at the 2002 Biennial in Liverpool to a pirate television station broadcasting from the Guggenheim Museum in 2005. But Tiravanija is best known for cooking and serving meals in spaces typically reserved for more traditional exhibitions.

Some of the pottery Tiravanija produced was shipped to Frankfurt in October, where he and Tobias Rehberger sold them, along with a varying menu of dishes, at a temporary stall in the city's historic market. Other pieces may travel to Singapore, Tiravanija says, to be used in a temporary tea house he is building at the National Gallery for a January exhibition there. His ceramics residency coincided with an exhibition at his friend and longtime dealer Gavin Brown's galleries in New York. It featured his archive of Super 8 films, studies of people he has observed over decades, as well as screenings of his remake of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1974 film *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. Wearing a clay-spattered apron, with Harry dutifully dozing in his lap, Tiravanija spoke about how he started cooking and why gathering people for a meal can be a defiant act.

SURFACE



Galerie
Chantal Crousel

A few of Tiravanija's creations at Greenwich House Pottery (Photo: Mo Daoud).

It's novel to see you sitting at the wheel rather than standing over the stove. Why did you start making ceramics?

Well, I've been making tea rooms here and there, and I was interested in the medicinal side of coffee and tea, so looking at how to serve it seemed natural. At the same time, it's kind of interesting because I teach, and I've noticed the kiln in the department has become very active in the last three years. I think it has to do with people discovering the material and a getting-back-to-the-earth kind of thing. If we weren't in the city, you could take the clay out of the ground and make everything literally from scratch. And it can also go the other way: You can use the object and return it to the ground. One of the things I'm interested in doing in the future is to make a project where you use the object and then you kind of return it—after you drink the tea, then you smash the cups.

SURFACE



Tiravanija' studio during his 2017 residency at Greenwich Pottery House (Photo: Mo Daoud).

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

That could be cathartic. Whether it's smashing cups or watching a film, your work always invites people to participate in one way or another. Have you always been a good host?

When I started art school up in Canada, I would [sometimes] make a pot of curry, but it's very difficult to cook when you're alone. You have to make it at least for four, so I would invite friends to come over to eat. And then it became like everybody would just show up every Sunday.

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Galerie
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Tiravanija and Tobias Rehberger staged the temporary work "Dirty Dishes", featuring food served on Tiravana's ceramics, at Frankfurt's Kleinmarkthalle. It was presented in 2017 by Portikus, the contemporary art space in Frankfurt. (Photos: Diana Pfammatter)

SURFACE

When did you decide to make cooking part of your work?

It started with an interest in anthropology and archaeology. I was a student at the Art Institute of Chicago, and they have a big Asian art collection. I was sitting there, looking at these things, and I realized that they have been collected: They've become a material for knowledge. Then I realized, well, actually, these things are really everyday objects. In Thailand, we use a Buddha every day in a sense. I thought, What's missing is the life around the object. It goes back to when I was a younger artist thinking about Duchamp's urinal. What do you do after the readymade? After everything could be claimed as sculpture? My answer was to take the urinal, reinstall it, and piss in it. It's the idea of reanimating an object, to put it back into use, to put the urinal back on the wall.



An early work by Tiravanija, "untitled (free)", was shown at 303 Gallery in New York in 1992.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

A few years later, I was walking down West Broadway [in Manhattan] one day, wondering what I was going to make for a group exhibition I was in, and I decided I would cook. I set up my things on a pedestal. There was a pot cooking away and some waste from the process in the gallery, and people started to participate, to add their beer bottles and cups to the pile. Then I thought, Oh, everything should just be given away. It should be pushed further, and that's really when I started to give out the food.

SURFACE



Installation view: "untitled 1990 (pad thai)" at Paula Allen Gallery in New York (1990).

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

How did people respond to the early projects?

When I started to cook food and serve it to people [in the early 1990s in New York City], the economy was bad and homelessness was big in the city. People started to interpret the work as a kind of comment.



Installation view: "this is A, this is not A, this is both A and not-A, this is neither A nor not-A." Okayama Art Summit "Development," Okayama, Japan (2016).

SURFACE

How do you know when you've found the right context for a work?

I don't have a studio. [The work] is always made in the place, with the conditions, with the people, and everything else that will be a part of it. I usually don't make anything until I have to. By the time I make something, I've observed and experienced enough of a situation to realize something about it. Things are floating freely in my head, and when I see a certain situation, this accumulation comes back and starts to inform me about what I need to do. It's very different to do things in the West than to do things in other places. At least, the activity of what art is, is very different.



Tiravanija and Gavin Brown's restaurant, Unclebrother, in Hancock, New York (2017).

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Do you use the experiences you create to explicitly comment on those contexts?

I made my first pad thai with a cookbook by a Western woman. One of the main ingredients that she has in it is ketchup. We think it's funny, but the acidity and the sweetness is a substitute for palm sugar and tamarind juice. For me, it was a kind of commentary on a colonial aspect of life, how the West takes on the Other and [brings] it into their home.

I mean, I really appreciate traditional things and traditional knowledge and crafts, but I'm also not interested in drowning in it. When you used to go to Thai restaurants, you were always getting this toned-down, bastardized style of cooking. Today, if you go, they'll ask you for three or four chilies, and everyone goes for four. It's amazing.

I'm interested in the fact that when people have more experience with something, they understand it better. Or maybe it's just taste.

