

TEXTS BY ATIF AKIN, JOAN ANIM-ADDO, MAGALÍ ARRIOLA, RAKHEE BALARAM, ERIKA BALSOM, UTE META BAUER, BETTINA BRUNNER, D. GRAHAM BURNETT, PATRICK CHARPÉNEL, DAMIAN CHRISTINGER, SEBASTIAN CICHOCKI, CM LIVE (NEELOFAR, SURAJ RAI, AND SHAMSHER ALI), GABRIELLE CRAM, HEATHER DAVIS, ANGELA DIMITRAKAKI, GEORGES B.J. DREYFUS, EVA EBERSBERGER, CHARLES ESCHÉ, BEATRICE FORCHINI, ANSELM FRANKE, NATASHA GINWALA, DAVID GRUBER, CARLES GUERRA, SOLEDAD GUTIÉRREZ, NAV HAQ, EVA HAYWARD, STEFAN HELMREICH, STEFANIE HESSLER, VÁCLAV JANOŠČÍK, CAROLINE A. JONES, RUBA KATRIB, LUTZ KOEPNICK, CRESANTIA FRANCES KOYA VAKA'UTA, LUCA LO PINTO, SARAT MAHARAJ, CHUS MARTÍNEZ, MARGARIDA MENDES, SUZANA MILEVSKA, VANESSA JOAN MÜLLER, HEIKE MUNDER, SARA NADAL-MELSIÓ, HENNING NASS, ASTRIDA NEIMANIS, INGO NIERMANN, SANDRA NOETH, HANS ULRICH OBRIST, BORIS ONDREIČKA, ANNIE PAUL, NATAŠA PETREŠIN-BACHELEZ, IGNAS PETRONIS, ELIZABETH A. POVINELLI, FILIPA RAMOS, RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, MARKUS REYMANN, KATHRIN RHOMBERG, DAN RICHARDS, RIDYKEULOUS (NICOLE EISENMAN + A.L. STEINER), RALPH RUGOFF, THIBAUT DE RUYTER, NADIM SAMMAN, MIRJAM SCHAUB, ANDREAS SCHLAEGEL, CORY SCOZZARI, TSERING SHAKYA, CHRIS SHARP, JASPER SHARP, FREDERIKE SPERLING, ANDREAS SPIEGL, FRANCESCA THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA, EMILIANO VALDÉS, NICOLA VASSELL, FRANZISKA SOPHIE WILDFÖRSTER, EVA WILSON, SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, DANIELA ZYMAN, OONA ZYMAN

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary The Commissions Book

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BASEL ABBAS AND RUANNE ABOU-RAHME, DAVID ADJAYE, NABIL AHMED, DOUG AITKEN, ATIF AKIN, JOHN AKOMFRAH, NEVIN ALADAĞ, ALLORA & CALZADILLA, LAURA ANDERSON BARBATA, JONATHAS DE ANDRADE, KUTLUĞ ATAMAN, NEİL BELOUFA, CECILIA BENGOLEA, JOHN BOCK, MONICA BONVICINI, CANDICE BREITZ, JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BUREŠ MILLER, JULIAN CHARRIÈRE, ANETTA MONA CHIŠA AND LUCIA TKÁČOVÁ, TYLER COBURN, PHIL COLLINS, CLAUDIA COMTE, ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS, EMANUEL DANESCH AND DAVID RYCH, DARK MORPH, JEREMY DELLER, OLAFUR ELIASSON, NOA ESHKOL, OMER FAST, MARIO GARCÍA TORRES, GELITIN, ISA GENZKEN, LIAM GILLICK, DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, DAN GRAHAM, ARIEL GUZIK, CARL MICHAEL VON HAUSSWOLFF AND THOMAS NORDANSTAD, FLORIAN HECKER, NIKOLAUS HIRSCH / MICHEL MÜLLER AND CYBERMOHALLA ENSEMBLE, CARSTEN HÖLLER, MARINE HUGONNIER, PIERRE HUYGHE, INHABITANTS, SANJA IVEKOVIĆ, RASHID JOHNSON, JOAN JONAS, BRAD KAHLHAMER, AMAR KANWAR, RAGNAR KJARTANSSON, ARMIN LINKE, SHARON LOCKHART, LOS CARPINTEROS, SARAH LUCAS, URSULA MAYER, JONATHAN MEESE, EDUARDO NAVARRO, ERNESTO NETO AND THE HUNI KUIN, RIVANE NEUENSCHWANDER, CARSTEN NICOLAI, OLAF NICOLAI, JORGE OTERO-PAILOS, MATHIAS POLEDNA, WALID RAAD, RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, LISA RAVE, MATTHEW RITCHIE WITH ARANDA LASCH AND ARUP AGU, TOMÁS SARACENO, RITU SARIN AND TENZING SONAM, HANS SCHABUS, CHRISTOPH SCHLINGENSIEF, ALLAN SEKULA, CHARLES STANKIEVECH, SIMON STARLING, SUPERFLEX, TERRITORIAL AGENCY, RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA, SISSEL TOLAAS, SUZANNE TREISTER, JANAINA TSCHÄPE WITH DAVID GRUBER, JANA WINDEREN, SUSANNE M. WINTERLING, CERITH WYN EVANS, ŽELIMIR ŽILNIK

