



GWANGJU

ROUNDTABLE REFLECTIONS

Lucy Rees

ROUNDTABLE, The 9th Gwangju Biennale (September 7, 2012 - November 11, 2012) can be seen as an evolving project to facilitate a series of open-ended conversations and collaborations. Flash Art International editor Lucy Rees asks each of the six co-artistic directors to respond to one of the Biennale's six sub-themes, revealing their working relationship and the breadth of curatorial modalities brought to the project.

BACK TO THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

Carol Yinghua Lu

Continuing my previous curatorial involvement in two recent research-based exhibitions — “Little Movements: Self-practice in Contemporary Art” and “Accidental Message: Art is Not a System, Not a World” — I am interested in the importance of recognizing individual positions,

narratives, processes, experiences and histories in shaping our discourse of art and our perception of the art system, while resisting attempts to subscribe to existing structures, categorization and generalization of any historical narrative. This is as much a political viewpoint as it is an artistic one. There is no prescribed order, remedy or experience to rely on as model or affirmation for a practitioner of any kind and

in any place rather than that of his/her own complex conditions. In a world of unprecedented connectivity and transparency, ideas of self-observation, self-reflection and self-practice are essential.

ADAM BROOMBERG AND OLIVER CHANARIN, 42/Sheet3, People in Trouble Series, 2011. C-type print. 150 x 190 cm. Courtesy Gwangju Biennale and the artists.

INTIMACY, AUTONOMY AND ANONYMITY**Sunjung Kim**

The city of Gwangju changed dramatically after the May 18, 1980, democratic uprising, and the hollowing out of the old city center had long-reaching political and cultural implications. I am driven to focus on the moment when a place disappears or is on the verge of change. This is a longstanding interest of mine, which I explored through the Platform exhibitions that I organized at the old Seoul Station and old Defense Security Command site (KIMUSA). For the 9th Gwangju Biennale I am commissioning works that engage with a specific space where the original function has disappeared or is temporarily suspended. At the moment when a space is being discarded or transformed, artworks often reveal or penetrate the city, reflecting the traces or texture of its past. To engage with the urban sphere, actions of camouflage, infiltration, assimilation and intimacy with the people who inhabit the space are essential.

TRANSIENT ENCOUNTERS**Mami Kataoka**

Derived from previous curatorial practices on the concepts of intangible and invisible states of being, in relation to Eastern traditional philosophies such as yin and yang, Taoism and Wu Xing (the Five Movements), I am interested in understanding the ROUNDTABLE as a horizontal platform where different interconnecting elements search for the temporal balance of energies in the most delicate manner. In Buddhism they say, “everything is transient,” which suggests we should challenge both constant change and the idea of the “here and now.” These ideas stimulate our awareness of the mutability, exchangeability, solidity and fluidity of process, as well as an interpretation of the environment as housing a spatial and conceptual context. If we see these terms from the grounded perspective of social, political and economical changes, we can observe how artists represent those changes. Combined with an awareness of the temporal conditions of time

and space, we could look into the invisible realms to see how we, as human beings, understand the structure of the whole universe and how we were once more aware of the cognitive balance of natural energies.

RE-VISITING HISTORY**Wassan Al-Khudhairi**

The ROUNDTABLE’s many perspectives and entry points echo the malleable nature of history, which is continually manipulated and recreated through individual and group narratives. I have long been drawn to artists who are engaged in re-telling, re-interpreting and re-creating histories — including past, present and future historical narratives. Recognizing the complexity of layered and oppositional perspectives existent within a single moment of history, the work I have selected is that in which the artist invites the audience into this evolving retelling of history. In response to the roundtable for this project I am consciously operating under an artistically centered approach. My subject has evolved through my engagement with the artists — beginning with a question about missing or recreated histories and progressing from there.

LOGGING IN AND OUT OF COLLECTIVITY**Nancy Adajania**

In moments of urgency or crisis, cultural producers join together with others in temporary alliances, platforms or assemblies. I hope to signalize those sparking points in cultural practice where an interplay between artistic choice and civic volition can bring about a burst of critical agency, calibrated at a tangent to the numb momentum of a herd manipulated by the agendas of states and corporations. In such a situation, cultural producers may articulate themselves as distributed subjectivities; they may subscribe to reserve notions of utopia lost or betrayed; or they may retrieve erased protocols of critical citizenship. Some major theaters where these dramas continue to unfold include: the 2011 turbulence in societies across



North Africa and West Asia (clubbed together as the “Arab Spring”), the post-Communist societies, and the emergent self-assessment within nations that belong or once belonged to the Non-Aligned Movement. My investigations into these scenarios will be conducted through the trope of entanglement of (dis)similar histories and not through the production of “pure” or uncontaminated histories. As a corollary, the act of logging in and out of collectivity is premised on being complicit in the crisis and pleasure of the other.

IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON SPACE AND TIME**Alia Swastika**

I have long been interested in exploring the impact of movement — specifically, the impact of shifting borders and the transnational flow of goods or people

SARA NUYTEMANS,
Observatory of the Self version 2.1, 2011.
Kinetic wearable object made of stainless steel, mirrors, motor, and gears.
Courtesy Gwangju Biennale.

— on the shaping and reshaping of the human experience and artistic production. While approaching the ROUNDTABLE I found myself continually drawn to artists whose work responds to and is affected by intersections between time / space / migration. This includes collaborative installations created in collaboration with local artists and the public, works that invite a direct interaction with the audience, and site-responsive performances (which are by definition ephemeral and fleeting). It is my intention that these works present the viewer with experiences that question the evolving role of mobility, of borders, and of intersections across localities, cultures and individuals.