SURFACE



Installation view: "(skip the bruising of the eskimos to the exquisite words vs. if I give you a penny you can give me a pair of scissors)" at Gavin Brown's Enterprise in New York, (2017).

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

How has that played out in more recent work?

I just shot a new film for the show at Gavin Brown's. We literally shot it in eight days. It's a remake of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. The film has been with me for a long time, and I've used it for twenty years in one context or another. It centers on an interracial relationship, which was [often viewed as] problematic then and is [still considered by some to be] today.

The story is complicated by what's going on around us today, and in that sense, I thought, I have to make this film.



Still image, "untitled (angst essen seele auf)", Tiravanija' video remaking Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (2017).

SURFACE

What specifically does the film respond to?

Fear of the Other, or fear of difference, is one of the biggest problems facing humanity right now. We're not able to understand ourselves enough to live with the Other. And that's one of the things that people don't realize. We're trying to be ourselves. We're trying to [remain] ourselves by alienating others. It's ignorance on a basic level.

Does your work remedy that?

I would like it to be some kind of antidote. When people are surprised by the fact that they could sit at the table with other people and enjoy dinner and a discussion, that's a little step forward. And to be able to make a space in a place and time for this little accident to happen, I think I would be very happy if I'm successful at it.

Galerie
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Installation view: "skip the bruising of the eskimos to the exquisite words vs. if I give you a penny you can give me a pair of scissors." at Gavin Brown's enterprise in New York (2017).

SURFACE

How has the way people react to your work changed over the years?

Everybody has a camera these days. I stopped making photographs a while ago because I started to realize that there were a lot of people standing in the same spot taking pictures. So I thought, I'm just going to stand here and actually look at everything. I feel that it's important to be sensitive to your environment in terms of your experience and not to give the machine all of your memory.

I guess everything is an Instagram opportunity. But if you make a certain kind of space, a certain kind of time available, people start to pick up on it. I'm interested in slowing everything down so that you can look at the details. The reason I make the things that I do, and the way that I do, is just to give people space to stop and pause. To stop and pause at this point is a kind of transgression.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel



Tiravanija at Greenwich Pottery House.

frieze

1992

Galerie
Chantal Crousel



Rirkrit Tiravanija
untitled (free)

If you were to walk into an exhibition today and come across a work that required you to participate in a social act in order to 'see' it, you might not find it unusual. But when, in 1992, Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija invited visitors to share a free meal, it was revolutionary. For *untitled (free)*, Tiravanija turned the back office of 303 Gallery in New York into a kitchen and transformed the gallery into a communal space where visitors could serve themselves Thai curry and rice prepared by the artist. The work, which has since been re-imagined and restaged in various venues, is now regarded as one of the first instances of relational aesthetics – works that require their audience to become social participants in art. — Christy Lange



PERFORMANCE

Performance von Rirkrit Tiravanija

UNTITLED 2016

DO, 22.09.2016, 16:00 UHR
MAK-SÄULENHALLE

untitled 2016 (ballet correalismus sans mécanique) (feat. Karl Holmqvist)
Im Rahmen der Ausstellung *FRIEDRICH KIESLER. Lebenswelten*

Rirkrit Tiravanija interessiert sich für die Bildung von Gemeinschaften, die im Zeichen der Globalität frei von nationalen und territorialen Tendenzen formiert werden. Verweise zur Kunstgeschichte konterkariert er mit situativen ideologischen Gesellschafts- und Arbeitsmodellen, die er in interdisziplinären Performances, Happenings, Banketts oder Produktionen im Umfeld des Kunstbetriebs testet.

Auf Einladung von Tiravanija entwickelt Karl Holmqvist, bekannt für seine Poesie und Lesungen, im Rahmen der MAK-Ausstellung eine Live-Performance.

Holmqvist spielt die Rolle des Protagonisten Kiesler, der im Setting einer assoziativen Bühnenlandschaft posiert und aus seinen visionären theoretischen Schriften liest. In Anspielung auf Kieslers Selbstdarstellungen mit seinen Werken wählen die Künstler die 8-teilige Galaxy [Floor/Wall Piece](1952) an der Schnittstelle von Malerei und Installation als Bühne, in welcher sich Kiesler posierend fotografieren ließ.

Foto: Rirkrit Tiravanija

untitled 2015 (run like hell), Opening performance with Karl Holmqvist and Antto Melasniemi
Foto credit: Marianna Capuano, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

PARIS

Rirkrit Tiravanija

Galerie Chantal Crousel/6 juin - 18 juillet 2015

C'est un grand retournement. Au premier regard, l'espace de la galerie Chantal Crousel, auquel on accède d'habitude par la rue Charlot, est réduit à un minuscule espace, reproduction exacte des toilettes du CBGB, la mythique boîte de nuit punk new-yorkaise (1973-2006). À un détail près, et il est de taille, les murs sont immaculés, à peine secoués des reliefs des anciens graffitis reconstitués à l'aide de photographies. Tout le mobilier que l'on imagine dans un tel lieu est en parfait état de marche et invite à faire des rencontres. Rirkrit Tiravanija, l'un des grands représentants de l'esthétique relationnelle, pratique depuis vingt ans ce principe de reconstitution : son atelier, la péniche Louise Catherine de Le Corbusier, et même les espaces de l'ARC. N'est pas nouvelle non plus dans son œuvre cette référence pleine d'humour à la figure de Duchamp—ici à son *Urinoir*, à la dernière Biennale de Sharjah à son *Porte-bouteille* et à son *Eau de Voilette*. Mais cette exposition, *Untitled 2015 (run like hell)*, se dessine dans l'espace avec une adresse et une tonalité renouvelées.