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Rirkrit Tiravanija

UNTITLED (ANGST ESSEN SEELE AUF, FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE, SEPTEMBER 15, 2008), 2010
CANVAS, NEWSPAPER, ACRYLIC
58.5 × 82 CM

UNTITLED 2014–2016 (CURRY FOR THE SOUL OF THE FORGOTTEN) (THREE), 2016
SINGLE-CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION (COLOR, SOUND), CAST BRONZE
47 MIN.
SCULPTURE: 52 × 135.3 × 71.5 CM

UNTITLED 2016 (WHERE DO YOU FIT INTO ALL OF THIS) (SIX), 2015–16
STAINLESS STEEL, POLYAMIDE, BONSAI
BOX: 55.9 × 91 × 122.6 CM
SCULPTURE: 33 × 22 × 26 CM
BONSAI: 33 × 22 × 26 CM

BORN IN BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, IN 1961.
LIVES IN NEW YORK, USA, BERLIN, GERMANY, AND CHIANG MAI, THAILAND.

“NE TRAVAILLEZ JAMAIS”: RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA’S NEW CONSTELLATIONS OF SOCIAL RELATIONS
BEATRICE FORCHINI

The form of the flower is unknown to the seed. It’s a sentence that speaks of a gap, the potentiality of a form yet to come, and, at the same time, it speaks of its opposite, a sense of impotence for something that cannot be fully grasped, maneuvered, or authored. *untitled 2019 (the form of the flower is unknown to the seed)* by artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, which opened in June 2019 at the ICA in London, consists of a functional sake bar, a communal space integrated in the institution whose scope is fulfilled when people take part in it. While consuming, they produce the work. The permanent spatial intervention at the ICA encapsulates most of the reflections central to Rirkrit Tiravanija’s practice, from his early food works¹ to communal and durational experiments like *The Land Foundation* in Chiang Mai, Thailand.² These operations purposely eschew definition and classification, testing the viewer’s experience by collapsing the distance between contemplation and participation, consumption and production, leisure and labor. What happens in the space between these oppositional moments—in this gap—is open to productive paradoxes and contradictions, ambiguities, and estrangement, as a poetic and political means. Another often-quoted line “Angst essen Seele auf” (“fear eats the soul”) exemplifies the tensions at stake in Tiravanija’s practice. Reappearing several times across his work,³ the expression comes from the title for the 1974 film *Angst essen Seele auf* by Rainer Werner Fassbinder.⁴ The title, a grammatical mistake imitating of broken German, generates unease, suggesting a reflection on the production of fragmented subjectivities and forms of exclusions embedded in language. In his 2010 painting *untitled (angst essen seele auf, frankfurter allgemeine, september 15, 2008)*, the expression’s meaning is updated in reference to new forms of subjugation that emerged in the wake of the financial crisis that hit the West in late 2008. “Angst essen Seele auf” is painted in red capital letters against two pages from the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. The text interferes with the background, visually altering the noise of the front page, an overload of information that entangles the subject within a totalizing narrative. On the pages of *Frankfurter Allgemeine*—the date, September 15, 2008, marks the collapse of Lehman Brothers—the sentence assumes a new meaning in relation to the financial crisis, and to forms of control, the mediatization of fear, and the production of political affiliations under a global dynamic of economic reductionism. In these momentous times, as Angela Dimitrakaki put it, “practically everything—from love to fear to subjectivity to migration to climate change to suicide—is currently registered and approached on economic terms.”⁵ Under the hegemony of an economic principle over forms of life, artistic practices can respond to this moment by giving exposure to the