Après cette première visite, Rirkrit Tiravanija nous renvoie dans la rue, du New York des années 1970 au vieux Marais, pour faire le tour du pâté de maison jusqu'à l'arrière de la galerie rue de Saintonge. Une grande scène s'y dresse, reposant sur des caisses comme dans un concert de punk. Cette sculpture—ou bien est-ce un monument?—est en marbre blanc de Carrare, scène ouverte à tous les visiteurs qui voudraient essayer les instruments laissés à leur disposition, et magnifique forme en attente. C'était donc cela, les sons



que l'on entendait depuis les toilettes de la rue Charlot, que l'on retrouve retroussées dans la galerie sous la forme d'un curieux volume en contreplaqué? Le soir du vernissage, a eu lieu un concert du groupe Cheveu. D'autres caisses de marbre qui jonchent le sol étaient remplies de tartines de lard de Colonnata, spécialité de la région de Carrare traditionnellement conservée dans le marbre, que les visiteurs pouvaient goûter ce jour-là. Peu de temps après, c'est devant la foire de Bâle que Rirkrit Tiravanija faisait partager un repas aux passants qui le désiraient, en les invitant aux préparatifs ou à faire la vaisselle; le pavillon de *Do We Dream Under The Same Sky* rejoindra *The Land*, projet lancé en Thaïlande en 1998 comme un lieu de résidence d'artistes et d'ateliers.

En comparaison de cette douce atmosphère, il y a dans l'exposition *Untitled 2015 (run like hell)* quelque chose de sombre. Faut-il y voir une autre allusion, même pleine de dérision, à Duchamp et à son étrange prophétie de 1961 : « le grand artiste de demain sera clandestin »? Est-ce

un commentaire cynique sur l'art d'aujourd'hui? Le choix du punk n'est évidemment pas anodin. Les dessins des manifestations et les agrandissements de pages de *Libération* recouvertes des mots « On ne peut pas simuler la liberté d'expression », qui sont accrochées dans la pièce à côté, donnent à cette musique une actualité intense.

Anaël Pigeat

This is a big turnaround. At first glance, the gallery space at Chantal Crousel, usually entered from Rue Charlot, has been reduced to a tiny area, the exact reproduction of the rest rooms at New York's legendary punk club, CBGB (1973-2006). Except for one significant detail: the walls are immaculate, barely defaced by the reliefs of the old graffiti, reconstituted here using photographs. All the furnishings one expects to find in such a place are in perfect working order and encourage encounters. Rirkrit Tiravanija, one of the great proponents of relational aesthe-

tics, has been making recreations for some twenty years now, whether of his own studio, Le Corbusier's barge, Louise Catherine, or the spaces of the ARC gallery in Paris. Nor is the humorous reference to Duchamp here (the *Urinal*) unprecedented; at the last Sharjah Biennale he evoked the *Bottle Rack* and *Eau de Voilette*. But this exhibition, *Untitled 2015 (run like hell)*, occupies the space with a deftness and a tone that are quite new.

After this first visit, Tiravanija sends us back out into the street, from the New York of the 1970s to the old Marais, taking us round the block to the back of the gallery on Rue Saintonge. A big stage rests on crates, as if at a punk concert. This sculpture—or is it a monument?—is in white Carrara marble, and visitors who wish to can make use of the instruments laid out there. It is also a magnificent latent form. So was this it, the source of the sounds heard from the toilets on Rue Charlot, which we find squashed into the gallery, in the form of a strange shape in plywood? On opening night the group Cheveu played here. Other crates of marble lay around the floor, filled with bread spread with Colonnata, the *lard* that is the specialty of the Carrara region and is traditionally kept in marble, and which visitors could try. Shortly afterwards, at Art Basel, Tiravanija shared a meal with willing passers-by, inviting them to cook with him or do the dishes. His *Do We Dream Under The Same Sky* pavilion will become part of *The Land*, his artists' residencies and studios project in Thailand. Compared to all this gentle commonsality, there is a darker streak in *Untitled 2015 (run like hell)*. Might it be an allusion, even a mocking one, to Duchamp and his strange prophecy in 1961: "the great artist of tomorrow will go underground"? Is it a commentary on today's art? The choice of punk is obviously significant, too. Drawings of demonstrations and blow-ups of pages from *Libération* covered with the words "You can't simulate freedom of expression" give this music an intensely topical reverberation.

Translation, C. Penwarden

Cette page/this page: « Untitled. 2015 (Run like hell) ». Vues d'exposition/exhibition views. (Ph. F. Kleinfenn)

Galerie
Chantal Crousel





Rirkrit Tiravanija's new work Untitled 2015 (run like hell), on display in Paris, seems an ironical attempt to construct a mausoleum for the now defunct punk aesthetic and celebrate the sense of alienation, perhaps for the purity of the marble or the super-clean sanitary fixtures – washbasins and lavatories that greet visitors to the gallery.

This is all the more so given the adoption of ingredients such as *Lardo di Colonnata*, a pure fat product we happily associate with exquisite and age-old taste experiences.