systemic conditions of oppression.⁶ Tirvanija's text works—including such lines as “Angst essen Seele auf,” “Asians Must Eat Rice,” or “Freedom Cannot Be Simulated”⁷—exist somewhere between pun and slogans. They create frictions that affect participation: they set in motion a discomfort, based on their linguistic content, which entangles the viewer in the controversies they bear. Similarly, the communal situations in Tiravanija's work, in their temporal and constructed conviviality, can be an ambivalent site of participation. In his cooking pieces, the remnants of the shared meals are displayed in the gallery until they rot. Everything speaks of the precarious nature of communities and the ambiguity of the gestures, symbols, and rituals that hold them together.⁸ Curator Maria Lind notes that the concept of gifting entangled in these situations could be read through Marcel Mauss “as seldom an expression of benevolent generosity. Instead, gifts are instruments of power, which demand reciprocity, preferably in abundance.”⁹ When considering the convivial pieces from this perspective, Lind sees them as “both enjoyable and uncomfortable—even repugnant. The accumulation of people—the often-quoted technical specification, ‘lots of people,’ who for example, eat together—tends to convey a feeling of emptiness.”¹⁰ It is in realizing this moment of discomfort that the spectator truly participates and questions their role in the game. The work must remain open to contradictions and ambivalence, at least on a metaphorical and poetic level, in order to enact a form of productive alienation and incite critique. In respect to this aspect, Helena Reckitt argues for an approach to Relational Aesthetics that resists the simplification of, and pacification with, the institutional context that the work inhabits. When work is adaptive and at ease with art institutions, it becomes purely staged, and does not attempt to create a critical form that can make visible the material dynamics, which shape the institution, and thereby make critique possible.¹¹

In *untitled 2014–2016 (curry for the soul of the forgotten)* (2016), a three-part video installation that includes a sculpture, a rupture is enacted through silence. The film documents a gathering in Chiang Mai revolving around the cooking and consumption of curry. The video piece and the action that it documents is part of the artist's engagement in the region with the foundation of The Land, initiated in 1998 as an open space, in close connection with the local communities, to conjoin a sensitivity for and exploration of agriculture, in relation to the social aspects of cohabitation. The rice harvested from the two fields that the land comprises is shared by all participants involved in its cultivation, and with local families. Throughout the cooking and eating of curry in *untitled 2014–2016 (curry for the soul of the forgotten)* no one in the group speaks, despite the liveliness of the communal situation. This absence of speech, contrasting with a seemingly informal set up and atmosphere, generates proximity, focus, and tension. It is what holds the group together and

414



415

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA, *UNTITLED 2019 (THE FORM OF THE FLOWER IS UNKNOWN TO THE SEED)*, 2019
INSTALLATION VIEW, ICA, LONDON, 2019

creates intimacy, kinship, and a communal will to act. The work addresses a multiplicity of times and places: the immediacy of the gallery space, where the pot and the cooking utensils are presented as a relic in front of the moving images, and the bearing witness to the experience in Chiang Mai recounted in the film. _____ As

part of his investigation into spaces that produce collectivity, Tiravanija looks at the art institution as a place where canonical definitions can be confronted and challenged. The institution becomes a site open to paradoxes, especially in relation to an attention economy that infiltrates all fields of production generating new forms of labor that rely on a constant drive to performativity and presence—whether digital or physical—as commodities for a total data-driven capitalization of the everyday. In this context, Sven Lütticken argues, Guy Debord’s Situationist motto “ne travaillez jamais” (“never work”), originally a comment on alienating wage labor, might as well be updated as “travaillez toujours” (“always work”).¹² The erosion of the distance between art and life has turned life into a constant experience of performance, networking, and immaterial labor. Though it does not require the spectator’s direct participation, *untitled 2016 (where do you fit into all of this) (six)* (2015–16) is rendered performative by the presence of the viewer. Consisting of an assemblage of separate components—a polished stainless steel box along with a bonsai tree and its machine-made double, a 3D-printed bonsai in polyamide—the work mirrors the activities and gestures taking place in its proximity. With its entropic qualities, the reflecting surface of this cold mirror box¹³ generates a feedback loop with the space in which the piece is installed, as the contours of the object are slowly absorbed into the architectural surroundings and vice versa. _____