A perfectly functioning 1:1 scale version concealed behind the main Chantal Crousel gallery entrance reproduces the toilets of the legendary CBGB in New York, a club that became a punk shrine in the 1970s and closed in 2006, in a clear reference to the gentrification process underway throughout the Lower East Side. A reliquary version of the real CBGB survives in John Varvatos' luxury boutique, where its walls and a large quantity of posters and memorabilia is conserved intact.



↑ **Top:** Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Run Like Hell*, 2015, marble, 36 x 300 x 350 cm., detail. **Above:** *Untitled (cul-de-sac)*, 2015, Plywood, wooden beams, urinals, toilet, modulated resin, clear lacquer, 330 x 190 x 490 cm. Exhibition view, *Untitled 2015 (run like hell)*, Galerie Chantal Crousel. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. © Florian Kleinfenn

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Here, this phantom presence and precise sampling from a real context are of a different nature and ready-made strategies are cancelled out. Of all the nuances that have accompanied the thoughts and body fluids that passed over Mr Robert Mutt's white ceramic (the name Duchamp signed on the founding ready-made urinal in 1917), Rirkrit Tiravanija's display is a true exception and the invitation to use it crosses even its boundaries.



↑ Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (cul-de-sac)*, 2015, plywood, wooden beams, urinals, toilet, modulated resin, clear lacquer, 330 x 190 x 490 cm. Exhibition view, *Untitled 2015 (run like hell)*, Galerie Chantal Crousel. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. © Florian Kleinfenn

Taking a leak in one of France's most highly regarded galleries seems quite irreverent and prompts thoughts on how the work of so many of his colleagues has evolved. Some, such as Pierre Huygue, uproot paving stones to construct sophisticated micro-environments on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Others, like Philippe Parreno, stage multimedia super-productions at the Park Avenue Armory. But where has all the early energy gone?

The impression given by an investigation of the relationship between subject and object is that everything is caught up in the reflections of British sociologist Dick Hebdige who, about 30 years ago, lifted the lid on the powerful and unnatural fascination with subcultures. One of his pieces on style, based on an analysis of the punk aesthetic, gave the movement a theoretical reputation. An immense theoretical production and rereading of youth phenomena, from punk to grunge, placed the counterculture scene on a par with high culture. Artists started harbouring a desire for legends and biopics, just like the most famous rockstars, helping to extend the domain of the punk aesthetic.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel



↑ Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Run Like Hell*, 2015, marble, 36 x 300 x 350 cm and *Untitled (cul-de-sac)*, 2015, plywood, wooden beams, urinals, toilet, modulated resin, clear lacquer, 330 x 190 x 490 cm. Exhibition view, *Untitled 2015 (run like hell)*, Galerie Chantal Crousel. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. © Florian Kleinfenn

Tiravanija presents today's art world with this simple exercise of turning the tables. He relaunches the construction of altars and sanctuaries, like this one in real marble: no longer the typical set for a hardcore performance but an unconscious monument to its impracticability.

Guitar, bass and drums all function perfectly and can be used but everything remains mute and, actually, unnatural. It is an explant of materials from their original setting and Tiravanija cites the Parthenon metope and marbles just like a modern-day Lord Elgin.



↑ Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Run Like Hell*, 2015, marble, 36 x 300 x 350 cm. Exhibition view, *Untitled 2015 (run like hell)*, Galerie Chantal Crousel. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. © Marianna Capuano

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

The exhibition measures the effort and significance of the re-enactment that has become so fashionable. Today, Classicism with a capital C is portable and even *prêt-à-porter*, as too the idea of postmodern vintage. The artist, who is known for serving excellent meals to the huge art public – and whose popular curries and soups have left traces in the public and private collections of museums worldwide – is now pushing himself farther. He does not want to resemble anyone else except in the marketability of the piece. His tasty and fragrant *Lardo di Colonnata* may be a bitter pill served up to the art system but it will not halt the obsession of collecting and trading in relics.

His marble basins for maturing the fatty pork back are minimal parallelepipeds, arranged on the gallery floor and filled with edible fat which is not the same as Beuys rounding the corners of the Modern. Immersed in the rhetoric on food and eco-sustainability, in this alchemic mix of punk and classicism, all that springs to mind is the simple meal of Carrara marble workers and nostalgia for non-alignment.

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PAROLES D'ARTISTE RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA

« L'interaction avec le public m'a toujours intéressé »

La transformation est radicale. L'entrée de la galerie Chantal Crousel, à Paris, a été transformée en toilettes par Rirkrit Tiravanija : très précisément une copie de celles du CBGB, célèbre bar new yorkais du Lower East Side qui a notamment vu défilier toute la scène punk américaine (*Untitled (cal-de-sac)*, 2015). Lui répond une scène utilisable, qui au lieu de planches convoque le marbre (*Run like Hell*, 2015).

En réalisant une copie des toilettes de ce bar légendaire, s'agissait-il de vous avancer sur le terrain de la contre-culture ? Je pense que le point de départ est toujours le ready made. Mais peut-être s'agit-il d'un « contre-ready-made » ? Ce motif était intéressant pour moi car il y a eu cette exposition sur la mode punk au Metropolitan Museum [à New York] :

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA.
UNTITLED 2015 (RUN LIKE HELL), jusqu'au 18 juillet, galerie Chantal Crousel, 10, rue Charlot, 75003 Paris, tél. 01 42 77 38 87, www.crousel.com, 11j sauf dimanche-lundi 11h-13h/14h-19h.