By catalyzing and making visible the interactions that take place in the gallery space, *untitled 2016 (where do you fit into all of this) (six)* precludes escape from seeing and being seen in the way it treats a system in which the viewer’s presence is constantly monitored and monetized. The work entangles the viewers in the dynamics of the exhibition space, and offers a space for questioning the ways in which individuals contribute to and share responsibility within the institution. In the context of the impossibility of finding a pure oppositional place or “a plausible ‘outside,’ constituted independently of capital’s rule,”¹⁴ the ground for inciting critique comes with the consciousness that “[T]he institution is us. Every time we speak of the ‘institution’ as other than ‘us’ we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions. We avoid responsibility for, or action against, the everyday complicities, compromises, and censorship ... which are driven by our own interests in the field and the benefits we derive from it.”¹⁵

416

417



RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA, *UNTITLED (ANGST ESSEN SEELE AUF, FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE, SEPTEMBER 15, 2008)*, 2010

1 In the work *untitled 1989* (1989), Rirkrit Tiravanija's first food piece, the leftovers from a green curry were displayed as part of a group show at Scott Henson Gallery, NYC. "Four pedestals were blocking the passage between the entryway and the exhibition space. Various processes of a curry being cooked were displayed on these pedestals, i.e. a pedestal for ingredients, a pedestal with curry cooking on a burner, a pedestal with waste products. The visitors could smell the cooking curry as they entered the space; the smell permeated through the gallery. A new pot of curry was cooked once a week, but the curry was not to be eaten." Tiravanija in Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Rirkrit Tiravanija/Hans Ulrich Obrist (Conversation Series)* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2010), 9.

2 "Initiated by artist Rirkrit Tiravanija in 1998 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the land (more direct translation from Thai to English would be 'the rice field') was the merging of ideas by different artists to cultivate a place of and for social engagement." It involved the experimentation of new natural and renewable resources and sustainable techniques, inviting collaborators, as artists, architects, students, and other practitioners, to join. In 2004 a board was formed, with Tiravanija as chairperson and Kamin Lertchaiprasert and Uthit Atimana as members. See www.thelandfoundation.org/.

3 The sentence was used the first time on the occasion of the exhibition "Untitled 1994 (Fear Eats the Soul)" at Galerie Esther Schipper in Cologne. The reference to Fassbinder's film was the central element of Tiravanija's solo show "FEAR EATS THE SOUL" at Gavin Brown's enterprise in New York, 2011. One of the latest interventions where the quote reappears is *Untitled 2017 (fear eats the soul) (white flag)* (2017) part of Pledges of Allegiance, an initiative organized by New York art nonprofit Creative Time.

4 The story of a romance between a Moroccan *Gastarbeiter*—an immigrant "guest worker"—and an older German woman. Throughout the film, the plot reveals the social tensions and hostility that can arise within a small community, escalating to a form of xenophobic ostracizing.

5 Angela Dimitrakaki, "Elections Change Nothing: On the Misery of the Democracy of Equivalence," *SOUTH as a State of Mind #6: Das Magazin der documenta 14*, issue 6 (October 2015). See www.documenta14.de/en/south/53_elections_change_nothing_on_the_misery_of_the_democracy_of_equivalence.

6 Angela Dimitrakaki, "Labour, Ethics, Sex and Capital: On Biopolitical Production in Contemporary Art," *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*, vol. 28 (2011): 6.

7 "Freedom cannot be simulated," a quote based on the work of Polish poet Stanisław Jerzy Lec, was later appropriated as a slogan during protests in the GDR.

8 Liz Linden, "Alone in the Crowd: Appropriated Text and Subjectivity in the Work of Rirkrit Tiravanija," *Third Text*, vol. 30 issue 3–4 (2016): 159–72.

9 Maria Lind, "The Process of Living in the World of Objects: Notes on the Work of Rirkrit Tiravanija," in *Rirkrit Tiravanija: A Retrospective (tomorrow is another fine day)*, ed. Francesca Grassi and Rirkrit Tiravanija (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2004), 126.

10 Ibid., 126.

11 Helena Reckitt, "Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics," in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 152.

12 Sven Lütticken, "General Performance," *e-flux journal*, 31 (January 2012). See www.e-flux.com/journal/31/68212/general-performance/.

13 Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments (1966)," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 12.

14 Dimitrakaki, "Labour, Ethics, Sex and Capital."

15 Andrea Fraser, "From Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," in *Institutional Critique and After*, Volume 2, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2006), 133.





RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA, **UNTITLED 2016 (WHERE DO YOU FIT INTO ALL OF THIS) (SIX)**, 2015–16