Chaos to Couture », 2013] où ces toilettes avaient été recréées. Le Metropolitan est très connu pour avoir ce genre de recreations d'espaces et j'ai trouvé intéressante cette idée de « transporter » un tel espace jusqu'au musée. Mais découvrant des images de ces toilettes dans les journaux, les gens qui connaissaient les originaux dans le bar ont trouvé que ce n'était pas vraiment à cela que ça ressemblait. Je travaillais déjà beaucoup avec ce genre de stratification, cette idée graffitée, de textes superposés, qui est pour moi plus un intérêt pour le situationnisme.

Avez-vous un intérêt particulier pour la contre-culture, le punk, cette période ? Ou s'agit-il plutôt de références pour vous ?

Ce sont plutôt des références qui pointent pour moi un peu l'idée de résistance. Car bien entendu tout cela a des significations, c'est donc plus comme des signes que je souhaite mettre en avant et utiliser afin d'élaborer de la résistance.

Ici les murs sont complètement propres, mais l'on peut y voir incrustées dans les murs les traces de certains graffitis, ce qui crée un changement radical entre



Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (cal-de-sac)*, 2015, détail, vue d'installation à la galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Vue sur le bar et la galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. © Chantal Crousel

ce que vous donnez à voir et la réalité de l'endroit...

Bien sûr, c'est une sorte de recreation. J'étais plus intéressé par la surface et d'une certaine manière par la façon d'en faire un objet, de transformer ces toilettes complètes en objet. Je cherchais donc une façon de les reproduire de manière intégrée, afin qu'elles deviennent elles-mêmes leur propre objet. En testant certains matériaux, nous

avons commencé à réaliser que certaines choses ne pouvaient apparaître telles quelles, puis j'ai pensé que finalement j'étais juste en train de créer une ombre des vraies toilettes. Ainsi cela devient d'une certaine manière une trace. Il y a donc cette question d'un véritable objet, mais aussi celle de l'image ; j'ai tenté de transformer un endroit en une image qui soit un véritable objet d'une certaine manière.

À propos du fait que l'installation soit fonctionnelle, vous avez toujours été intéressé par l'interaction avec le public. Est-ce ce même intérêt qui régit en partie cette œuvre ici ?

Oui je crois. J'ai toujours été très intéressé par les seuils que les individus doivent franchir afin de participer ; c'est leur décision d'entrer ou pas. Il y a cette question d'avoir à le

faire ou de l'avoir fait qui vous étreint, et il y a cette signification de violation. Je souhaite que cette œuvre appelle aussi cette question de seuils et mettre cet objet dans un lieu où chacun doit prendre une décision. Et les deux décisions peuvent provoquer quelque chose d'intéressant.

Depuis le milieu des années 1990, vous êtes associé

à l'esthétique relationnelle. Croyez-vous que ce concept soit encore pertinent aujourd'hui ? Je pense que c'est toujours pertinent en effet et que c'est toujours joué. Peut-être ce que c'était exactement n'était pas très clair à l'époque, mais maintenant cela devient presque comme une forme, peut-être un peu trop une forme d'ailleurs.

À propos de la seconde installation, n'est-ce pas contradictoire que quelque chose qui soit censé être en bois, plus ou moins fragile, soit ici exécuté en marbre ?

Je m'intéressais à cette contradiction : quelque chose qui est véritablement éphémère en termes d'attitude et très permanent en termes de matériaux, cela joue donc avec cela. J'ai évidemment voulu montrer cela en relation avec les toilettes. Il y a une sorte de possibilité que vous soyez allé aux toilettes et que vous ayez entendu quelqu'un jouer dans le fond, c'était donc une sorte de réponse. Je regarde le tout comme une seule chose, ce n'est pas vraiment une seconde installation.

Propos recueillis par Frédéric Bonnet

Exposition réalisée en association avec le Musée de La Poste. Paris - www.ladresseuseedelaposte.fr



EXPOSITION DU 12 MARS - 8 NOVEMBRE 2015
Musée du Général Leclerc de Hayebouque et de la Libération de Paris
Musée Jean Moulin

Partenaires, partenaires, administration de gravure, Réseau de programmes sur les commémorations de la guerre, à Paris - Marguerite Demarec



MATISSE EN SON TEMPS



Fondation Pierre Gianadda
Martigny
20 juin - 22 novembre 2015
Tous les jours de 9 h à 19 h



Vie Rapide S1E67 - Mardi

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

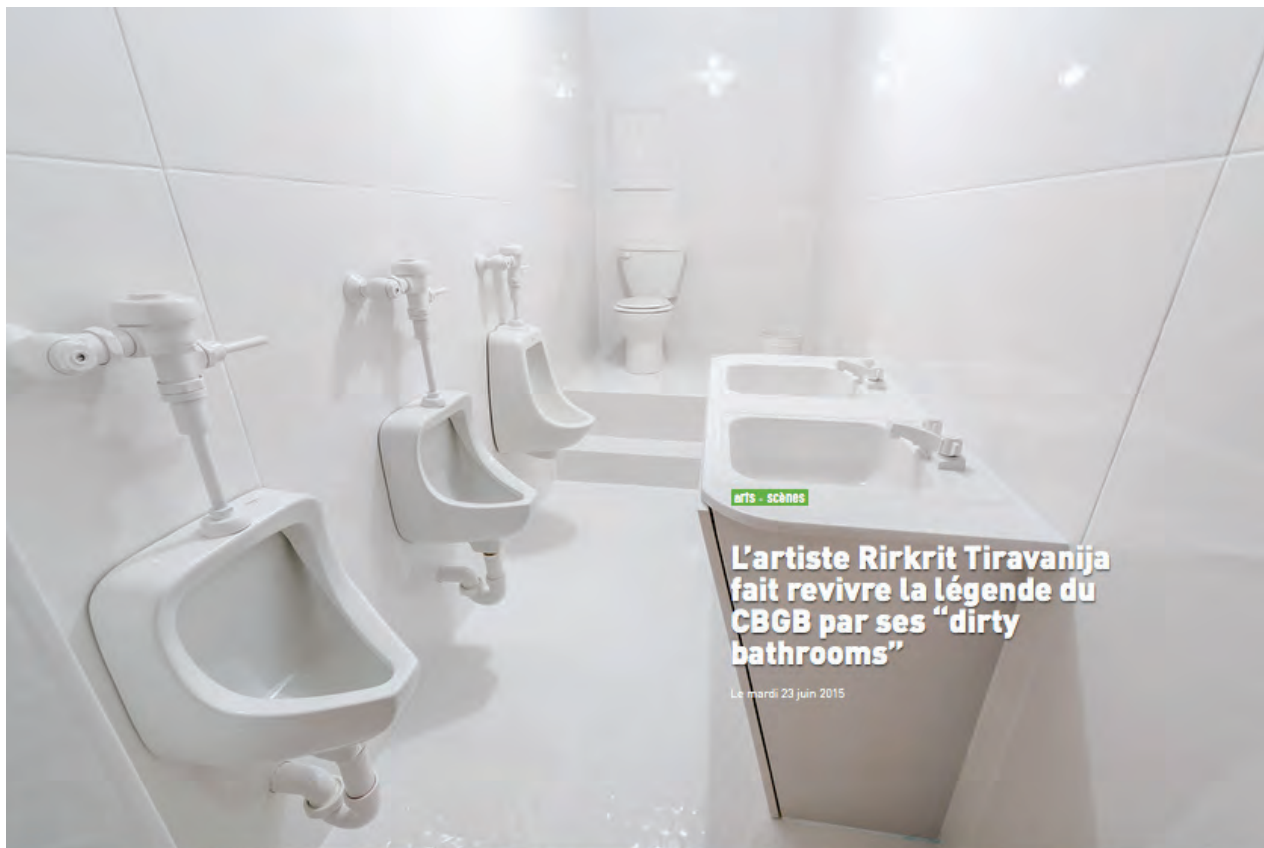


Rencontre avec l'artiste thaïlandais Rirkrit Tiravanija, qui a eu l'idée d'exposer à Paris une reproduction des toilettes d'un ancien club mythique de New-York, le CBGB.

A demain, Mehdi.



Galerie
Chantal Crousel



L'artiste Rirkrit Tiravanija
fait revivre la légende du
CBGB par ses "dirty
bathrooms"

Le mardi 23 juin 2015

Rirkrit Tiravanija, Untitled (cul-de-sac), 2015, Vue d'exposition Untitled 2015 (un like hell) à la Galerie Chantal Crousel © Photo Florian Kleinlehn, Courtesy de l'artiste et Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Où est passé l'esprit du mythique CBGB, qui a fermé ses portes en 2006 après trente-trois ans de bons et loyaux services ? Voici en substance la question que pose l'artiste Rirkrit Tiravanija à la galerie Chantal Crousel, avec une reconstitution grandeur nature, sans fétichisme aucun, des fameuses "dirty bathrooms" du club punk new-yorkais.

"Je prends le bar avec moi, je prends la scène avec moi, je prends les urinoirs dans lesquels j'ai pissé avec Joey Ramone." On est en 2006, et Hilly Cristal, fondateur et gérant du mythique club CBGB, fondé en décembre 1973 à Manhattan, annonce qu'il va déménager à Las Vegas, contraint de mettre la clé sous la porte après que le propriétaire du bâtiment a annoncé vouloir doubler le prix de la location.

Depuis c'est silence radio. Avec cette question qui reste en suspens et que contribue aujourd'hui à reformuler la drôle d'exposition que signe l'artiste thaïlandais Rirkrit Tiravanija à la galerie Chantal Crousel à Paris. A quoi tient l'esprit d'un lieu ? Suffit-il, comme le proposait Hilly Cristal de télétransporter bar poisseux et backstage pouilleux pour retrouver l'odeur de la sueur et de l'alcool, les cris et la puissance des shoots, les accords dissonants de Television et la voix de Tom Verlaine, les Perfecto des Ramones et le punk sexy de Debbie Harry ?

Suffit-il comme le fait aujourd'hui Tiravanija de reconstituer à échelle 1, les fameuses "dirty bathroom" du CBGB pour retrouver un peu du parfum contestataire du punk new-yorkais né sur les cendres de la contre-



culture, les relents de la guerre du Vietnam et l'insalubrité du Bronx ?

Tiravanija ne se fait aucune illusion apparemment, qui ne fait même pas mine d'importer, ou de reporter, les traces multiples, traces de doigts, graffs et stickers qui recouvraient littéralement les chiottes cradingues du 315 Bowery ; mais livre ici un remake immaculé (bien que fonctionnel – les toilettes fonctionnent, vous pouvez y faire un stop) ces coulisses au moins aussi décisives que la piste de danse et la scène (que l'on retrouve plus loin dans l'exposition).

Les déclarations d'amour ou les insultes griffonnées à même les murs qui se sont accumulées au long des 33 années d'activité du club apparaissent ici de façon quasi imperceptible, blanc sur blanc mais signalées par un léger relief à peine visible à l'œil nu.



Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (sou-de-sac)*, 2015; *Vue d'exposition Untitled 2015 (run like hell)* à la Galerie Chantal Crousel © Photo Florian Kleinefenn, Courtesy de l'artiste et Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

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Zéro fétichisme donc du côté de Tiravanija réputé pour ses expériences communautaires (repas partagé et puzzle géant) et son appartenance à un courant phare dans les années 90 : l'esthétique relationnelle, mais plutôt un geste fort avec cette entrée en matière imposée en quelque sorte, puisque le visiteur doit d'abord passer par ce sas historique et ironique à la fois, avant de revenir sur ses pas, faire le tour du pâté de maison et rejoindre le reste de l'exposition en passant cette fois par l'arrière-cour de la galerie ! Une façon de nous mettre le nez dans l'histoire et de nous proposer une expérience live du reenactment (pratique très en vue dans l'art contemporain et dont Tiravanija est l'un des représentants).

“Il témoigne d'un rejet total des circuits conventionnels et donne notamment le droit à tout un chacun de monter sur scène pour s'y exprimer, de manière plus ou moins talentueuse. Inspiré par cette culture de l'amateurisme et de la contestation, Rirkrit Tiravanija provoque de manière récurrente des situations d'expérimentation, laissant le visiteur interagir en toute liberté avec ses installations et faisant ainsi glisser son statut de visiteur à celui de participant” peut-on ainsi lire dans le texte de présentation.

Claire Moulène. « L'artiste Rirkrit Tiravanija fait revivre la légende du CBGB par ses "dirty bathrooms" », *lesinrocks.com*, June, 23, 2015. <http://abonnes.lesinrocks.com/2015/06/23/arts-scenes/arts/lartiste-rirkrit-tiravanija-fait-revivre-la-legende-du-cbgb-par-ses-dirty-bathrooms-11755671/>

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Rirkrit Tiravanija, Why Sneeze, 2015 - Vue d'exposition Untitled 2015 (run like hell) © Photo Florian Kleinemann, Courtesy de l'artiste et Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.



Rirkrit Tiravanija during the vernissage Untitled 2015 (run like hell) © Marianne Capozzi, Courtesy de l'artiste et Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

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Le reste de cette exposition chorégraphiée, qui attend du spectateur qu'il joue le jeu, face à un saut aux toilettes, s'y arrêtent éventuellement le temps d'un rail de coke ou d'une pause pipi, avant de parcourir quelques centaines de mètres et de débarquer par l'arrière, joue sur la même corde, avec la reproduction millimétrée, mais en marbre, de la scène mythique qui vit passer Blondie, Suicide ou Patti Smith.

Les instruments, batteries, guitares et basses, activées le soir du vernissage par l'artiste en personne, sont désormais à la disposition du public. Tandis que des bacs à glace, sans bière, mais remplis de lard de Colonnata (un

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lard blanc et fondant, un temps conservé dans des vasques en marbre de carrare dont sont aussi fait ces facsimilés de glacière), jonchent le sol de la galerie.

Dans la salle adjacente : deux couvertures sérigraphiées sur toile du journal Libération affublées du même message, "on ne peut pas simuler la liberté", font de l'œil à une série de dessins sur fond rouge (les mêmes que ceux présentés actuellement à la Biennale de Venise) recensant tous les soulèvements populaires de ces dernières années. Une façon de rappeler qu'en 2015, si les canaux de révolte ont changé, il souffle encore un vent contestataire. Bien loin de l'East Village.

Claire Moulène

Rirkrit Tiravanija, Untitled 2015 (Run Like Hell), jusqu'au 18 juillet à la galerie Chantal Crousel. Paris.



Image tirée du film "CBGB" de Randall Miller, 2013

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Bienvenue au club

En 1973, le punk élit domicile au CBGB. Là, c'est l'histoire du mouvement qui s'écrit au fil des concerts.

Décembre 1973, le CBGB ouvrit ses portes au 315 Bowery, sur les cendres du Palace Bar. Trois blocs à l'est, c'était l'Avenue A. Deux blocs au sud, la lisière du Lower East Side. Au cœur du brasier. Peu avant, le Mercer Arts Center avait fermé. Ses habitués (New York Dolls, Suicide...) se mirent à la recherche d'un havre. Le proprio Hilly Kristal, fan de blues, était convaincu qu'il pouvait attirer dans ce coin du Bowery (alors essentiellement peuplé de clodos, de junkies et de bohèmes) les amateurs de country et de bluegrass. Qui ne vinrent jamais. Ou furent vite dissuadés par cet espace puant l'urine, au sol chroniquement sale, aux toilettes graffitées où l'on déféquait à la vue de tous, et dont les cuisines à l'hygiène moyenâgeuse abritait un chili infect dans lequel les Dead Boys aimaient à se branler...

Ainsi, le CBGB végéta jusqu'à ce que Richard Hell y programme un concert de Television, le 31 mars 1974. Héroïne en quantité. Accrochages. Pitreries de Tom Verlaine. Kristal jura qu'on ne l'y reprendrait plus, mais se vit supplier de remettre ça. Il céda. Après tout, son bar avait fait du profit, et pour cachet le groupe s'était contenté d'un peu de monnaie. La fois d'après, Television débarqua avec quatre blousons noirs : les Ramones. La suite est célèbre. Patti Smith élit domicile au 315 Bowery, aussitôt suivie d'une faune hirsute : Jayne County,

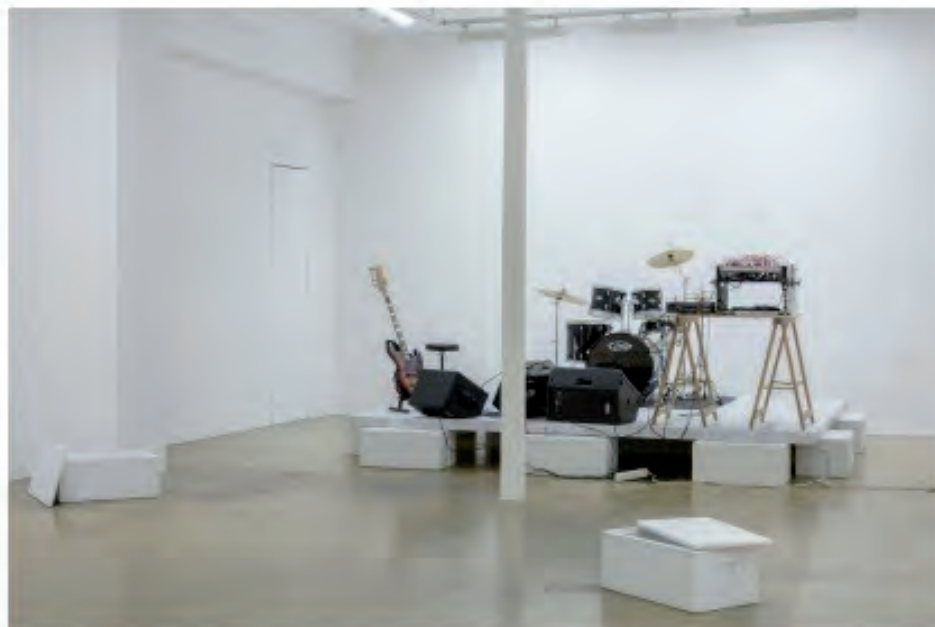


Suicide, Johnny Thunders, The Dictators ou Malcolm McLaren – alors manager des New York Dolls – qui vint ici piocher quelques idées pour son futur grand projet.

L'histoire a été largement révisée depuis mais, en 1974, il n'y avait pas cent personnes qui traînaient au CBGB. Un an plus tard, le club était l'épicentre de l'underground new-yorkais, programmant Talking Heads, Blondie, Mink DeVille. Dans le public : Iggy Pop, David Bowie, Lou Reed ou Lester Bangs. Les mêmes se retrouveraient sous peu dans un autre haut lieu punk : Max's Kansas City, sur Park Avenue South.

La décennie suivante, le hardcore y constitua son abri (Sick of It All, Madball, Agnostic Front, etc.) et, jusqu'à sa fermeture en 2006, il accueillit plusieurs gloires du rock qui vinrent y parfaire leur réputation (Guns N'Roses, AC/DC, Green Day, The Strokes, etc.). A sa place trône aujourd'hui une galerie d'art. De là, remontez jusqu'à l'angle de 2nd Street : Joey Ramone Place. Inaugurée en mémoire de ce que le chanteur "a apporté à New York". Plus loin, sur Bleecker Street, un graffiti sur la grille d'une épicerie : "Metallic K.O." Le dernier concert des Stooges avant implosion. C'était en 1974. Le punk new-yorkais venait de naître. Deux ans plus tard, l'industrie s'en mêlait. Peu après, la plupart de ses héros étaient lessivés.

David Brun-Lambert



Rirkrit Tiravanija, "Run Like Hell", 2015, marbre, 36 x 300 x 350 cm, Vue d'exposition Untitled 2015 (run like hell), Galerie Chantal Crousel (6 juin – 18 juillet 2015) Courtesy de l'artiste et Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. © Florian Kleinfenn

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Chantal Crousel

Rirkrit Tiravanija

L'artiste thaïlandais nous avait habitué à ses reconstitutions grandeur nature d'espaces atypiques : une péniche conçue par le Corbusier ou son propre appartement new-yorkais, tous deux répliqués à échelle 1. Cette fois-ci, c'est au pipi-room d'un lieu mythique, le bar new-yorkais CBGB1, qu'il s'est attaqué. Un backstage qui convoque avec lui toute une histoire, mais aussi toute une époque : celle des Ramones et de Patti Smith, d'avant le néo-conservatisme et la normalisation. La deuxième partie de l'expo, une scène et des bacs à glace taillés dans le marbre (mais avec du lard de Colonnata à la place des bières), sont une tentative d'inscription dans l'éternité de cette histoire de la contre-culture.

"Untitled 2015 (run like hell)" de Rirkrit Tiravanija, jusqu'au 18 juillet à la Galerie Chantal Crousel à Paris